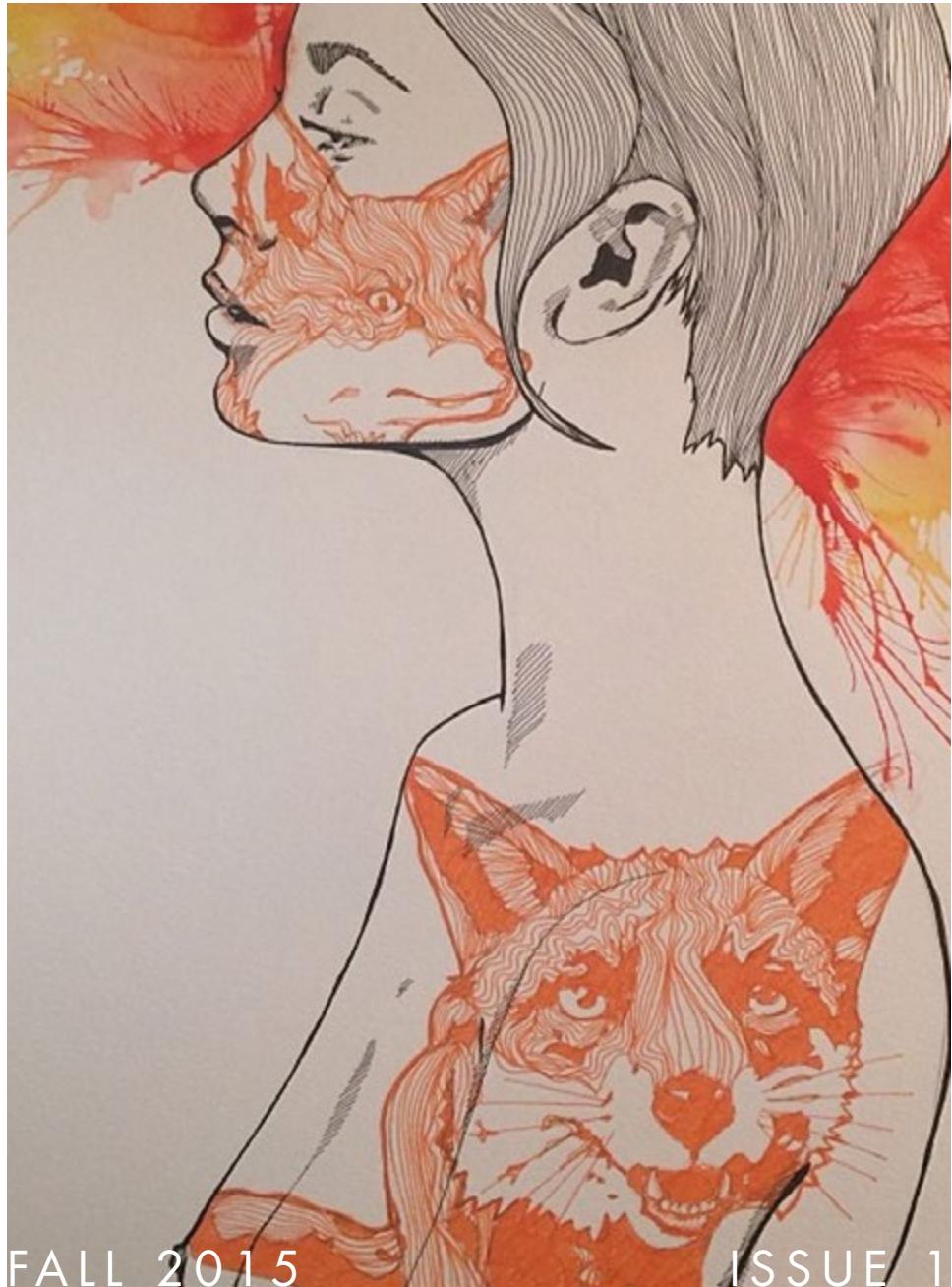


DOOR = J  R



FALL 2015

ISSUE 1

# Introduction

It is finally here, the very first issue of *Door is a Jar Magazine*, and for this, I could not be happier!

Starting as only an idea to bring quality writing and artwork to everyone, no matter one's social class, race, sexual orientation, lifestyle, religion, gender, education, or experience, and to select works from a variety of everyday writers and artist, and not only from a pool of elite academics, *Door is a Jar Magazine* has come to life in a way that I never imagined.

When I think of the joy of being Editor of this magazine, I think of how it feels to create a connection that brings together academics and the common, everyday Joe. You know, a casual connection like what happens between two friends at a café or bar, the way that they sincerely connect with each other when they're talking, frees them to be who they are without the feeling of being judged or misunderstood. This is what *Door is a Jar Magazine* is for everyone who reads it and submits their work, and this is what it will remain to be — a connection that is established between a variety of different writers, artists and readers.

With this said, I could not have created this magazine without the immense help of my colleague, co-founder and Managing Editor, Maxwell Bauman, and without our Art Director, Azeez Alli, who dedicated much of his unpaid time to our website and to the production of the magazine itself. And without the dedication of Clemonce Heard, Nina Long, Shivawn Mitchell and Corinne Nulton, how would I have been able to make this issue the best that it could be? The answer, I wouldn't have.

So, this issue I dedicate to all of you, to you the writers and artists, to you the reader, to you Maxwell, Azeez, Clemonce, Nina, Shivawn and Corinne. This is your door to walk through, where you can read and admire, where you can know how much you are valued, accepted and appreciated.

— Ahrend Torrey, Editor, *Door is a Jar Magazine*

*"The art of art, the glory of expression and the sunshine of the  
light of letters, is simplicity."*

– Walt Whitman



Cover image Foxy by Gabriel Saint

# Door is a Jar

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## **Editors**

Ahrend Torrey, Editor

Maxwell Bauman, Managing Editor

Nina Long, Fiction Editor

Shivawn Mitchell, Nonfiction Editor

Clemonce Heard, Poetry Editor

Corinne Nulton, Drama Editor

Azeez Alli, Art Director

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## **Detour**

Thomas J. Misuraca

They are doing construction on the way you walk to your office building. Signs and arrows lead you through covered scaffolding. Though "Post No Bills" is painted in red stencil on the wooden walls, posters of upcoming movies and album releases are stapled to them.

You can hear cars on the street outside, but can no longer see them. The wooden walls have now become concrete, painted steel gray. You wonder why they put so much work into a temporary walkway.

Shouldn't you be at the corner by now? It seems like you've walked much longer. You find it odd how no others are in this walkway with you. Perhaps they were all smart enough to go to the other side of the street.

When you reach the stairs that lead upwards, you begin to question this path. But an arrow points in that direction, so you trust it and ascend. It is now a long hallway and somewhere along the way, the walls turned to metal. An echoing sound of dripping water can be heard, but you know not from where it's coming.

You glance at your watch. It is now past nine. The first time you've even been late without an emergency. But it's not your fault, it's the city's. On your lunch hour, you'll call the city clerk and complain.

You go down steps again, and then down some more. Just when the passageway grows stuffy, you are hit with a breeze. This will end soon. Yes. There is sunlight ahead of you.

The passage way exits into a jungle. This can't be possible, but green vines and leaves sprawl all around you. You see no beginning or end. The humidity wraps around you like a hot, wet towel. Insects buzz noisily.

Arrows continue to lead you on and you follow. What else can you do at this point, but tread over the lush flora?

In the middle of the ground are stairs that lead into what appears to be an underground cave. Phosphorescence lights your way. There are puddles of water on the ground growing larger and more plentiful that you are not surprised when you find yourself treading through a foot of water.

Your best shoes are soaked, and probably ruined. But you do not care about that. You only want to return to familiar territory.

The walls are once again concrete; you hope this means you've returned to the city. Large roaches crawl along the walls, they seem perfectly at home here. Something wriggles over your ankle. Who knows what lies within the water you tread.

But the arrows point onward, and onward you go.

Up more stairs, metal this time. Into a carpeted hallway. Out into a sandy field. Into a round, rubber tube. And then you reach a left turn, but you notice the arrows are pointing back the way you came.

You debate for a moment about turning around and going back as the arrows suggest, but you do not. You walk onward, with no more arrows to guide you.



## **Junkyard Poetics**

Doug Bolling

Each year I visit the poetry junkyard  
to see what can be done.

Discarded poems are everywhere,  
mounds of them lifting toward a  
now forgotten horizon,  
promises begun, betrayed  
into failure.

Everywhere I find the shards:  
beginnings, middles, ends  
in raucous disconnect,  
weather beaten, mold laced.

Here a metaphor. There a simile.  
Clusters of ironies that never  
became sufficiently sharpened.  
Nouns and verbs ripped apart  
as though useless, best forgotten.  
Signifiers, signifieds crowded  
into separate boxes and told  
to be quiet.

I come with one purpose:  
To rebuild, clean and polish  
each sad piece of a possible poem.

I bring pliers and wrenches, a carton  
of roofing nails, a steady saw found  
in cinema land's back lot.  
Three hammers and a can  
of oil.

Now to reconstitute, revitalize,  
bring back from the dead and unloved,  
offer a second chance  
online or in print,  
MFA or untutored dream.



## **Rebuilding**

Doug Bolling

My two best friends are rebuilding  
their marriage one anger at a time.

I visit. I watch. I offer no advice.  
Only what I unload in the diary  
each night.

They are remodeling the bathroom.  
Green tile or pink.  
Stainless steel fixtures or pretend marble.  
Hot tub or his/her shower stalls  
his/her commodes.

Their words come in brief spurts  
carefully modulated to keep down  
the multiple rages achieved over  
the last five years.

They smile. They laugh.  
They weep.  
Gritted teeth and flushed jowls.  
Two bodies almost not apart.

Still, I admire them in this.  
Step by step journey to reach  
a somewhat truce somewhat hell  
believing, not believing.

Right on I say.  
But only to myself.  
Nothing is perfect.  
Everything is.  
So to speak.



## **A Self of Houses**

Patricia George

My story lives on inside my head-  
inside the many houses where I've lived  
The shacks of early childhood,  
The one with the slanted foyer roof  
that dripped icicles in the winter,  
The first California house where we  
waited an endless summer for the moving van  
to deliver our furniture from across the nation  
The houses of marriage that moved  
around the country  
The divorce house  
the houses that become small apartments  
Each house superimposed upon the next  
So many houses from beginning until now  
all wanting to claim me as their own  
even invading my dreams, my nightmares  
Afraid that I will forget who I am  
afraid to let me go  
afraid I would be meaningless without them  
afraid I would not exist without them





Gabriel Saint, Charcoal on Canvas I



Gabriel Saint, Mixed Media on Canvas II



Gabriel Saint, Mixed Media on Canvas III



Gabriel Saint, Mixed Media, Charcoal and Pastel on Canvas IV



Gabriel Saint, Mixed Media, Charcoal and Pastel on Canvas V

## **The Ride Home**

Lewis J. Beilman III

John started the car. He drove to the end of the driveway and turned right as Jane's blue eyes bored through him.

