

DOOR = JAR



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Door Is A Jar
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Cover Image "Bubblegum Love" by Kateryna Bortsova

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Market

Frank Blake

Poetry

A market had sprung up outside our makeshift base
Selling egg sandwiches and lighters and watches
A seed of capitalism in the desert of war
Proud civilizations fighting a new fight to make money
and pay their bills
Enterprising Iraqi's sewing new patches or previewing
bootleg movies
Is this the freedom we promised you?
No, but if they only knew how much worse things were
about to get
But for now, the taste of a non-army meal
Brings us closer to our enemies
And provides a respite from recons

Shower

Frank Blake

Poetry

Nine weeks without a shower
Two pairs of clothes
One to wear
And one to wash in a bucket with some soap if you can
find it.
Hung out to dry with Babylonian simplicity
Salt stains run through the camouflage
Like slow moving waves of northern lights
Each sweat line a story
Like rings on a tree
Or entries in a war diary we wear on our backs each day

That is a sight of battle
Not the fake movie explosions
Of the machine gun belts of bullets

It is the sweaty salt stains on your clothes after a raid on
a dusty village
That reminds you you're not training and this shit is real
And it stinks

Love Songs

Lisa Stice

Poetry

for Sarojini Naidu

grow wings when they are inside
then fly out of your throat, wild

catch the wind and circle around
come back again to roost and nest

loudly call, no quiet warbling here
preen and molt and regrow plumage

brighter, more iridescent, radiant
in safety, tranquil in confidence

hunt and gather, but always return
to the chest that birthed them

* Sarojini Naidu (1879-1949; India): poet (seven collections, including *The Golden Threshold*, *The Broken Wing* and *The Feather of the Dawn*) and political activist

The Schlong Word

Maria Simbra

Nonfiction

“Maria, you can’t say that word on air.”

My news director warned me not to say the word “penis.” In a news report about the dangers of erectile dysfunction drugs.

I was fairly new at the television station then, about three years in, as Dr. Maria, medical reporter. My news director was the second one I’d had, and also new, within his first two years there. He was a stern and nervous man, hiding his nervousness with his sternness. He was of medium height with medium brown hair starting to recede. He had a thin build and thin facial features -- his nose, his eyes, his mouth — which made him look steely. He wasn’t bad looking. If you didn’t know him, you might even think he was handsome, or potentially suave. But he was all coat-and-tie business, and if he ever smiled, it looked like a snarl. He was around 40, which was just a few years older than me at that time, and hungry to leave his flawless mark.

My news director made this edict in the office of my special projects producer, under whose purview I fell. The offices of the bosses and managers, the special projects producer being one of them, were situated along the back wall of the newsroom. Four stark blue doors marked the line between the decision makers and the newsroom staff. Those who worked in the newsroom called the managers, in fond contempt, “the Blue Doors.”

“How am I to avoid using this word? In this piece?” I incredulously asked my special projects producer. He was a kind and jovial middle-aged man, like a darkly-complexioned Santa Claus, with the round glasses but without the beard, and without hat, which would have

sat atop his thinning, pepper-and-salt, curly, tightly trimmed hair. Many in the newsroom respected him for his experience and wisdom, his ability to listen to concerns compassionately and yet get everything on air the way it had to be. He shook his head and shrugged. He was ultimately answerable to the news director. The boss had spoken. I was to obey.

I didn't see what the big deal was. It wasn't on the notorious list of the "seven forbidden words" you can't say on TV, per *FCC v. Pacifica Foundation*, solidified into public consciousness by the comedian George Carlin. To me, penis seemed to be the most reasonable word for what it was.

I went about gathering my interviews and writing my minute fifteen's worth of news report. I had a brilliant solution to get around the problem of not being able to say penis. The doctor I interviewed was going to say it!

A news report consists of tracks and sound bites. The reporter records lines of written material called tracks, over which video appears on screen. Interspersed between the tracks are sound bites, which are snippets of the collected interviews.

So I included a sound bite from the emergency room doctor about how "a prolonged erection could do damage *to the penis*." I could have shorted the sound bite to end with "damage," but I felt a duty to be complete in the information I presented. I didn't want to leave *what sort of damage* to the imagination. "To the penis" was staying in.

After some commercial promotion, the day came for my report to air.

At the front of the newsroom is an area called "Cam 5," with a small news desk and a teleprompter-equipped camera. To introduce and tag their reports, reporters would sit at the Cam 5 newsdesk, a bustling, working

newsroom over one shoulder, blue doors in the distant background, and a relevant graphic on the monitor over the other shoulder. The anchors sat in the main studio, removed from the newsroom. The arrangement was to convey the action and process of news.

The in-studio anchors tossed to me, which I could hear in the molded earpiece tucked into my ear. The red light under Cam 5 came ablaze, indicating I was on. The teleprompter just under the camera lens shined brightly, scrolling big black letters before me. I thanked the anchors, read my intro, and sat back and confidently listened to my report through my earpiece, knowing that I, myself, had not uttered the word penis even once in any of my tracks.

Having spent considerable time carefully writing it, I was quite familiar and anticipated every word. About three quarters of the way through the report came the doctor sound bite that would live in infamy, "*Damage to the penis.*"

As soon as those words echoed on screen, a howl emanated from the the direction of blue doors. "OOOOhhhh!" my special projects producer loudly shuddered, as a sports fan would after a spectacular fumble.

I sensed commotion behind me, but had to finish. The red light came on again, the teleprompter cued up, I tagged out my piece.

Sure enough, my news director had burst out of his blue-doored office and strode angrily up to the front of the newsroom and waited for me at the side of the Cam 5 set. Also emerged from his office, but steps behind, was my dear and concerned-looking special projects producer.

"Maria, we do NOT use that WORD on air!" My news director barked his reprimand, one hand on hip, the

other outstretched demonstratively, everything about his medium-thin self looking tense and stern.

I wanted to point out that I followed his instructions and did not, myself, say penis. I realized it did not matter at that moment. I also wanted to ask him exactly what other word he would have preferred me use. Schlong? But I thought I was about to be fired. I was new at this and I liked my job, so I didn't argue. I wish now I had.

My co-workers watched in disbelief. Many of them, including some Blue Doors, later expressed they were on my side. I never said a word to anyone about the incident, but my co-workers all must have, because I was suddenly getting inundated with emails of solidarity with pages and pages of alternative terms.

My news director never explained his opposition to the word penis. The political reporter became friendly with this particular boss, and years later, asked over dinner what term would have been appropriate. "Male genitalia" was his reply.

When writing in the broadcast style, reporters strive to write conversationally. Even if it's not always grammatically correct. Even if it's not always complete sentences. Who talks like that? Male genitalia. Please.

It is now several news directors later, and the terminology has not been an issue. As far as I'm concerned, from here on out, "penis" will do me just fine.

Bread and Love

Kari Flickinger

Poetry

Kneading dough is like kneading a lover's muscles, and it has been too long since I have felt like showing this kind of care. I remember nearly nothing from what I've learned of muscles other than protein, and trapezius because trapezius sounds like something someone would swing on at a circus, but it's near the neck on the back, I think. I have fallen in love with men because of the backs of their necks. The act of baking reminds me how love can be infused in every moment, even muscle memory. Loving hides in out-of-practice blood vessels. Proteins. Force, motion. Pour flour. Stoop to smell flowers. This connection to the body tissue is alive when it strikes with the lump of yeast, rye and wheat. I roll, and thump. The drumbeat of old lovers has been hiding here.

if/in #82

Darren Demaree

Poetry

there are actual borders
we've crossed
uncensored

& whole borders
created by the idea
of god

& we cross them
all the time
our borders are trash

Another Fucking Vampire Story

Shane Wilson

Fiction

He was running late for his meeting. He slept through his alarm — twice — and now the sun was burning across his eyes. The new church was across town. It had been hard for him lately — to keep himself from drinking. He needed to go.

In the kitchen, he popped open a can of BludSport to wash down his breakfast. *Damn. It's almost like drinking the real thing.* He didn't know what they put in the synthetic blood soda, but it usually quelled his pangs for the real thing.

He applied his deodorant liberally since he didn't have time for a shower, and he knew he would see Julie. He pulled on the thick clothes he had to wear during the day — long, thick pants and sleeves, a heavy beanie, and big sunglasses — and he applied the sunscreen to his face and hands. This process made him wonder why he ever decided to better himself. It was such a hassle to go out in the daylight, but for some reason, he decided he wanted to be a part of the world.

Across town, he stood at the door to the church, knocking. The sun beat down on his body, but the ground beneath him was undarkened by a shadow. He knew the meeting had already started inside, but he needed someone to come let him in. Finally, the door was pushed open. It was Julie.

"Stokes, we were worried you weren't going to make it." She looked at him. He looked back. "What's up?" she asked, wondering why he was just standing there.

"Come on, Jules. How many times do we have to do this? You know I can't come inside a new place until I've been invited."