"Why did you do it?" Jane asked.

"Do what?" John replied.

"What you did. In the kitchen."

"So — I was in the kitchen with George."

"And what were you doing?"

"Talking."

"What else, John?"

"Talking."

"And what else?"

John paused. He ran his hand through his brown, thinning hair. "We had a couple of drinks. I'm all right to drive." A car came towards them, its bright headlights making them both squint. John gripped the steering wheel, hunched his broad shoulders forward, his jaw set in a determined line.

"I'm not worried about your driving," Jane said. "You said you were going to stop."

"I had a couple of drinks," John heatedly. "I stopped after two."

Jane fumbled with the purse in her lap, her thin fingers lacing and unlacing across the strap. She remembered the last time he had broken his promise. At a dinner party three months ago, she and a friend of John's had had to maneuver him to their car after he had finished his seventh or eighth Manhattan. On the ride home, he had vomited in the passenger seat. The following morning, he recalled little from the dinner party.

Jane closed her eyes, taking a deep breath. "And next time?" she said.

"What if you don't stop after two?"

John said nothing. Clenching his teeth, he glared through the windshield.

Jane's eyes narrowed. "I hate you sometimes," she muttered.

"Thanks," John said in a dull tone. "I feel better now."

Jane turned away. In the moonlight, the birches looked like ghosts. They loomed in the headlights and flickered by — lost to the darkness — as another car sped past them.

"You're going to have to choose," she said.

"Choose what?"

"You know what, John."

"When? Right now?"

"I'm serious."

They approached the intersection in the center of town. It was mostly dark, due to the late hour, which made the streets look emptier than usual. Jane shivered as she noticed the Methodist church towering in front of them. The gravestones in the cemetery behind the church seemed to glow like white bulbs.

"We're almost home," John suddenly said. "Could we just let it be?"

Jane started to cry.

"Now what?" John asked, striking his fist on the dashboard.

Jane stared into the night as the car turned into their driveway. As they descended the slope to the garage, she glanced at their small backyard pond as the moon shone on the water. A beaver-dam blocked the flow of a brook into the pond.

Inside the garage, John turned off the ignition, opened the car door, and stood beside the car. His shadow spread across the wall.

"You coming?" John said, bending to look through the open door.

Jane leaned towards him. His face had changed with the years. His hairline receded past his temples now, crow's feet stepped from the sides of his eyes, and creases formed where his lips met.

"You go ahead," Jan said, wiping the tears from her cheeks. "I'll be in soon."



## **Jew Boy**

Zvi A. Sesling

I used to hear that a lot  
in first grade from the Poles  
and Irish who would yell  
Jew Boy at me even when  
I was on their pick up baseball  
or football team

The pitcher on the other team  
would always try and hit me  
no one on my team would  
defend me, while in football  
the other team would pile on  
maybe throw a punch

On the way home from Hebrew  
school or synagogue they would  
line up and taunt me for being  
Jewish and later in high school  
when I had my first car they would  
put sugar or water in the gas tank

They also put salt in the radiator  
or dumped Coke on the driver's seat  
occasionally let air out of tires and  
threw dog shit inside if the windows  
were open so I challenged them to  
a game of chicken

Two cars faced each other about a  
quarter mile apart with wheels on  
either side of the median strip then  
revved up the motor and headed toward  
each other at top speed the chicken  
being the first one to pull off

I never lost those deadly duels  
so the epithet Jew Boy disappeared  
car by car, car by car  
until my name or my car's model  
was what they would call me and  
no one challenged me to chicken



## **She Loves Me, She Loves Me Not**

Zvi A. Sesling

How many flowers were subjected  
to the torture of dismemberment

Ripped from their roots, the stem  
severed in the middle like a beheading

Daisies—they are favorite of the  
petal pluckers—the weepers and wailers

Each white petal pulled and discarded  
floating to the ground like a leaf in autumn

The yellow center remaining like a  
dead star, tossed away and ignored

*She loves me* – pull the tender white petal  
like a baby ripped from its mother's arms

Continue the circular circumcision  
uttering the chant outwardly: *She loves me, She loves me not*

While inwardly a second set of lips, a second tongue  
issue silent prayers, *She loves me*

Prayers for success in finding true love to blossom  
like the flower just dissected

To the cheaters, the ones who make the  
outcome their own success, they will soon learn

That in the end, no matter  
how the fortune telling flower answered their wish

The truth of the human heart will often reveal  
the dreamer's truth: *She loves me not*



## A Song Plays

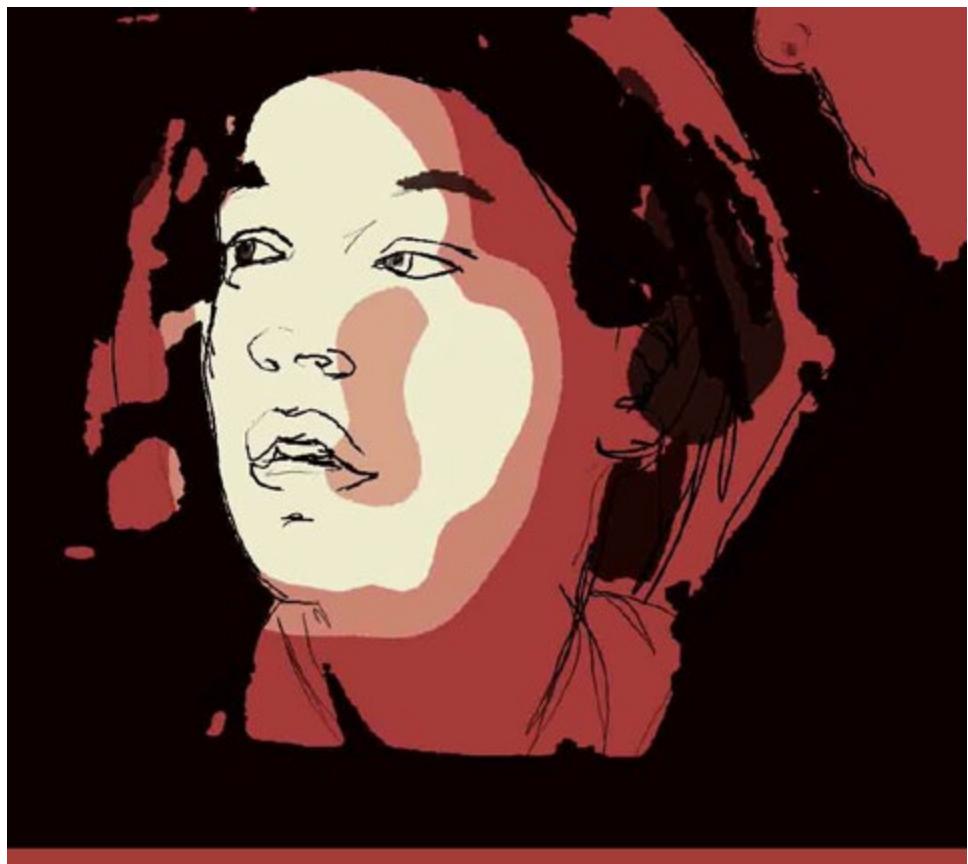
Isaiah Vianese

I slip back in time.  
This flannel shirt gives way  
to a black tee.  
My hair shortens,  
slicks to the side, '40s style,  
and my jeans tighten  
It's night.  
Music from the bar  
still rings in my ears.  
A guy I will never quite love  
has his hands in my pocket.  
He tastes like peach margaritas,  
and soon we'll find a dark corner  
or a backseat.  
When it's over  
he'll hum a pop song in my ear  
and buy us two coffees with cream.  
He will always send me home.  
I don't know what will happen  
in the years that follow —  
the empty house and dark winters,  
the joy that will eventually bloom.  
I don't know how lost I've become  
and won't learn for a while.  
Still, I love the stars and warmth.  
The guy nuzzles into my neck.  
His hair smells of cigarettes.  
I lean in to kiss him,  
but the song ends.





Joe Paq, Mixed Media, Ink, Acrylic on Canvas |



Joe Paq, Mixed Media, Ink, Acrylic on Canvas II

## Spring Break

Richard Caliban

A studious, but disheveled young man appears.

MAN

She was shifting around on her bar stool as though teased by some delicious itch — flashing her flesh, tossing her hair around to expose one side of her neck and then the other. Such ploys are out of my league. I had squandered my resistance way before she'd finished licking the salt from the rim of her Margarita. Her loose ease, her over-whelming sexuality was by contrast making me feel all the more self-conscious, constrained. I have never known how to impress such women, never known how to submerge myself into all the subterranean nuances of flirtatious foreplay without feeling sort of catastrophically obvious. Anyway — at one point, in a desperate attempt to hold up my end of the conversation, I made an ill-advised literary reference — concerning Milton, actually — a tactic you will find in none of the manuals on how to successfully attract women. Nevertheless, my words had the shockingly unexpected effect of stopping her in her tracks. She took my face between her hands and kissed me all over. Right there in that stupid crowded bar — me sitting on my stool, she now standing between my knees, carefully kissing my eyelids, lips, ears, nose... I think I — and this is a funny word to use — but, I think I swooned. So then — so then — after having reduced me to a pathetic, sensorially overloaded liquid blob — she flipped me up onto her shoulder and carried me six blocks all the way to my apartment where for six non-stop days she made love to me in ways I can't describe without diminishing the sense of passion and abandon I experienced. On the seventh day she calmly dove out the window, shattering the glass with her naked body and flew off over the building tops till she became a let-go-helium-balloon speck that finally vanished in the sky.

I have spent many, many hours contemplating this unbelievable episode and have come up with only one plausible explanation: Angel on Spring Break.

*Blackout.*



## **A Nurse Sees Her Patient**

Dylan Debelis

Sudden white flash and he's out.

Last weekend chugging  
Stella at the finish line  
to the New Jersey Marathon, but now drunk  
on morphine and uncertainty,  
with signs above his head that say "fall risk"  
and "do not approach without a mask."

The unit's air conditioner is broken  
so he has torn off his sheets and most of his gown.  
His calf muscles shimmer with sweat;  
toned and cut by youth.