“Oh, right.” She deepened her voice to mock the old rule he had quoted to her many times before. “‘He may not enter anywhere at the first, unless there be some one of the household who bid him to come, though afterwards he can come as he please.’ Right? Well, Stokes, I invite you in to join us at this wonderful round of Alcoholics Anonymous at this, the First Church of the First Day of the Lord, Your God, in Holiness of the Mother Mary and All Whatever and Ever Amen.” She laughed and reached out a hand to him. They walked together to the multi-purpose room, which thankfully contained no crucifixes or other religious paraphernalia.

~~~

Giles was finishing his turn at the podium, talking about what almost sent him off the wagon last week — something about the Miami Dolphins and Kenny Stills and dropping *another fucking touchdown*.

“Would anyone else like to speak?” asked the member leading the meeting. After a few moments of the awkward silence that tends to follow that question, Stokes raised his hand. He moved to the podium.

“I’m Stokes, and I’m an alcoholic.”

“Hi Stokes,” came the rumble of voices from around the room.

“It’s been a tough week,” he started. “I saw this preview for a new movie — it’s by those same people that did *Twilight* a while back. I know this doesn’t make any sense to most of you — why something like this would bother me or whatever — but those movies don’t get it. It’s not sexy being a vampire.” He made eye contact with Julie. “Nobody even wants to touch you when you smile and your teeth look like pointy straws.” He breathed deeply. “And this guy they casted to play the sexy vampire? Fucking Chris Pratt. Chris Pratt? That



dude isn't even a real vampire, man. It's Robert Pattinson all over again. They'll slap some pale makeup on him and give him pointy teeth and they'll trot him out there to seduce some woman on screen and turn her into a vampire, too, and it'll be sexy and stupid. Do you remember when Emma Stone played that Asian chick in that movie and everybody got pissed off? Or when Matt Damon was Chinese in that movie about the Great Wall of China? Shit — do you remember *black face*? There are real fucking vampires out there, man. I'm not saying I deserve to be a movie star, but we exist. Why are they slapping a mask on a pretty boy to sell these stories? And don't even get me started on the stories they are telling. Girls think we're all like that now — that we all sparkle in the sun and that we all breathe heavy and fly around being sexy. I have to wear fucking *Kevlar* to go to the store before 9:00 PM. I don't sparkle in the sun."

He stopped and ran his fingers up and down the edges of the podium.

"I went out last night. I flew out the window of my apartment and just waited in this tall tree across from the bar. Two o'clock rolls around, and this guy stumbles out — he can barely walk. I float down to him, and when I'm close, I smell it on him — the whiskey. I knew his blood alcohol content would be high." He laughed. "I've never liked my booze straight up. I've always liked it cut with a little of the red stuff. This guy would have been perfect. His blood would have taken me to the moon. But I stopped. I stopped because, well, I guess because life isn't so bad. Being pissed at Chris Pratt was an excuse to go looking for boozed-up blood to suck on. But I think my life is actually headed in the right direction, and I was afraid of losing that. So, I helped the guy into a cab, and I walked home."

He stood there for a few moments before moving to his seat near Julie. She reached out and grabbed his

hand. She looked into his eyes, and he looked back into hers.

**HOARDING TIME**

Claire Scott

Poetry

A minute here, a second there,  
wrapped in crumpled tissue paper,  
tucked in the back of a drawer.

On my birthday an hour,  
on Christmas two or three.

Today the doctor said  
not much more—  
perhaps six—

She didn't know about my stash.

An un-taken trip to the Taj Mahal,  
a course in Chinese water colors,  
season tickets to the symphony.

I open the drawer.

Moths swirl. Dust settles  
on flecks of tissue paper.

## MORPHINE AND MAGIC

Claire Scott

Poetry

a stealth pack of terrorists  
    creeps through her body  
speaking in tongues: *ductal carcinoma*,  
    *leukocytes, lobule, sentinel lymph node*  
planting mines that burst and shatter  
    spread into spine and lungs  
spread into word dread: *metastasis*  
    a crazed duplicating machine  
    like mops in the *Sorcerer's Apprentice*  
drugs useless as a book of spells  
    without the magic of Merlin

let her be a child of six or seven swing-soaring  
    above leafing lilac  
beyond the reach of wet mops, impossible words  
    higher! higher!  
beyond the smell of Lysol  
    the drip drip of morphine  
let the sorcerer raise his wand once more  
    and weave a magic spell

## The Great Disappointment

Dan Brotzel

Fiction

"OK guys and gals, let's begin with the usual."

The seven of them fidgeted a little more on their cushions, then settled into a well-rehearsed stillness. A breeze played with the net curtains at the window of Krish's living room.

"OK everyone," Krish said, exhaling dramatically with a self-congratulatory yogic air. "Find that still centre. Light your inner candle. Say hello to your soul."

Others around him began their own deep breaths, some melodramatic, some more timid, others almost sighing. A drill began vibrating violently in the road outside.

"Ssh, sshhh, that's OK." Krish smiled. "These things are sent to try us! Literally." He elicited a few half-hearted smiles and chuckles. "Just acknowledge the distraction, bless it away, and return to your soul-flame."

There was, despite his best efforts, a sullenness in the air that had never been there before.

"Thank you, Source, for connecting us to the wellspring of your love," Krish intoned. "Thank you for connecting us to all things — for allowing us to find each other and meet here in the light of your love."

Silence. Drilling. A fly buzzed a perfect enneagram.

It was Sandra who cracked first. She was an impetuous fifty-something divorcee who had just got her first tattoo.