I find myself wondering if tragedy is always marked  
by a touch of the erotic.

My stomach twirls like good-luck charms hanging off the rearview.

As I refill the drip and recalibrate the machine calculating his vitals,  
I cover his stomach with the jacket he has left on the chair.

Sudden white flash and I'm out,  
what a good father he might have been.



## **No Children**

Kate LaDew

it comes every 28 days  
a stabbing pain in my side  
reminding me no children have ever lived there  
a failure to my parents, a failure  
watching everyone grow up around me  
and here I am in this little apartment  
trying to keep my plants from dying  
picking up the dead petals  
and wondering if there's any glue strong enough to bring them back to life



## To the Sea

Shanda Connolly

Chloe didn't just divorce her husband; she divorced her life. With her divorce, everything changed. With her world split apart and flipped upside down, her perspective changed and things looked strange from this different angle. In the process, she became unrecognizable from her former self.

It started on a day in early August when Chloe took up swimming and gave up on couples counseling. Her husband had left her two months before without telling her where he was staying. After that, Chloe joined a group of swimmers who met every weekday at 6 a.m. When she began, she could only swim one length of the 50 meter pool. At the end of her second lap, she looked up at the coach and said, "I don't think I can do this."

"Sure you can!" he said. He was a lanky twenty-something kid, with shaggy blond hair and shark tooth earrings.

"I can't try any harder," she said.

"So don't try so hard. Just be. Just *feel the water*," he said, reaching out his arm and mimicking a swim stroke.

"Okay," she said. Feel the water. She wanted to scream but was too winded.

Each morning before sunrise, she arrived at the cinder block locker room and pulled on her suit. She immersed herself in the cold water, which smelled like bleach and scorched the inside of her nose. When she finished practice, she washed off in the drafty showers usually without hot water. As the weeks passed, she became stronger and faster in the water. She developed triceps and her shoulders became more pronounced. Her brown hair got lighter and her fair skin darker. When she could swim 800 meters continuously near Halloween, she boxed up her wedding pictures and threw away her dried floral wedding bouquet. After the New Year when she could swim 100 meters in less than 2 minutes, she stopped wearing her wedding ring.

The following June, Chloe decided to try swimming in the ocean. At first, she was terrified of the surf, as if the 60 degree water was actually breathing with its rhythmic swells. On her first attempt to swim out to the buoys, she swam straight into a six-foot wave. She was somersaulted, and then forced down deep under the wall of water. She surrendered. When she thought she couldn't hold her breath any longer, she was able to come up for air. Her eyes flushed with tears and then cleared. On her next attempt to get beyond the surf, she dove under the waves and dug her hands into the sand. The waves crashed over her, and she made her way to the buoys with the rest of the swimmers who gathered there on weekend mornings.

In the ocean, the only thing to see was the blackness of the water with the Santa Monica Pier on the horizon. She could feel the others around her, sensing their warmth, and she occasionally touched someone's foot or shoulder. Near the end of the dark journey, there was one last nerve-wracking task: getting back to the shore. She took her time, ducking under every dangerous wave until she could touch bottom. Every Saturday morning for the rest of the month, she went back to the beach to swim with the others. During these months of swimming in the ocean and the pool, her hair became blond and her formerly shapeless arms and legs were now defined with small muscles. At the end of the month, she filed the divorce papers.

When the divorce was final in October, it was mostly too cold and rough for ocean swimming in Southern California, even with a wetsuit, and because her job was taking up more of her time, she often couldn't get to the pool. She decided that she wanted to swim without having to fight her schedule in order to get to the ocean or the water once she was in it.

At this point, it was easy to quit her job working for the too-tanned, big-white-toothed partner who burst into her office as she was packing. "Just what do you think you're doing!?" her boss asked.

"Boxing up my things. I turned in my resignation this morning," she said.

"Just like that? Where are you going?" he said.

"Far away from here."

"This is crazy! What am I going to do about the Paramount case? The trial starts in two weeks!" he said.

"You'll figure it out, Marty." She took her things from her office and canceled her bar membership. She no longer had to justify her desire for something other than big bonuses, BMWs, and partner track. It was time to leave the city in which she had never wanted to live in the first place, that her ex-husband had chosen after they graduated law school in Ann Arbor ten years ago.

Chloe took a two-month Berlitz course before making her way to Africa around Christmas. She found a budget resort in "Lonely Planet" that had beach huts outside of Dakar by the Atlantic Ocean.

"Welcome to Senegal, Madame," said the porter to Chloe as she tipped him. His bright yellow starched uniform crinkled as he turned to leave.

After settling into her hut, she walked down to the ocean. There were no waves; the water was a glassy, black mirror under the sun. She waded out to her waist and began to swim. The water was warm and soothing, like being in an infinite bathtub. She tasted the salt in her mouth and felt the brine collecting on her skin. She focused on the rhythm of the movement of her arms and legs with each breath she took. Her heart pumped harder, and her breathing became strong and measured. She glided faster on top of the water as she moved her arms and legs with more power. There was nothing to see except for darkness, and the only sound she heard was the combination of her own breath and a low, drumming roar.



## **Into Arcades or Domes**

Valerie Westmark

You take up space, he said,  
and while he meant move over,  
I heard: shrink.  
I heard generations of women  
nod their heads, absorb  
into themselves whole  
imaginings, swear off food or  
into corsets: anything to be smaller,  
quieter, contained.

He said, you take up space  
and meant manhood stifled,  
cramped, not to capacity;  
men expand, fill out, become muscle,  
weight, strength, substance:  
anything to be larger,  
dominant, proven.

He said it flippantly, but I heard freight,  
so I am going to write  
a poem about this, I told him.  
He smiled, mocking or disbelieving.  
"Why? What could you say?"

What a man doesn't know: I need not say much.  
A poem expands,  
becomes a room of its own.



## Ode To a Grandma

Valerie Westmark

At dinner, she asks about the cat  
nine times; my brother and I count,  
my grandfather no longer notices.  
I wonder what it is like to grow old.

It happened almost without announcement,  
a slow unraveling of days,  
of memory and independence.  
But yet, small things flourish:

like how she'll say her mind now,  
speaks love to my grandfather,  
finally sure he needs it,  
tells new stories of her childhood.

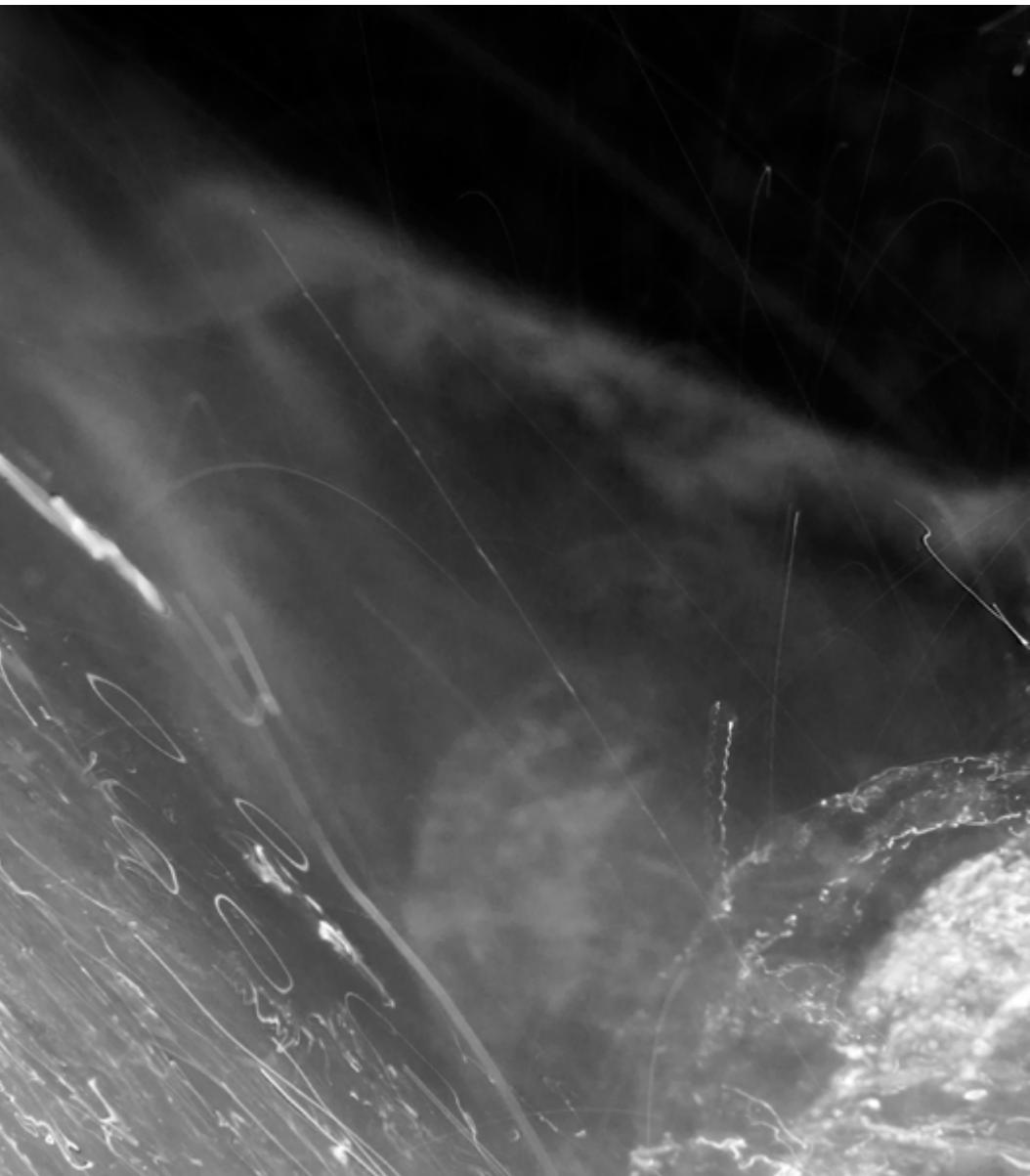
Each moment just as new  
always wonder,  
always wide-eyed and open.  
Like a zen master, my dad says.

Maybe growing old isn't so bad I think  
if you can become enlightened  
without even knowing it.





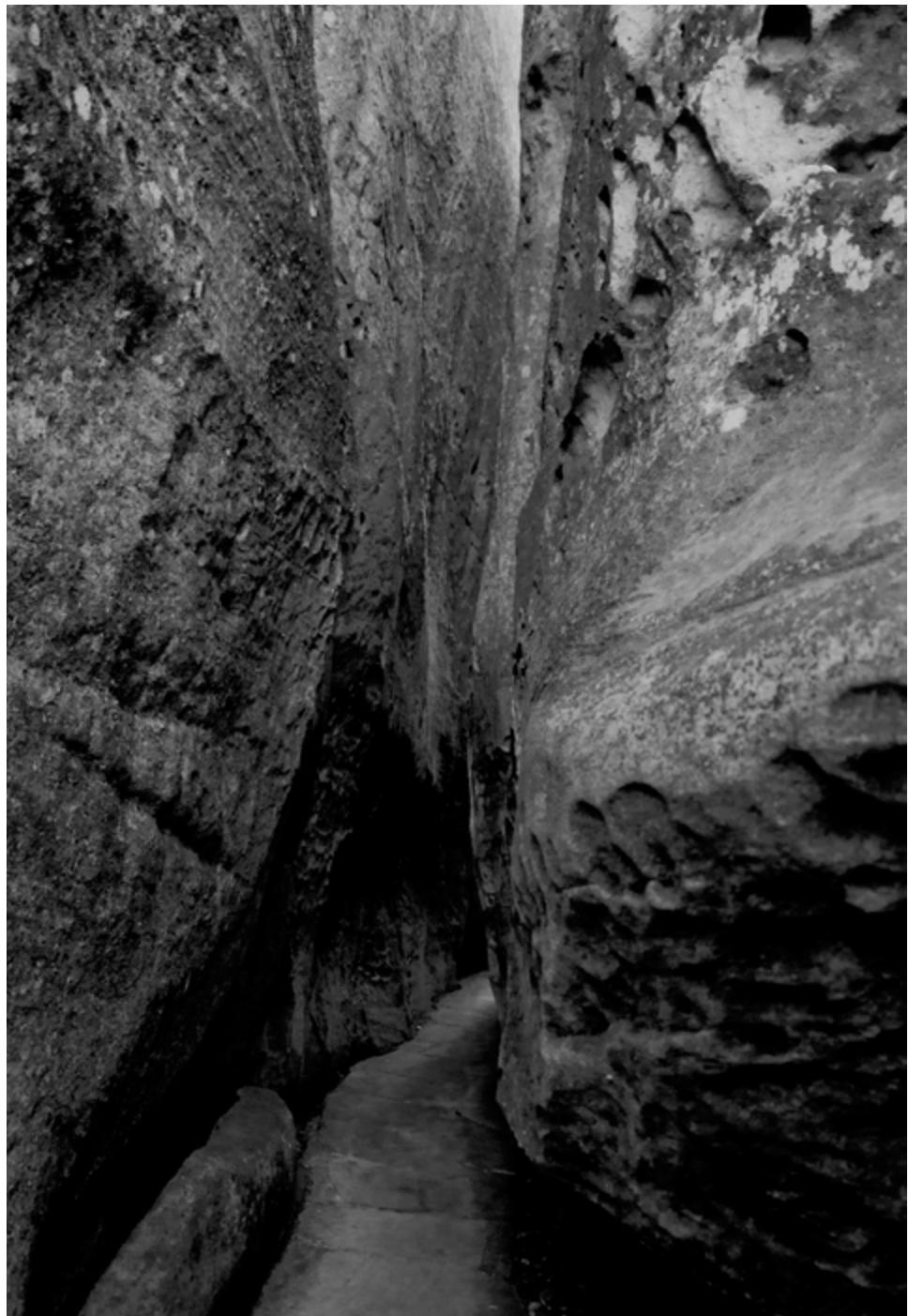
Kendra Flanner, Digital Photography I





Kendra Flanner, Digital Photography II





Kendra Flanner, Digital Photography III



Kendra Flanner, Digital Photography IV

## **Barbecue Up At The Lake**

Gerard Sarnat

Hey Big Bro, we missed you Memorial Day weekend  
but here's the blow by blow.

By the time everyone returned butt-numb from church,  
I deboned the perch our daughters caught,  
demembraned, unfatted then rubbed honey porridge  
your boy harvested from forest hives on pork bellies  
and baby back ribs which got distributed to avoid  
hot spots on the grill like you taught me.

Per the usual invite list, friends knew they oughta show up  
ASAP to place orders before their mushroom burger faves  
or philly cheese steak lobster combo with bamboo sticks  
indicating rare or well-done are all gone with only garbage  
left over including Pops' turned potato salad,  
a few of Mom's lukewarm chili dogs and tongs  
that'll remain on the tray in the garage till Labor Day  
when hopefully you'll be lawyered up,  
out on probation and can rejoin us.

Love ya, keep your nose clean, Little Bro.



## **Missing**

Patricia Florio

On this day, somewhere in the early 1960s, my cousin Johnny-Boy went missing. I didn't know that as I sat in Grandma's kitchen in darkness with just a slice of daylight peeking through into the living room from her front bedroom window. It wouldn't be until six the next morning when Uncle John, my mother's brother, placed a phone call to my father.

I overheard portions of the conversation, as my father spoke in a hushed tone from our kitchen phone. While I couldn't make out the entire conversation from both ends, it was easy enough to figure out that Uncle John had called the police at midnight when his son, fourteen-year old John Junior didn't come home for supper that night.

That stupid kid, I thought, scaring his parents and sisters. John had three older sisters and one younger. He was the only son my Uncle John had. Johnny-Boy looked like Huck Finn. Half Irish half Italian, he had light skin and dirty-blonde hair, dark eyes, reddish freckles all over his body, a lanky kid at that.

Johnny-Boy loved baseball and played every chance he got. He even had his own team that he coached that year, playing their games right across the street from Grandma's house in Brooklyn, at the schoolyard of P.S. 32.

I lived upstairs from Grandma on the third floor so I heard when the family started to gather about ten o'clock the morning after John went missing. My mother had four brothers and five sisters; we totaled twenty-six cousins, and the kitchen started to swell with bodies, some crying, some even yelling, aunts and uncles trying to comfort and calm down one another. That's when I heard one of them say the police had nothing to go on.

Then a term was mentioned I had never heard before: A three-state alarm. If my cousin didn't show up in thirty-six hours, the FBI would cause a three-state alarm to go off; a search would go out to Upstate New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania for my cousin's whereabouts. His picture would be posted in every police station in Brooklyn and sent on to the police headquarters in these nearby states.

First, the routine things were done later that afternoon. His teammates and friends were called into police headquarters and questioned. They were all given polygraph tests with their parents present. Some said they saw him in the schoolyard, across from Grandma's house, until the drenching rain swept sideways across the field. Thunder had caused most of the boys to run home. For some reason, Johnny-Boy didn't go home.

One of his friends said, "John was feeling bad because his team lost their first game that day." That didn't make sense to the adults. But adults don't live in a young boy's heart and soul, or in his dreams.

Johnny-Boy went to an all boys' high school in New York City, Power Memorial. My cousin was smart book-wise. But I was thinking he was kind of stupid, too. Why didn't he go home? Or at least run for cover into Grandma's house?

The voices of the adults overlapped one another gathered around Grandma's kitchen table. Lips moved, heads bobbed, hands flared. These were all of my mother's brothers and sisters. Johnny-Boy's mother and four sisters stayed at home with Aunt Gert's family gathered around her for moral support while Uncle John gathered support from my father and my uncles, who had taken the day off from work to be with him. No one asked any of us what we thought. We were kids; some of us had just become teenagers, so we weren't allowed to speak out about such things, except to one another. We whispered in Grandma's hallway, but none of us, those who were there that day, knew anything about Johnny-Boy's friends. I mean we were close, lived within blocks of one another, but we didn't know, most of us being girls, we didn't know who his friends were.

I wasn't there two days later when they dredged the canal, a block away, down Union Street from my Grandmother's house. My cousin Theresa was there when the body or the remains of a body police had dragged up out of the murky waters was laid out on the ground. She saw what my Uncle John would have to identify as his son's body at the morgue later that afternoon.

Police investigations continued for several months and years even. My cousin, Johnny-Boy's case known in police lingo as a "cold case" an unsolved mystery that still remains open on the records.

Maybe it's on a day like today, a bleak rainy day of spring, where it seems we can't turn the corner and get out of winter that caused me to remember that April day so long ago.



## **Roger Finds Fame**

June Calender

Roger was a talented little kid. He picked out Jingle Bells on the piano at age three. His mother was besotted with delight. To be the mother of a genius was a challenge, but this promised fame and fortune for both of them. She found a piano teacher and fancied herself another Mama-of-Andre-Watts. Mama also entered Roger in local talent contests, which he usually won. Local fame kept them both happy and working hard all through Roger's growing years. Then came the All State High School Piano Competition. Both were sure Roger would win; it meant a scholarship to Juilliard and a brilliant future.

Roger wanted to play Chopin's "Heroic Polonaise" but his teacher said someone played it every year; the judges were sick and tired of it. Anything else would be better. What about Gottchalk's "Cake Walk"? Everyone would love the catchy rhythm; the judges hadn't OD-ed on Gottchalk. Roger loved it, Mama loved it, the audience loved it. The judges gave first prize to a Korean girl from Plattsburg who played Chopin's "Heroic Polonaise,"

To their dismay however, Roger got second place and a lesser scholarship. Roger then informed his mother, "No more piano, Mama. I'll get a business degree and make a million dollars."

"You won't be famous," Mama said, clucking her tongue.

"I'm sorry, Mama. Will you love me if I'm not famous?"

"Of course I'll love you, Roger. But I had dreams..."

Roger didn't understand a mother's dreams, so he became a derivatives trader and made his million at age twenty-eight.

Roger's sister married a lawyer named Merv who climbed mountains. He often asked Roger to join him. Roger liked the adrenaline rush of climbing, it was a lot like the Heroic Polonaise.

Merv wanted to go for glory. Not on Everest — "Grand Central Station in the Sky" — he wanted to climb K2, the most temperamental, least climbed, most dangerous of the big four.

"People die," Roger said.

"People die on Everest too, but the crowds keep coming," Merv said.

"Not me," Roger said.

From a street vender, Roger found an old book by F. Stuart Chapman who, in 1937, climbed Chumolari, a mountain between Bhutan and Tibet. Chumolari was not a formidable challenge. Chapman, wearing lumpy Harris tweeds, climbed without oxygen, with only two sherpas. Roger asked Marv to climb Chumolari with him. "Nobody's been up there for years. Could be interesting."

"Listen, Rog, no guts, no glory."

It would cost less than the bonus Roger expected that year. His girlfriend, Eileen, an editor at Elle, said, "Write an in-the-footsteps-of book. Add melting glaciers, ecology. It'll sell. You'll be famous and your Mama will be proud."