"I'm sorry, Krish," she exclaimed, shifting out of her meditation pose and sitting back on her haunches in an attitude that suggested righteous indignation rather than serene self-contemplation. "But is no one really going to mention it?"

"What's that?" Krish said innocently.

"Well! I mean. Here we are all, meeting again, in your living room in Gerard's Cross..."

"That's right!" Krish exclaimed. "And isn't it wonderful we can all be here to share one's another company again?"

"Only... we weren't supposed to be here at all by now, were we?" It was Frank now, always ready to take up a fight once someone else had started it. "We were supposed to have ascended yesterday at dawn."

Krish said nothing.

"Krish, we love you, and we love the Soul Circle, you know that," Sandra's sister Louise said, who could be relied on to say and think whatever Sandra did. "But I guess we just need to know where we stand."

"We stand here, now, in this moment," Krish said with maddening simplicity. "We are. Here. Together. Now."

"Yee-ees," Frank persisted. "But according to your predictions, we should have been ushered into celestial bliss by now. You promised us an ascension. You showed us all your calculations. We've been working up to The Dawn Awakening for months — years, some of us."

"That's right," Krish said. "And we all stood on the top of Blackwell Hill yesterday. At 5am. Awaiting the great moment."

"Which didn't happen," Tony said, who was normally the most mild-mannered of the group, but also the one with the most need for things to be spelled out to him. The fact that Tony was speaking up now brought the conversation, the group, to a whole new level of crisis.

"Or perhaps it did happen," Krish said carefully. "Perhaps we have ascended?"

"Right," Sandra said doubtfully. There were a few murmurs.

"So we've ascended into... another level of reality that looks exactly like this one?" Frank said.

"But *is it* the same, though?" Krish asked profoundly. "I don't know about you guys, but I feel... subtly changed." At this he inhaled deeply, sat up straighter on his haunches, and arched his graceful back, accidentally accentuating the sleek perfection of his pectorals through his thin robe.

"Do you?" Tony said excitedly. He was unclear what was happening, but as the group's newest member he was desperate to bear witness to a proper spiritual experience.

"Absolutely, Tony," Krish said, staring right through him with those eyes of his. "I feel a deeper love for you all. As if I could see your souls as they truly are, naked and beautiful. For the very first time."

"Actually, I sort of feel a bit fluttery too," Sandra said, who now found she couldn't help focusing on the triangle of taut bare skin visible around Krish's nut-brown navel.

"Or perhaps Source simply wanted to test us." Krish smiled. "In which case our behaviour over the next few days and weeks is absolutely critical."

"No, no!" Tony said, desperately. "I definitely think we've arrived somewhere. There's a sort of... awakened atmosphere in this room."

"That's all well and good," Frank said, doggedly. "But I jacked my job in."

Krish smiled. He sighed warmly. "Bless you Frank!" he said, looking directly into Frank's eyes for a long, compassionate yet steely moment, until at last, Frank gave a little cough and looked furtively away.

"Or again...?" Krish began solemnly. "Perhaps Source only granted the Ascension... to some of us? Perhaps some of us are here at one level, while others..."

The sentence hung unfinished in the summer heat. For a long moment, there was only the sound of a light breeze fluttering the net curtains.

Then Krishna leant across to Frank, reached out and clasped that chubby, bearded, civil-servant face between his delicate piano hands. "What do you think, Frank?"

A sudden blast of sunshine lit up the room. A play of rainbow light, a sudden gust of warmth. There were gasps from some, knowing smiles from others.

"Wow," Tony said reverently, a true initiate at last.

"Blessed be Source. Blessed be Brother Krish," Frank said eventually.

"Blessed be Source. Blessed be Brother Krish," the rest of the group repeated as one.

"So here we are at last!" Krish said expansively, stretching out his arms in welcome. "Now, I wonder: Will the wireless signal will be any better in this new reality?" He reached for his iPad and began connecting his payment-card reader.

The sun beat in through the window, roasting the air and setting the flies off once more. Outside, a lorry's brakes whistled hard, and the drill started up again.



**#MeToo**  
Anum Sattar  
Poetry

Opening the college catalogue, I notice a picture of you and your new student editorial assistant. I worked with you for four years. I am a senior but have never been offered an editorial assistantship. She is a freshman. Sometimes, I wish I could flush your poetry magazine down the toilet commode. Or ask our English Department to cease its publication before more noble fir are cut down. You look like the perfect mentor for young and inexperienced girls like myself, but I know better. I shut the catalogue and slam it onto the coffee table. Yesterday, you denied my request for a reference letter to an MFA program.

You order her to climb up a rolling library ladder, grab former issues from the shelves, pack them into corrugated boxes, load them onto a hand truck and wheel them out to your orange Nissan rogue. She is only 5'1" compared to your 6'3" old, pot-bellied self. How can a petite girl do all that work, alone? You answer that she is paid a minimum wage of \$8.30 by the hour.

So then, I put off writing this complaint as you edited the first drafts of my poems for the fall semester while making her wait for ten minutes outside the office door. But I cannot stay silent for too long, because I am working on my undergraduate dissertation with an advisor who is not from amongst the creative writing faculty and you refuse to mentor me anymore...

## **The 500<sup>th</sup> Block of Vincent Child**

Marc Alexander Valle

Fiction

Vincent Child watched as the young man assaulted the old man across the street. He wasn't sure if it was a robbery, and he didn't know what to do if it was. So he stood still, watching the young man grab and shove the old man in front of the tenement on the narrow one-way street.