Roger liked Eileen's ideas. They would go places, but not exactly together; she was no climber.

The guys in the office were impressed, especially the CEO. Roger was a doer, a darer, a 21st century man; he liked extreme sports.

In Sikkim Roger, hired his Sherpas. They established base camp at 18,000 feet. The next morning Roger set out for the edge of a glacier. Lukfa, the number one Sherpa, said the glacier once extended to their camp but was now nearly a quarter of a mile higher.

They planned to find a place up on the glacier to erect a second camp from which a day of climbing would put them on the summit with time to return. They picked a path through murrain dumped by the glacier. Boulders were piled one on one another, big on small and small on big. A difficult clamor more than a climb.

"Something dead," Lukfa said, pointing skyward where large birds were wheeling, some dropped to a spot further up the mountain. Roger put his binoculars to his eyes. "Vultures," he said.

"Yes, something dead."

"Mountain goat, maybe?" Roger guessed.

Lukfa said, "Even bear sometimes up here."

Perhaps it was something that had been buried in ice until now? Roger had read about the Swiss "Ice Age Man." "Could it be a man?"

Lukfa shrugged, "Yak herder, could be."

When they were within sight of the squabbling vultures, Roger counted nine huge birds. He could see something matted and dirty white on the ground, not snow although snowflakes were dancing through the air. Roger was both disappointed and relieved it wasn't human. He threw a big stone at the vultures; they squawked and fluttered up. One seemed about to fly at them, but Lukfa yelled, wind-milling his arms and Roger grabbed another stone. The ugly birds flew away like disgruntled rioters dispersing after a SWAT team arrived. Roger stared down at the big gray-white, shaggy shape. There was no blood. Apparently it had been frozen, a furry pelt was crumpled into crevasses between the boulders.

"A blue sheep?" Roger asked.

"Not sheepskin," Lukfa said,

Roger used his trekking poles to pull the pelt over what remained of a carcass, the head was under tightly wedged stones. Lukfa began removing them. "Albino bear?" Roger asked.

Lukfa was wrestling with a heavy stone and did not answer.

"Wait, I should take photographs." Roger took pictures on his cell phone. Finally Lukfa managed to remove the last stone from the crushed head. He jumped back as if it had opened its eyes and snarled at him. Lukfa immediately knew what they had discovered. "Yeti!" Lukfa shouted. "Yeti! Dead yeti!"

"Yeti?" Roger said. "That's a yeti?"

"Yeti!" Lukfa stood back from the very dead creature as if it possessed some supernatural power.

"Holy cow! I'll be famous," Roger said. They took pictures of each other and the matted mess of hair. "We've got to save this thing. Cover it up." The vultures were now circling and landing further away, also at the glacier's edge. "My god, I'll bet there's another one. Woo-hoo!" Roger yelled throwing his arms up to the gray, snow-spitting clouds. "Lukfa, we're golden. We're Hillary and Tensin. We're in the history books!"

Roger was right. They had found what came to be known as the Chumolari Yeti Graveyard, a find as marvelous as the discovery in the 16th century of well-preserved wooly mammoths in Siberian tundra. Within a few hours their pictures with the yeti were on every news network. Roger and Lukfa were Men of the Year on Time Magazine's cover.

Roger's Mama was the happiest woman in New Rochelle.



## **The Lost Gospel of the Cooper's Hawk**

Sheila Nickerson

Finally, there were two hens left, until that afternoon  
when the Cooper's Hawk swooped down and took one.  
We gave the last away: What would her life have been —  
a single hen cowering beneath the sky?  
Then silence stole the chicken coop.

Of course I blamed the hawk, but later  
there would be different translations.  
In some, the hawk would become hero;  
in others, it would barely appear,  
or not be properly identified,  
the whole story in question.  
I leave argument and theory to others —  
priests on one side, witches on another.  
Having had to scoop the feathers up,  
I join the silence.



## **Snail**

J.R. Solonche

Slow, sleep-confident snail,  
shouldering your tooth-proof shell  
against a world of enemy hunger,  
don't you know how foolish you are,

don't you know I could pluck  
you off this bark as easily as I pick  
a scab from my shin, crack you out  
of there the way I split a walnut,

scoop your tender body's meat  
as I scrape the walnut on the point  
of my knife? Don't you know  
that before I destroy you

utterly I can make you go mad?  
Muscle in a helmet, sad,  
happy snail, I watch you ignore me,  
continuing to cross this trunk of tree

on your own spit, your horns  
like the arms of a drowning one.  
From you I learn the fir



## On Keeping Broken Things

Sharon Rose

I don't know why, but I keep broken things. I don't like to throw things away, even when they're falling to pieces. Even when they're useless.

\*

My sister gave it to me four Christmases ago, a tiny painted owl pendant tinted pink from rust. Once it was embedded with five fake crystals: two eyes and a collar of three. It was blinded and unrobed a little at a time by the constant clacking and swinging it has undergone in my service. There's still one small crystal left, tipping precariously to the left.

The chain's broken twice: once at the little metal oval-shaped tag that reads "Claire's" and again where it snapped at the clasp. It smells metallic, rusty, poisonous.

It still hangs around my neck, held together with a silver safety pin.

\*

There is a *ping ping* that clatters on tile whenever I open my wallet as pennies, quarters, dimes, pesos spill out—eventually the wallet will grow too heavy with the coins and I'll dump them into a craftily-cut water bottle wrapped by a crumpled handwritten copy of Longfellow's "Rainy Day."

There are numerous clay figures molded by my brother's and sister's hands (the Flash, Harry Potter, a little chibi me) hanging from hand lotion bottles and perching on my elegant decor-boxes-shaped-like-books filled with Disney princess Band-Aids and faulty earbuds of various colors.

There are pockets of threadbare purses, worn out hair ties, gaudy scarves, and novelty jewelry of various primary colors, all hanging from hooks and ledges around my bed.

There are scraps brightening every blank space on my plain cement dorm wall—sunny Valentines, index cards of encouragement, play and concert tickets discarded by their owners, photos from the Jersey Shore and New York City, a paper name-tag from Target Dayton soup kitchen, Christmas coloring pages.

And there are many, many, blank diaries and journals too pure to pollute with my ugly scrawls and musings: I stack them up upon my desk, an architecture of potential and possibilities presented before me day by day until it becomes no longer feasible to live around. Then they'll spend the rest of their always hopeful, always possible existence stuffed in a corner of the drawer underneath my bed and in a bin in the closet—to be forgotten but never disposed of.

\*

The boots were nice once. Redeemable, flimsy faux-Uggs given secondhand by that nice Joy Piccolo from Church.

Now the black is coated and muted underneath the hearty thick rings of sidewalk salt. Its long cavernous neck is creased and bent. Its fuzzy insides are slicked back and damp. There's a hole on the heel, when it rains I have to walk on tippy toes to avoid getting soaked. I wore them in the rain anyway, too busy and proud to bother with buying another pair. I've tried various methods of waterproofing—from wrapping my feet in plastic bags to lining the soles with paisley duct tape.

It wasn't until the sock liner was punctured and the soles tore that I finally gave up. They're waiting in an orange duffel bag underneath my bed. Haven't quite brought myself to throw them out yet.

\*

My bottom dresser drawer is devoted to the cards and drawings scribbled by little hands over the years: crafts from the two weeks in middle school I spent teaching Bible stories with Kristen Thompson on a youth group missions trip in Camden, New Jersey, and the cards drawn over the years by my artistic little ten-year old sister, and the scribbled letters of little Maggie Mauro from when we became pen pals after she moved to Florida in Fourth Grade.

Sometimes the drawer of scrap brings an unwelcome welling of nostalgia in my chest. For the most part it rests comfortingly in the back of my mind – a fragment of my past, echoes of dreams unfulfilled but once held some potential.

Maybe that's what's at the bottom of this all. Potential.

\*

I would wear it every day when I was in seventh-grade—even to youth group, before I stopped going. The sweatshirt is dull gray, plain. It's thin and cotton, so the holes were inevitable. It started by the wrists, two perfect holes to slip my thumbs through while the ragged thread edges tickled them comfortably. The holes that dotted the top of the sleeves were the fault of my Yorkie mutt, only less than a year at the time, whose claws and teeth had been growing in. The zipper's rusty and changes colors. I wore it until it grew too raggedy to wear in public, then too raggedy to wear in private.

It hung from a hanger in my closet until I finally folded it up and placed it in my large cardboard box filled with musty baby clothes and stuffed animals bleeding fluff.

Maybe it has nothing to do with my personal feelings. Maybe the problem is things break too easily. Everyday houses crumble, high heels snap, doors fall off their hinges. Mirrors smash, mugs crack and lose more coffee than they keep, knees and hips grow rusty with age, bones fracture—legs, arms, tibias, fibulas, ankles, necks. Souls shatter and hover inside chests. Smiles, friendships, hearts—failed first loves, friends leaving you behind, leaving friends behind, failing at what you love, watching others die, other people not noticing you're dying—they all fall apart without much resistance. It's a wonder there's anything still unbroken in the world at all.

Or maybe in spite all that, broken things just remind me to hold onto hope. Broken doesn't have to mean ended. It just means you have to *try* to see the good, to see the worth. Sometimes that means I'm searching for the hope inside an old worn boot, and sometimes that means I'm struggling to keep hope together through paisley duct tape and will.

Maybe, in the end, I like to think if I ever broke, there's somebody who would keep me too.



## **Cloak**

Trey Evans

the clouds in the sky darken their moods  
the sun bids us farewell  
as small droplets of rain begin to fall, I wonder  
is this God changing his wardrobe?  
pulling the hood over his head  
to keep us from seeing the tears that fall from his face?

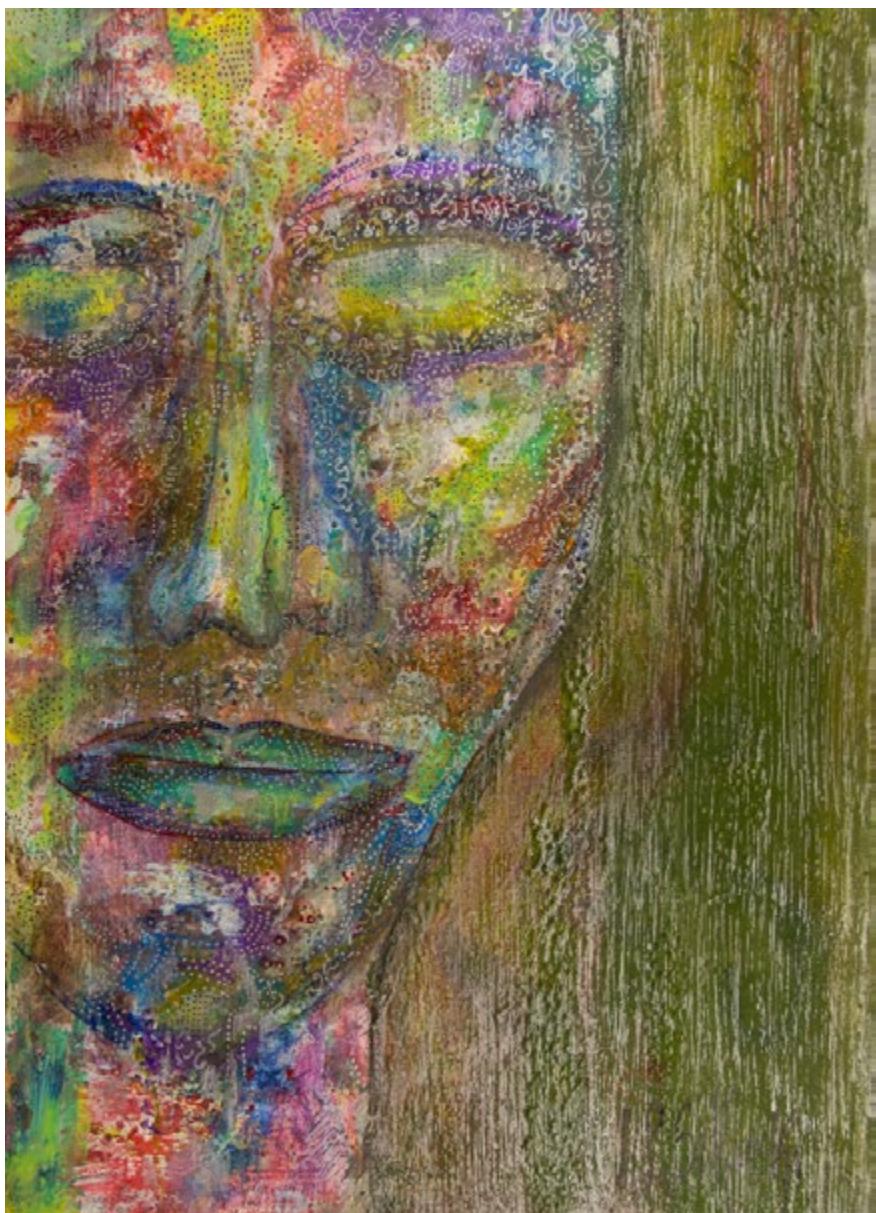




Lauralee Sikorski, Acrylic on Canvas I



Lauralee Sikorski, Acrylic on Canvas II



Lauralee Sikorski, Acrylic on Canvas III

## A Leisurely Pace

Chris Dungey

In early winter, after he'd hung up his bicycle, Hector Fritch walked in at Lap-  
eer Recreation Center. He felt guilty if he didn't do this every day. In that regard, it was  
much like the jogging which had finally ruined a knee and an ankle.

It was snowing as Hector drove into town — a wet, big-flake, first-snow-of-the-  
season, the roads already sloppy. But he held little hope that weather would deter the  
usual Saturday crowd. As expected, he found few parking spots left.

Fritch dreaded Saturdays at the Rec Center in any case. The huge gym, sitting  
below ground level with the track above its perimeter, would be packed with school  
kids. The locker rooms would be a swamp if he needed to use the toilet. The showers  
ran continuously for swimmers who trailed water to and from the pool. Mirrors and  
commodes were beaded with steam and wet paper towels overflowed the trash. The  
place echoed the testosterone shouts of adolescents. Whether he was more annoyed  
or intimidated by this oblivious life-force Fritch could not say, but he avoided going in  
there.

He checked in at the front desk then followed a wet path of blue salt to the  
coat rack near the track entrance. He wiped his shoes with a clean rag from the bin.  
A second can was full of soiled Terrycloth. He adjusted a pair of shooting range  
ear covers to mute all but a murmur of the youthful din and the *classic rock* piped  
overhead. A digital timer above the first turn blinked 1:58:28 p.m. While Fritch  
waited for an even start time, he turned on his Kindle.

That was his own secret to a successful workout — tricking the time into going  
by. Reading helped. He'd been amazed to discover that he could actually walk and  
read without giving himself a headache or running into anyone.

Fritch was more than half-way through *Herzog* by Saul Bellow. It was surpris-  
ingly enjoyable. Some of the old white novelists still held up apparently. Why had  
he never discovered Bellow? Oh sure, *Seize the Day* in college. Now he planned to  
get through the entire oeuvre — at 13 laps to the mile. Reading slowed him, so that  
worked out to 20 minutes at a leisurely pace. Three miles in an hour, adjusting for any  
piss breaks.

At 1:59:55 p.m., he waited for two joggers to go past. He stepped across to the walking lane, falling in behind one of those silly fellows who swung their arms like a drum major. They *did* seem to haul ass but Fritch wasn't going to try it. He used the first laps to reconnoiter. There were a few others walking, but they too would be passing *him*. Below, two games of 4 on 4 basketball chased up and down the divided gym. The squeaking athletic shoes, the thud of balls on hardwood, all the usual smack-talk, praise, and derision were now sweetly blunted to Fritch. Hosts of kids of all ages waited in their baggy shorts and bellicose Nike tees to take on the winners. '*Run with the big dogs or stay on the porch.*' '*Score 'til you black out.*'

Another small surface with one backboard had been stuck below the backstretch, between the handball enclosures. Fritch peered down at the crowd of elementary school kids who were relegated there, away from the serious games. The air was filled with their low-trajectory jumpers and strained set-shots, rim-caroms sometimes deflecting several balls that arrived at once. An open staircase ascending to the track at that point was often crowded with loitering children, discouraged by the disorder below. As long as they just watched their step, Fritch thought. Well, they'd paid their fees, too, and he accepted this. Even if they had no fitness goals and were apt to dart in any direction at any moment without looking.

In *Herzog*, Fritch had reached the critical juncture when the protagonist decides to quit being a victim. The story was getting intense and the swirl of activity in the gym receded further from Hector's focus. Moses Herzon has naively abetted his own cuckolding by ex-wife Madelaine and former best friend, Val Gersback. But Moses' lawyer and therapist, both old friends of Madelaine have admitted to serving his interests poorly. When a mutual friend informs him that his seven-year-old daughter, June, is sometimes locked in the couple's car while they argue, Moses abruptly flies to Chicago to confront his betrayers. On his way from the airport in a rented car, he stops off to visit his elderly stepmother. While the woman is diverted to make tea, Moses jimmies the lock of an old desk and retrieves his deceased father's revolver. He can find only two cartridges, but they should be enough.

A *Falcon*, Fritch mused. A cheap little Ford like his parents owned in the early Sixties. He'd never considered the Falcon as a rental car, but the agencies must have offered economy models back then, too. Don't look at the time yet, he warned himself, as he approached the clock. It'll start to drag. He rounded another corner, toward the backstretch again. Herzog crouches outside an alley window. The pistol perspires in his grip as he watches Gersbach supervise the child's evening bath. Businesslike, yet loving in a way. Almost tender, as she steps into the towel and he dries her hair.

Then Fritch was driven sprawling onto the track. His left hand and elbow smacked the dark, composite surface and the Kindle clattered from his grasp. The young girl was maybe eleven, still plump with baby fat and perhaps suffering an early development. She had come bounding, shrieking away from some pursuer up those back stairs. She must have been looking behind as she lunged through the tight space at the top. She'd intercepted Fritch perfectly under his left armpit. The ear covers were knocked askew, to grip the back of his head and his nose. It's rearrangement completed the absurd picture he imagined he must present, slobberknocked by a child. He gazed up at the stunned girl, her mouth slackopen and speechless. He stymied an expletive before it could blur, caught it with a wince. The women who'd passed him now drew back around to assist him.

"Oh! I'm so sorry, mister. So sorry," The girl groaned. Her hands framing her flushed cheeks. Several friends flanked her with awed faces.

"Oh. My. God," one of them whispered.

"Are you alright, sir?" One of the walkers, a tall gal in a Michigan State sweatshirt, bent to help him up. The other retrieved the Kindle. It had been sprung part-way out of its protective case by the impact.

"Yes. Yeah, I'm OK," Fritch told the woman. "Thanks." He removed the ear-covers. "You've got to watch where you're going," he addressed the girl.

Now on the verge of tears, she sniffled. "I'm really sorry. But you were reading."

Fritch hesitated, shaking his head in disbelief. Was there any point in arguing with this child? Was there any logic he could apply, likely as she was to be hardwired for excusing herself? Or, was he culpable? Maybe it was just the right moment time to display some maturity and restraint. Then seethe about it later, as he usually did. Reporting the incident to the front desk might make him fell better. A brief effort would be made by the harried staff, but...It was Saturday, after all.

Then, while brushing off the arm of his sweater, the tall woman took his side: "You listen here, honey. He's where he's supposed to be. You ran into him! Now stay off the damn track unless you're using it! I will get your little butt put out of here!"

Taken aback, the girl's mouth fell open again. "I am really sorry," she croaked. She and her friends turned sullenly toward the stairs.

"Sure. OK," Fritch replied. "Just be more careful." He began to put the ear-covers back on his head. "Thanks again," he told the two adults.

"Not a problem," his defender said. "We've been dodging them since we started. I should have gotten on them earlier. Are you sure you're OK?"

"Yup," Hector said. "I'm gonna go ahead and finish."

"There you go," the second lady said, handing back the Kindle. "Get 'er done!"

The women marched away and Fritch followed slowly. The right knee burned under his scuffed pantlet but he didn't think he'd broken the skin. Maybe just some road rash. His right elbow smarted as well.

During the next lap, he simmered with humiliation. A child had belted him off his feet, like a linebacker running over a cheerleader. There were plenty of witnesses, he was certain, and now he felt their eyes on him: That old guy was knocked ass-over-teakettle by that girl. The clock gave him twenty minutes to go. Better add five for the crash. He saw her sitting with friends, watching one of the big-kids' games.

She appeared chastened now, but Fritch figured it wouldn't last. Difficult to sustain a serious moment at that age. Hormones coursing already? Strong as testosterone? He didn't know. But maybe she'd think of others for a little while. In another couple of laps, he'd nearly forgiven himself. It was actually just a simple matter of physics: Her velocity and mass, his own velocity. Angle of incidence? Of course he was going to hit the floor. He shuffled a few pages on the Kindle to find where he'd been interrupted.