Vincent looked around. No pedestrians. Only him and the two men on the sunless block. A knot formed in his stomach and he could feel the cold breeze more intensely, cutting through his black jacket and tan pants. The men continued to struggle.

He wished he hadn't turned this corner. Yesterday, he turned onto another street. That was his usual route for the last ten days as he substituted for an eighth-grade teacher at Jackson Middle School. But he'd read an article that said that if you change certain routines in your life, you can change your brain waves and create positive thought patterns. So he turned onto the 500<sup>th</sup> block of Chester St, a slightly downhill block of apartment buildings and tightly parked clunkers, then he crossed the street.

"Give it," the young man said.

"No!" the old man said.

The young man punched the old man, who fell behind a parked Cadillac. The young man crouched down. Vincent could see neither of them now. He could hear sirens getting closer and wondered who they were for.

He looked around again. A woman pushing a stroller walked his way. He believed that she hadn't seen the struggle across the street, but he figured she would soon. And when she did the woman would believe that he was

a coward. She would tell the police that he did nothing, and the news would quote her as saying, “No one did anything. He just stood there.”

Vincent pulled his cell phone from out of his jacket. He turned it on and waited.

*What icon do I press? Do I call 911? Are they already coming?*

“Help!” he heard from the old man.

The young man was standing back up. “Stop!” he said, looking down and kicked.

“Give it.” He kicked again.

“Hey,” Vincent said. “Hey!”

The young man looked over. “I called the cops,” Vincent said, raising his phone to the young man. “The cops.” The sirens were blaring and getting closer.

The young man crouched down again behind the Cadillac.

“What’s that?” the woman said.

“I don’t know,” Vincent said. “Two guys fighting.”

The woman shook her head and kept walking with the stroller.

Vincent kept looking at her as she walked away, then turned to the Cadillac.

He could neither hear, nor see either of the two. He turned back to the woman with the stroller. She was nearing the corner. He turned to the Cadillac. Still no commotion. Then back to the woman as she turned the corner. Then back to the Cadillac.

“Hey,” Vincent said.

No response.

He turned and started walking down the block.

“No! Fuck!” he heard someone say behind the Cadillac. “No!”

It sounded like the young man. But it could have been the old man. He wasn’t sure.

“Hey,” Vincent said.

No response. No commotion. Vincent backed closer to the corner.

He heard the sirens, blaring and getting closer.

*The cops are on their way. I'm late.*

They were blaring and getting close.

*I'm sure they're coming here. Right?*

He turned the corner.

"A 67-year old man was  
beaten to death yesterday  
on the 500<sup>th</sup> block of  
Chester St. at 9:00 am.  
Police were alerted by  
neighbor s—"

Vincent Child put down his phone on the desk. The incident he saw yesterday took place at 7:00 am. A full two hours before neighbors called. *It's impossible to have been the men I saw.* He exhaled and stood up. The seventh-grade students would be arriving in ten minutes. He'd wanted to avoid seventh grade. He heard they were bad this year, but he was sent to cover one period after his break. The teacher's lesson plan was at the center of the desk:

**Students will be wrapping up their projects on How My Community Feels. If finished, tell them to post drawing on the corkboard. Some students are finished. Have them read a book.**

Vincent walked over to look at the drawings. Most drawings had children playing. Some had children with family. A few had people arguing. But in one drawing there was a man on the ground with another man standing above him. Vincent read the words below it:

**I saw a man get beat out my window and no one did nothing. Makes me scared.**

Vincent looked at the image again. At the edge of the paper, a woman in purple held on to a yellow stroller. Behind her, a man dressed in a black jacket and tan pants. The man in the black jacket looked back at the two men with wide eyes and an open mouth. He saw “Period 3, 7<sup>th</sup> grade” labeled at the top of the paper. Vincent was in period 2 now.

The school bell rang.

Vincent took his black jacket and hung it in the closet. He doubled checked his pants and saw they were blue today. The students could be heard down the hall, yelling and getting closer. Part of his job was to serve as hall monitor in between classes, but he could only stand still, listening to them yelling and getting closer.

Vincent looked over to the drawing again and studied the face of the man with the black jacket. He had the vertical face his mother always said he had and noticed shaky lines to make him look more scared. He put his head down and took a deep breath.

Vincent turned to the door again. He could hear the kids coming down the hall, yelling and getting closer. Yelling and getting closer.

[31]  
Marie Fields  
Poetry

No  
Don't take my picture  
Don't even try  
Pointing a camera  
At me  
I will not smile  
I will not laugh  
I do not want to remember any of this  
My anger  
My awkwardness  
At faking such a pretty life  
A pretty lie  
It's not in my nature  
But you had me thinking  
Being pretty wasn't.

**Walk Away**  
Kasi Bitter  
Nonfiction

You are sitting on the floor in your boyfriend's bathroom, tears streaming down your face, chest heaving, struggling to take another breath. You feel as if your stomach is coiling upward, battling the buildup of air sitting above it, unmoving. It's too early in your relationship to let him see you like this, so broken down and helpless, but you know he'll find you eventually. The lights are off. You don't deserve that luxury. The tile is cold on the backs of your thighs. You hear his footsteps outside the door.