Herzog steps down from the cement block that boosted his voyeurism to the bathroom window. He sighs with relief after he has inched back down the alley. The light from the windows of neighbors falls upon gardens and window boxes — rambler roses and lillies-of-the-valley breathing into his breath. Roof angles, branches in new leaf, utility wires — all are silhouetted by early stars and dim streetlights. June is in no danger. She seems to be loved and Herzog has rejected the amphibian imperatives in his human soul — those ugly vestiges wriggling in the gene pool.

How about that, Fritch mused. He hadn't even read that part yet but had taken the highroad on his own, no reminders.

By the time Fritch completed his journey, Moses has driven to the apartment of an old colleague to spend the night. Through this friend, he will arrange a visitation, perhaps take the child to a museum or to the aquarium.

But that would all have to happen during the next hike. Fritch shut down the reading and pulled off his ear-covers. He took a long drink at the chilled fountain then walked slowly, half-a-lap back around to the alcove containing the incline benches. Few of the kids bothered with this spot or had the attention span sit-ups. Nevertheless, he hoped that Monday wouldn't be a snow day.



## Two Johnsons Walk Into A Gym Shower

J. Marcus Weekley

One: Hey, how it be?

Two: Oh, you know, a little to the side, little low.

One: I feel you, I feel you.

Two: Not today you don't. Not unless you're paying.

One: You sign up for Obamacare yet, pass that ball exam?

Two: I'm not saying nothing. They found a lump.

One: Like a lovely lady lump or a aint-gonna-get-lucky-anymore kind of lump?

Two: Can we talk about something else?

One: Sure.

Two: What do you think the meaning of life is?

One: Whoa, going to the deep end, huh? Swimming with the big boys?

Two: I just been thinking about why we're here, on this hunk of rock, and if anybody's really happy, if they fake it until they get to the point where each day is hot ass, burgers, sleep, work, more hot ass.

One: Check out that one: thinks he's the shit because of that piercing.

Ouch!

Two: I wish there was something or someone who understood. I don't want to just be a dick.

One: What's for lunch?

Two: Hold up, I got to rinse.



## **Still life with peaches**

J. Marcus Weekley

orange yellow orange red orange  
image paint reflection word image  
orange yellow orange red orange  
dead dying live living born  
orange yellow orange red orange  
breath art breath art breath  
orange yellow orange red orange  
in a bowl



## Dear Rainer

Drew Pisarra

I've never written a fan letter to anyone.  
How strange to write one now, even to try.  
Everyone knows you're dead. Everyone.

And yet if I were to write to someone,  
why not you? I'm not crazy. That's why  
I've never written a fan letter to anyone.

And writing to you isn't writing to no one.  
You're still who you are even when you die.  
Everyone knows you're dead. Everyone.

But dying doesn't mean you're done.  
Not really. What a lie. Here's another lie:  
I've never written a fan letter to anyone.

Because in truth I'm writing this one  
to you, this bit of scribbling on the fly.  
Everyone knows you're dead. Everyone.

What's the point then? There is none.  
We'll never meet and say hello, good-bye.  
I've never written a fan letter to anyone.  
Everyone knows you're dead. Everyone.



## **Screen**

Kevin E. Pittack Jr.

Screen, glowing screen,  
stare back at me.  
Gawk at me with discus eyes  
and drool-coated lips.  
Do not remove your gaze from mine,  
for I can be all the things to you  
that you are to me.

I will entertain you...  
I will educate you...  
I will distract you...  
I will give you a taste  
                          And get you hooked.  
I will eulogize you.  
Come on,  
                          you need a fix?  
Get a taste  
and be a slave to me.

Come on, screen,  
let me be all of those things  
for you.



## Clowning's

Joe Russo

My parents met twenty years ago in a little town called Clowning's. I'm not kidding. They both grew up there, they fell in love there and finally gave birth to me there. You see, everyone in Clowning's was, is, or feels like a clown.

There's one problem however... I'm terrified of clowns.

It all started at my fifth birthday party when Ms. Smiley Sol, our next-door neighbor, suggested she perform the Clowning's birthday song. My parents, natural born clowns that followed after the steps of their parents and their parents before them, agreed. They sat me down in front of the cake, a small boy clown figure perched on top, and Ms. Smiley Sol came up behind me, clasped her hands over my eyes and whispered in my ears, "From each and every clown here in Clowning's we wish you the most happiest, clowniest birthday day." She removed her hands, stepped in front of me, took out a flower lighter and lit the candles.

And something in me snapped.

I screamed and kicked the chair out from under me. I pushed Ms. Smiley Sol into the cake, her lighter dropping onto the table and catching the little blue napkins aflame. She backhanded the flames with her white gloves three sizes too big with a grin plastered onto her face, reminding me of a character in a comic book. Parents started running about, grabbing their kids except for a few sneaky ones who grabbed some of my presents from the table. Bastards.

I backed away, stepping on the feet of some of our neighbors like Mr. Rodney Miracles, our gardener, who, in pain, raised his foot in the air like he was doing a dance. I watched as Ms. Smiley Sol clapped her chest to extinguish the flames. My parents rushed over to her, holding a small bucket and dumped water over their neighbor. Mom placed the bucket (after folding it in half) into her pocket, a trick that still amazes me.

I got to the porch steps and sat down. The party nearly empty, Mr. Rodney Miracles still doing his little dance and my parents still trying to clean up the mess, I didn't notice Ms. Smiley Sol staring at me, her grin turned into a frown.

\*

Sixteen years later, to the day, I'm sitting on that exact same step. I am mainly thinking about Ms. Smiley Sol, who wasn't seriously injured, and Mr. Rodney Miracles who were both supposed to perform the Clowning's birthday song to me. I hear the back door open and my father steps out, wearing his torn overalls and his orange wig.

"Hey, kiddo. Excited for today?"

"Not as much as you."

"Oh, come on kid. It's name day... Everyone loves name day!" Name day. The day when every twenty-one year old in Clowning's gets his or her own clown name.

"Have you thought about names?"

I shake my head no. I watch as he places a big, bright and shiny red ball on the tip of his nose.

"Cause then we'll have to choose. And those names are pretty..." My father doesn't finish.

I know what he's getting at. Names like Mrs. Happy Sparkles, my third grade teacher, Mr. Happy Larry, the mailman or Mrs. Jo Giddy the Fourth, the mother of the girl I'm secretly in love with. "What if I don't want to be a clown?"

"Don't want to be a clown?" My father laughs. "Son, everyone's a clown. Do you want a good job like news reporter or politician?"

He was right. Mr. Happy Go Lucky became the mayor of Clowning's three years ago and now he's running for Congress.

"You have to get ready. The party starts in two shakes of a leg."

Twenty minutes later, my mother places me in the same seat that I was in sixteen years ago. The cake, grown considerably bigger, had no blue clown boy standing atop it. Instead it had, HAPPY NAME DAY, written in blue icing.

The people, our friends, neighbors and mailman, start clapping. Ms. Smiley Sol begins to hum and places her hands over my eyes. She whispers, "From each and every clown here in Clowning's, we wish you the happiest, clowniest birthday day." She removes her hands, turns and asks Mr. Rodney Miracles for a lighter. He hands it over. She pauses, just as she's about to light and asks, "Well, Ron do you have a name yet?"

I take a deep breath. I look over at my parents, smiling, my mother crying. Next to them is the Giddy family, Kat with her blonde hair shining, her eyes sparkling against the heavy white makeup. I wondered, how could I leave this behind? This life I was so accustomed to, this life I hated, this life I, somehow and some why, wanted.

"How about Mr. Ronnie Giggles?"

Everyone cheers and, once Ms. Smiley Sol lights the candles, my fate is sealed. I hear everyone repeating my new name over and over again and once again I look around at the parade of white faces looking back at me like some sort of cruel joke, and once again, like it happened sixteen years ago, something inside me snapped.

I jump out of the chair, again pushing poor Ms. Smiley Sol into the cake and pick up the flower lighter that fell from her hands. She stands, whipping the pieces of white icing that stuck to her face at the crowd almost as if she was swatting at flies.

"Where you going, son?" My father asks.

"A short drive. I have to clear my head."

"Well, be back tonight... we have a special performance for you," My mother says.

The crowd stays still and silent as I wave my hand and leave the backyard, the party and my so-called friends. I head to the driveway, to the small red car parked next to three other small cars. I open the door of the first one I see, the keys, I bet, still in the ignition because in Clowning's, everyone is free to use each other's stuff.

But not me, no, not me. I'll be Mr. Ronnie Giggles somewhere else. If only I can get this damn car started.



## **The Simple Joys of Delivering a Baby Giraffe at an Abandoned Mental Institution**

John Ott, Jr.

Until you have the experience of delivering a baby giraffe in the middle of a graffiti-ridden, abandoned mental institution — sweat dripping down your face as the sunbeams hit you from the split and shattered roof above — until you have the experience of cutting the cord with your teeth, the sweet sound of mama giraffe moaning in rage at the disappointment of her offspring (giraffes are often disappointed with their newborns — they have high expectations that not even the hardest-working and most efficient newborn could meet), until you hand the wet and slime-covered giraffe newborn to her mother and wipe your hands at a job well done, until you look up at the sun until your corneas are damaged to celebrate another hard day's work, until you've had that experience — well, I'm sorry, but I'm afraid you've never lived.



## Door Is A Jar Bios

**Chris Dungey** is a retired autoworker in MI. He feeds two wood-stoves, hikes, bikes, sings in Presbyterian choir, watches English football, camps at sports-car races, and spends too much time in Starbucks. Chris has more than 45 story credits including 10 in 8 different publications last year. His 2015 work appears currently in Marathon Literary Review.

**Doug Bolling** has visited mountains, lived a year and a half in Europe, mostly France, attempted Zen, fished in heavy waters, published stories & poems, parts of novels. He tends to believe life is often mostly a disappearing act though he continues to reach, reach, commit a dream or two, believe love.

**Drew Pisarra** focused for three years on turning R.W. Fassbinder's movies into poems. Previous to that he had a ventriloquist act entitled "Singularly Grotesque." Additionally, he writes almost weekly about Korean films on his blog KoreanGrindhouse. blogspot.com. He also has a rare medical condition so that the green of his irises are slowly leaking into the whites of his eyes. You can follow him on Twitter via @mistermysterio. Or not.