When he sees you, he quietly begs you to get up, to wipe your eyes, to go play with your roommate's cat, who he is graciously hosting while you two move into a new apartment. Having never experienced anxiety, let alone an anxiety attack, he starts telling you that everything is okay; it's all going to be okay because that's what he thinks he's supposed to do. You can't really hear him. That's the thing about these kinds of episodes, as you call them: all rational thought and understanding dissipates, surrendering to your intrinsic desire to escape, to leave where you are and keep going until you feel safe again. If you feel safe again.

It's dark outside, and you know he'll be upset if you walk home. He'll be even more upset if you don't go home at all, and the longer he looks at you with his pleading eyes, the more you want to leave, the more you begin to beat yourself up over your hysterical state. This can't only be about the muddled clarity regarding his feelings for you. You're not that kind of girl, not that desperate to be loved. At least, you hope not.

The consequences of leaving come to you in convoluted ways. You want him to see you after as

nothing but a flight risk, a loose cannon. You want him to believe what you said before about carrying too much baggage, about how he wasn't ready or able to handle being with you. That way, you'll be able to reconcile with the disparities in the feelings you both have for each other. But you also want him to see you as you are: a little complicated, not at all as put-together as he knew you to be when you were just friends. In your irrationality, you think the only way he could ever know all of you is for him to see it himself. The desperation of your anxious escapism isn't something you can convey in a rational state; it's one of those things you have to see to believe.

He's still looking at you, so you pretend to be okay. You nod, wipe your eyes, take a deep breath, and ask him to give you just a moment to calm down. When he leaves, you get up, grab your things, and walk through the man cave toward the kitchen. His yellow lab, Havoc, cuts you off, throws himself against your knees, and shuffles back and forth on his front two paws, panting. *Don't tell*, you whisper as you pat his head.

The air outside is stale, humid. You've never tried to escape in the summer before. The decline in your mental state seems to follow basic migratory patterns: it goes South for the winter. When a car passes by with its brights on, you turn your head. As you approach the two brick pillars with white, stone pineapples on top that mark the entrance to the neighborhood, your phone starts buzzing against your palm. Pray it isn't him, that he hasn't noticed you're gone so soon. Too bad you don't think to ask God that it's not your mother.

For a moment before you answer, you are angry with yourself for having sent her a message on Facebook from the bathroom. She wants to know what's going on, why you're acting like this, where you are. But you don't have an answer. You don't want to feel your chest



constricting or the pounding in your temples, like small children pounding on the floor in a fit. You don't want to feel the dryness on your tongue from tear-induced dehydration. You can't find a way to explain to her that you simultaneously want everything to explode and want nothing to happen at all. You tell her you're taking a walk.

A police car slows as it passes you; the officer rolls down his window and asks if everything is ok. You duck your head down, telling him that yes, everything is fine. He drives away. His lights have just gone out of view when your roommate pulls up behind you, calling your name. Turning to her, you see that your boyfriend is behind her in his Subaru Outback. You can barely see his defeated face through his dirty windshield, but you know the look of an overwhelmed, in-over-their-head boyfriend well.

**Dance Lesson**

Sarah Cash

Poetry

Her bare toes balance unsure on leather boots  
as his heavy feet fall awkward and watchful  
step to step.  
Small fingers grasp his weathered thumbs.

The room spins,  
and lamps turn to little lines of light.  
For him, her smile full with tiny teeth stays steady.

Her soft cheek brushes soft flannel,  
full with the scent of smoke and cedar.

And at each turn, a glimpse  
of grandma, keeping perfect time.  
Slippered feet pattering gently on wood plank floor.

**Painting on the Kitchen Wall**

Sarah Cash

Poetry

There is a painting of a girl feeding ducks  
on the wall in a white brushed frame.  
She is peaceful. Sitting along a riverbank  
in blue

a red kerchief tied up over her head.  
I watch her sometimes  
in the passiveness of the morning  
when the coffee is hot.

The white brushed frame could be the sill of my  
window,  
and I could lift my hand and wave  
to the girl. She would wave back.

The ducks would be startled  
in this sudden exchange and would scuttle  
off, back to their river across the frosted,  
crunchy morning grass.

**Jarama**  
Dom Hewett  
Poetry

in the end, his end  
was not a *notable* death.  
in a heap-clump half-chested,  
and fighting for breath.

seeing mud on his boots,  
and blood on his vest,  
one man fell to his knees,  
and he bled out the rest.

**Anticipation**

Louella Lester

Poetry

*Red rover Red rover*  
he runs toward her  
hurtles across the field  
his side cheering  
egging him on  
imagined or real  
he is expanding  
she has joined the game  
has signed up  
and when he is too close  
to turn back  
she looks down  
at her clutched hand

**Worm**

Louella Lester

Poetry

It comes to her in bits and pieces  
like fruit flies attracted to rot  
repelled for now by a wave of her hand

His last name was made up of four letters  
carved under the wooden steps  
attached to the front of the school

They played there in the dry dirt  
she was not ready to be caught off guard  
when he reached for the top button

**Dancing**

Louella Lester

Poetry

She is no angel  
but she is dancing  
on the head of a pin  
not the point  
where her foot  
would snag and catch  
blood dripping down  
the slippery silver spike  
for there is  
really no point  
not one at all

She is dancing  
on the head of a pin

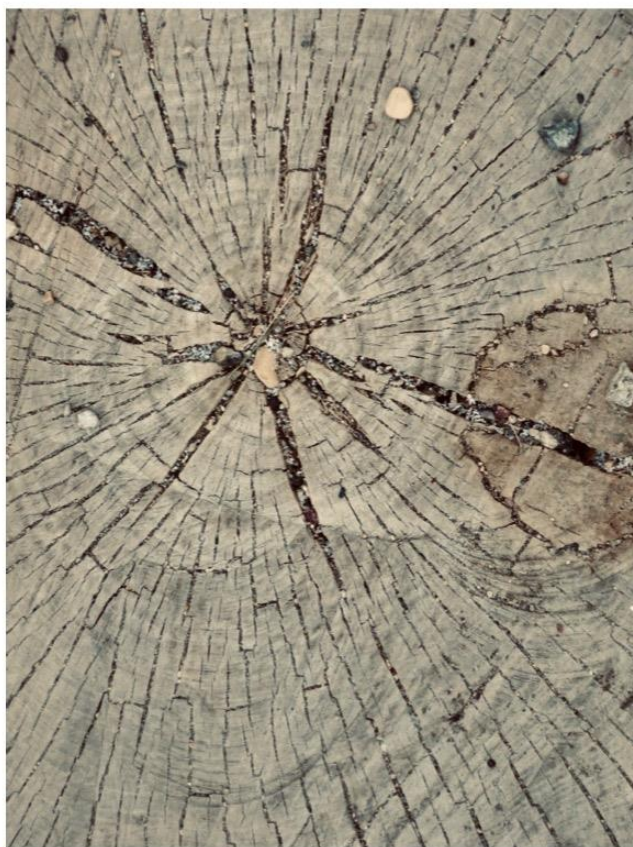
She has material substance  
a finite number  
not a pedantically  
debating crowd

**Untitled 2**  
Louella Lester  
Art





**Untitled 3**  
Louella Lester  
Art



**Shrine**  
Kelly Nickie  
Poetry

My Frigidaire  
has become  
a shrine  
for all things  
    marriage  
    babies  
    and Thank Yous  
from cash I wish was spent  
on trips to the Poconos Island

I guess any announcement  
where someone is spending  
over twenty grand  
deserves some real estate  
under a Garfield magnet

God forbid  
if I receive anoter  
Save the Date  
someone from this clan  
is gonna have to be  
sacrificed

**Corkscrew**  
Kelly Nickie  
Poetry

I wish to heal  
through  
doubt

Recover my legs  
and lead  
with  
my senses

This feeling  
between my heart  
and ribs  
corkscrewing  
will dissipate  
once I  
discover  
a move  
best suited  
away from me

**St. Patrick's Purgatory**

Christine Brooks

Poetry

I won't go quietly,  
Into the night, into the midnight unknown  
I will stir and race and  
Wonder, dragging my heels  
With sleep in my eyes  
To a night which cannot, will  
Not, promise to behave.

I won't go quietly,  
Into the night, to that familiar place,  
Where the shadows that  
chase me have  
teeth, that tear at my  
Paper skin, leaving scars,  
that even in daylight,  
refuse to fade.

I won't go quietly,  
To a place that never speaks, but instead  
shoots poison arrows through  
My soul, stealing my last breath  
Over and over, and  
Over

Again, and again.

I will not go quietly,  
to the flowerless sober  
garden,  
Barren  
Godforsaken

But, on a night empty of the  
Moon, I will nevertheless

Go.

**Lamb's Ear**

Dev Murphy

Nonfiction

I think about what I would leave my children if I had any: lessons in self-comfort, habits to help them breathe, a prayer, a walk, picking up lamb's ear by the side of the road. After a heavy rain the stalks bow down but when they dry they stand up again. I carry an ear in my fingers and stroke it as I walk.

Once as a child I heard the Lord say to me *My frightened little lamb*. Most of my beliefs have left me but I hold onto that. But how can you explain to a therapist who wants to know if you've ever heard the voice of someone who is not there that yes you have but this is different? When the therapist says, "So it was the result of sleep deprivation, desperation, sadness, loneliness," I say, "I guess," but what I'm really thinking is, *How do you expect to help me if you don't believe what I'm telling you? If we're talking about life and death here, you should know that I don't want to live in a world where I don't now and then hear the voice of God.*

**Green Glass**

John Riley

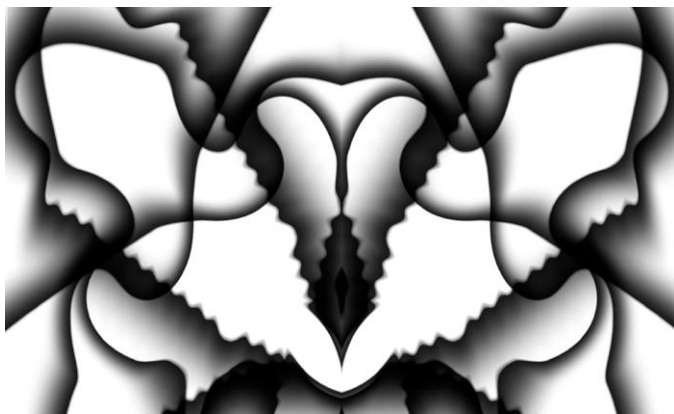
Poetry

Today as I walk through  
the other side of my city  
I wish I could be lost and that around the next corner  
turtledoves will fly out of  
a row of green-glass windows  
swung open over the sidewalk.  
When they spring free  
from the building's insides  
I won't worry about finding  
my way home  
and will watch the doves  
rise and swoop until  
they become silhouettes.

**Chip on the Shoulder**

Edward Supranowicz

Art





**Bubblegum Love**  
Kateryna Bortsova  
Art



**Cheat**

Dorothy Kollat

Poetry

in a relationship  
with heartbreak  
we stay close  
spending all our  
waking hours  
together, but at night  
when I dream,  
I cheat and  
imagine a life without.

**The Face Thief**

Mir-Yashar Seyedbagheri

Fiction

When I grew up, I tried to succeed. I tried acting, piano, tried to become a bowler. When I couldn't find my niche, I stole faces. I stole Mother's face because she was a prominent author, embodied the apotheosis of success. I pretended to wax about metaphors, imagery. The words felt foreign on my tongue. I stole my older sister's face for it was one of confidence and friendliness. I had no confidence of my own, unable to make friends. I felt shame, tried to write my history. Nothing fit. I went about life, the weight of false faces drowning me.

**Without Explanation**

Caitlyn Parris

Poetry

There are people  
who will leave you,  
and this is no fault of your own.

Just like the leaves  
drift after a  
season, so you  
may find that  
drifting happens,

and this is no  
fault of your own.

**Terms and Conditions**

Devan Burton

Poetry

When I said it was just a kiss,  
you ought to have believed me.

We sat at the table —  
each night — for dinner.

It rained that night.  
We thought the clouds concealed us.

She and I caught the same train.  
Once we were strangers.

I did not have to be told twice.  
The dishes plied in the sink

are washed when we finished our meal.  
I broke bread with you.

We reclaimed our identities.  
The embrace ended.

I should have told her,  
I had a wife at home.

**Parental Rights**

Devan Burton

Poetry

I wake with you.  
Even though the miles separate us.  
Every week day,  
your mother screams,  
until Jesus, Joseph, and Mary wake.

Brush your teeth in the bathroom.  
Look deeper into the mirror,  
and you will see my routine from 1992.

On the first day of school,  
there are new shoes on your feet.  
The night before Christmas,  
presents wrapped with care—  
are there—  
for you to open when we give thanks  
for the birth of Christ.

When the humming fridge lacks humanity,  
I remember telling you drinking coffee turns you black  
(when I last saw you).

In my morning routine,  
father, son, and daughters  
are under the same roof.

**made assumptions**

David E. Howerton

Poetry

On a cloudy afternoon  
when no one's looking  
I hide  
on a porch swing  
with a book or two  
it'll be an hour or more  
before someone notices  
I've made away  
Once they figure it out  
I'll sit here listening  
as they look everywhere  
except outside for me  
sill people pigeonholing me  
can't see any place  
they're not expecting

**The King Announces Himself**

Dianne Hunter

Poetry

I am the King.

I decide who is a member of my court,  
and who comes in  
and who goes out of my kingdom.

I am the bridegroom.  
All the good-looking women  
want to sit beside me as my Queen.

I have a stable of horses.  
A falcon rides on my wrist.  
White Russian wolfhounds run with us.

I arrange brilliant festivals.  
I swish around in magnificent robes.  
I dispense wealth wherever travel.

I adjudicate disputes wisely.  
I am a merry soul.  
I keep my lands fertile and productive.

I have a secret I am not going to tell you.



**Perfect Temp**  
Marco Randazzo  