**Dylan Debelis** is a publisher, poet, performer, chaplain, and minister based out of New York City. A candidate for Unitarian Universalist Ministry, Dylan embodies his faith in praxis through his pastoral care and social justice activism. In sermons, writings, and worship, Dylan weaves grotesque worlds, loving embraces, and an off-kilter wit to lead the audience or congregation in a very unorthodox prayer.

**Gabriel Saint**, is an artist, musician and native of Baton Rouge La, who studied multi-media art at The Art Institute of Seattle. Saint works hard to develop his craft, and stays true to his inspiration and themes that range from portraits with strong evidence of the artists' stroke, to pop culture, to gestural figure studies. Creating opportunities to show his works locally, Saint has developed inclusive Arts Market events, and displays art throughout traditional venues.

**Gerard (Gerry) Sarnat** is the great-great grandson of Jacob Ben Isaac Gesundheit, the High Rabbi of Warsaw, and shtetl lowlifes, Nahum Z. and Yente Liebe Sarnatzky. A virginal poet six years ago at the tender age of sixty-four, Gerard Sarnat first wrote about caring for the homeless and happenings in the lands of Abraham and Burning Man from the Judean Desert of his heritage to the Black Rock Desert's annual pagan arts festival. Gerard has established and staffed clinics for the disenfranchised and been a CEO of healthcare organizations and Stanford Medical School professor. Gerry's work has appeared in over a hundred magazines, and he is the author of three critically acclaimed collections: HOMELESS CHRONICLES from Abraham to Burning Man (2010), Disputes (2012), and 17s (2014). Melting The Ice King will come out later this year. Gerry is a father of three, grandpa to three, and has been married forty-six years.

**Isaiah Vianese's** poems and book reviews have appeared in Assaracus, Blue Collar Review, The Fourth River, Lambda Literary, Moon City Review, nin, and Rattle. He lives in New York City, where he teaches writing, listens to music, and watches lots of *Murder, She Wrote*. In fact, right now, he is probably drinking tea and watching Jessica Fletcher charm her way through another mystery. For more of his thoughts on poetry, pop culture, and music, you can visit <http://vianesefromyes.blogspot.com/>.

**J. Marcus Weekley** enjoys lasagna, chocolate éclairs, and horror movies (and not working any of them off). He is (not in any particular order) a quilter, a photographer, an actor, a writer, a warrior, and a teacher, though he's also cooked fries, waited tables, cleaned bowling alley restrooms, and built a retaining wall for a circular fountain. Marcus has never been to Saigon or Tokyo, yet, and he likes Paris, London, Athens (GA), and digs how in some parts of California, you can drive only an hour and transition from sunny (warm) beaches to snow-surrounded Sequoia. He has three cats (and one more is his mom's). Marcus admires the work of Caillebotte, Sexton, Hughes, Tillmans, and Callahan, among others.

**Joe Paq** paints and draws from a simple desire to make something. Working from direct observation versus designing from the imagination defines the dividing line between truth and fact. A fact is that Joe likes tomatoes. As said by him "A universal truth is that the speed of light in a vacuum, travels at 186,282 miles per second, and because the velocity of light is reduced to a slower rate through different atmospheres is why I am able to see, and enjoy the RED tomato." Joe's work has been exclusively exhibited in Rhode Island and Boston.

**Joe Russo** is a current creative writing student. He has been published four other times at such sites like Linguistic Erosion, 50-Word Stories and Farther Stars Than These. His poem "Marilyn Monroe" was just accepted to Leaves of Ink. When he's not writing he's watching old reruns of *Sex and the City*.

**John Ott, Jr.** lives in rural South Carolina and won several Scholastic Writing Awards during his time at the South Carolina Governor's School for the Arts and Humanities. He is the creator of the web series Poetry Nightmare, where you can find renditions of classic poetry like you've never seen them before. He also loves Korean food.

**J.R. Solonche** is a multiple pushcart as well as Best of the Net nominee, and has been publishing in magazines and anthologies since the early 70s. He is coauthor of *Peach Girl: Poems for a Chinese Daughter* (Grayson Books) and author of *Beautiful Day* (Deerbrook Editions). He lives in the Hudson Valley with his wife, the poet Joan I. Siegel, and ten cats, at least three of whom are poets.

**June Calender**, when she moved from NYC to Cape Cod, stopped writing plays and turned to poetry, fiction and creative nonfiction. Her plays had been produced off-off Broadway (as far off as Alaska). Her poetry has been published in two anthologies and several literary magazines. Currently, she teaches writing to seniors at the Academy for Lifelong Learning and edits their annual anthology.

**Kate LaDew** is a graduate from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro with a BA in Studio Art. She lives in Graham, NC with her cat, Charlie Chaplin. Kate is working on her first novel, "Lying About Mustaches." She doesn't worry about becoming a crazy cat lady. That ship has sailed.

**Kendra Flenner** is a wife, a mother and an artist. She has always had a great passion for photography. For her, every picture tells a story, whether it's the sun peaking over a mountain on a long and winding road, or the smallest element around us that we pass and never take a second to look at. Her passion is to capture these moments and to show the beauty of the world around us. Currently, she is a Service Specialist for Apple, Inc.

**Kevin E. Pittack** is a retired metalhead, a punk in twilight, and a man whose soul is forever that of a folk singer. He typically dabbles in short fiction, but has recently ventured into poetry, and *Door is a Jar Magazine* is the first outlet where he has submitted poetry. Kevin is a freelance writer from Pennsylvania, as well as a staff writer for the baseball website [baseballessential.com](http://baseballessential.com).

**Lauralee Sikorski's** belief is that art is not what we think. Life is not what we think. She is not what we think. Lauralee uses meditation and the absence of thought to magic carpet ride around.

**Lewis J. Beilman III** lives in New Haven, Connecticut, with his family and two cats. He writes short stories in his spare time. His novelette, "Gina and the Dolphin," appears in the *Garden of the Goddesses* anthology. Other stories of his have appeared in *Empty Sink Publishing*, *Cactus Heart Press*, *Balloons Literary Journal*, *Reed Magazine*, *The Middle Gray*, *Blood Lotus*, *Gravel Magazine*, *Straylight Online*, *Red Fez* and *Larks Fiction Magazine*. In 2009, he won first prize in the Fred R. Shaw Poetry Contest.

**Patricia Florio** graduated with my MFA from Wilkes University in January of 2011. She is the author of *My Two Mothers, A Memoir with Recipes*; *Cucina Amelia, Family Stories and Sicilian and Neapolitan Recipes*. Her scholarships include Norman Mailer Fellowship Contest, as a finalist in 2012 and 2014 a scholarship to the Norman Mailer Colony in Salt Lake City, Utah. She lives in the beach community of a little town on the Jersey Shore called Ocean Grove with her husband Ralph of 43 years.

**Patricia George** draws and paints, as well as writes, and relates to the name of this journal because she has created a greeting card with a line drawing that shows a door with a jar labeled, "Pickles" and the message says, "I left the door ajar but it didn't like pickles." Her high school principal where she works is Mr. Pickle and she hesitates to send him the card thinking he might take it the wrong way. No matter what the door says, Patricia likes pickles both dill and sweet. She also likes peanut butter, just not with pickles.

**Richard Caliban** has worked as a playwright, composer and director throughout the US and internationally. He was Artistic Director of Cucaracha Theatre in NYC and has also been produced at The Public Theatre, The Cherry Lane, Playwrights Horizons, Primary Stages, Naked Angels, La Mama, Geva Theatre, Berkshire Theatre Festival, Alabama Shakespeare Festival, the RS9 Theatre in Budapest, the Ilkhom Theatre in Tashkent Uzbekistan, and many others.

**Shanda Connolly** is a writer living in Los Angeles. "Runner's World" recently selected her essay for publication, which is about running a 50-kilometer, 108-degree trail run. Last May, her fiction was featured in the "New Fiction Series" through the Pasadena Arts Council in North Hollywood and "The Rumpus." She is also a 48-year-old single mom with an adorable baby girl, Elizabeth. In writing, she endeavors to be authentic, and is greatly influenced by her experience of growing up in a small town in Northwest Missouri.

**Sharon Tapia** is a writer from Lakewood, New Jersey, going into her third year as an English Major. She enjoys writing poetry, crafting essays, and thinking deeply about the motivations of super heroes. She loves to read Emily Dickinson when she gets stressed out with her studies, because Dickinson reminds her that there are worse fates than ten to twelve page papers. Sharon is often writing in her head while she should be paying attention to other things. When she graduates, she wants to work in a library surrounded by walls of books and words.

**Shelia Nickerson** spends a good deal of time with animals. She has three horses, two being rescues — thoroughbred ex-race horses, and one is named Poet. She also has a deep-water turtle that she feeds a wax worm every day, and he has a friend, a large goldfish. She is in the process of adopting a dog, a senior Pug, after a lonely gap in canine companions. Animals, she has learned, have a lot to say.

**Thomas Misuraca** was born and raised in Boston, where he studied writing at Emerson College. Soon after, he moved to Los Angeles to make it big in the prose and play writing industries. He's had over eight short stories and two novels published, including the vampire parody, *Lifestyles of the Damned*. He's also had over fifty one-act and six full-length plays produced. When he's not writing, he works as a graphic designer. He is an avid comic book collector (his faves are Batman and The Fantastic Four), loves to read (anything from Kafka to Joyce Carol Oates), enjoys his yoga practice and will stay up all night making playlists for his iPod. And he apparently has good taste in clothing, because the phrase most often said to him by strangers is: "Nice shirt!" To learn more about Tom, visit [www.tommiz.com](http://www.tommiz.com).

**Trey Evans** is a 21 year-old college senior. He attends the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, majoring in creative writing and minoring in communication. His hobbies include video games, comics, writing, watching TV/movies and reading.

**Valerie Westmark** fell in love with poetry in 7th grade and has been getting to know it better ever since. She finds joy in chai tea lattes, fresh cut flowers, worn book pages, relationships and the white sand beaches of her hometown, Pensacola, FL. She graduated with a concentration in creative writing and her poetry has been in several publications including the *Wilderness House Literary Review*, *The Southern Voice*, *The Wayfarer*, *Sleet Magazine*, *The Voices Project*, *Damselfly Press*, *Ikleftiko*, *Gravel* and *Digital Americana*.

**Zvi A. Sesling** has been published in numerous magazines. He edits *Muddy River Poetry Review* and publishes *Muddy River Books*. He authored *King of the Jungle* (Ibbetson Street Press, 2010) and a chapbook *Across Stones of Bad Dreams* (Cervena Barva, 2011). His volume, *Fire Tongue*, is due from Cervena Barva Press.