Poetry

I want to boil an egg to  
perfection,

To reach that durability  
on the outside

and keep that gooey consistency  
on the inside

a shining yellow sun in the middle  
of a blinding white exterior

a surprise that so many people look  
for, but no one can obtain easily

How long should I keep this egg submersed in  
boiling water?

How long can I wait to find out if I  
have reached my goal?

**Difficult to Breathe**

Dan A. Cardoza

Poetry

The sky opened up; no, it tore,  
ripped wounded of blue. It filled  
with stratus of gray, sepia to  
charcoal. It grew heavy,  
buckled, popped rivets, bowed  
its weight.

Someday I will float, tied to a  
tall string. Get as high as the  
blue in the sky.  
Pop.  
See you again.

## It's My Job to Keep Punk Rock Elite

Thomas Simko

Fiction

Terrence walked back toward the merch table from the toilets where Ed was puking his guts out from too much pre-gaming. He saw *her* there and made sure she saw him scowling.

“What?” She pushed a pink streak of hair from in front of her face and turned toward the hoodies hanging on the back wall.

“You’re wearing an ‘All Time Low’ shirt.”

“So?”

“Are you sure you’re at the right show?” He laced his fingers between fourteen-inch liberty spikes.

She shot him an angry glare. “What the fuck, dude? I’m allowed to like All Time Low *and* Dillinger Four. Also, you got green all over your hands. Did you spray your hair right before the show?”

He wiped his hands on ripped jeans, succeeding only at spreading the dye across more parts of his body. The two had already had this argument on the drive up to the show. Terrence had hitched a ride with his friend Ed (who he’d known since the ’98 Weston show back before The Green had closed). *She* was apparently some girl Ed met online. She had taken control of the aux cord for the drive up and played nothing but pop punk.

Dillinger had just finished, so they had about fifteen minutes until NOFX would start their set. She was perusing the shirts at the merch table. Then Terrence spotted it. For whatever reason, he didn’t care because this was like finding gold, they had a copy of the 2005 “7 inch of the month” LP. He only had a pirated digital copy of it in sort-of-okay quality. He reached for it and found another hand was already on it. He followed the hand up to see *her* glaring between pink streaks.

She puffed, blowing the hair from her face. “You’ve got to be fucking kidding me.”

“Fuck off. I saw it first. How do you even listen to this?” Then he sighed and let go.

“All right, dude, fine. Can I at least rip it to my laptop, so I don’t have to listen to it in fucking mono or whatever?”

“Why should I?” She pulled two twenties out of a Hello Kitty change purse and paid. “You’ve been a complete asshat to me since you got in the car.”

“Look, I just, I dunno. Like, do you listen to this stuff because you have a cooler, older brother or something?” He rubbed the back of his neck, tinging it green. “And isn’t Ed a bit old for you anyway? I think he got his first STD when I was still afraid of getting cooties.”

She snort-laughed. “No, I don’t have a cooler, older brother, and age doesn’t matter. Ed’s worse than you. I wouldn’t fuck Ed with your dick and *that* guy pushing.” She pointed at the guy working the merch table. The merch guy decided that was a good time to rearrange the shirts.

“Then, why the fuck are you here?” Terrence shot back.

“Because I fucking love NOFX, dumbass. Is it that hard to believe? And Ed had an extra ticket. They’ve been my favorite band since *Pump Up the Valuum*. And, yeah, yeah, I’m sure you’re going to say that you were into them since *Liberal Animation*.” Her cheeks flushed. “You know being an elitist asshole is not very punk rock.”

He glared at her, then looked down and put his hands in his pockets. “Well, I guess it’s *kinda* cool you even know what *Liberal Animation* is. Actually, *Punk in Drublic* was what got me into them. I’m sorry ‘bout

being such an asshole. I just assumed you were some scene kid showing off your fake punk roots.”

“Scene kid? It’s not like you’re that much older than me. What’re you, like 30?”

“32.”

“Yeah, I’m 24. I know, I know. I look young. Blah, blah. I’ve been going to shows since 2006 when I snuck into Warped Tour to see A.F.I.”

Terrence took a deep breath and exhaled, “Well, how about I buy you a shitty, overpriced drink and we start over?”

A devilish grin spread across her face. “How about you push us up to the front for NOFX instead?”

“Ha! Shit yeah. Just stay right behind me.”

He could see the Fat Mike, bass in hand, just offstage. They were about to go on. He cracked his neck and proceeded to force his way toward the front through an onslaught of curses and dirty looks. “Okay, now get in front!” He shouted over the first chords of *We Called it America*. She squeezed to the railing. He squared his shoulders and gripped the railing to keep her from getting squashed against it by the onrush of moshing punk rockers.

“Maybe you’re not such an asshole after all!” She yelled.

“You too!”

“You’re still an elitist!”

He laughed.

Somewhere between *Stickin’ in My Eye* and *Bob* she turned towards him.

“Hey, I never would have got up here myself. Consider us even,” and she placed a small kiss on his cheek.

He stuttered, “Err, um, okay Heather, no problem.”

“Don’t spend that erection all in one place there, big boy.”

Terrence laughed. She laughed back. She turned back toward the stage just as El Hefe kicked in to *Linoleum*.

# Iron and Wood 1

Keith Moul

Art



**Iron Age Rust**  
Keith Moul  
Art





**Bright and Dark and Bright Again**

James David Fox

Fiction

I dropped my phone into a glass of iced coffee this morning. I was sitting out on the veranda, the light was brittle, and the sky was crisp in spite of Michael's absence. Of course, as soon as I thought this, he called. The little hairs on my arms stood up and gold light shone right through them.

"Hello?"

"It's me, Michael."

"I know," I said. "You came up on the screen."

"Oh."

I held my breath to steady it, but my jitters relocated to my hands. My ring finger spasmed. "Are you... still coming?"

"It's not really..." he cleared his throat. "I mean, I'm not really available. Anymore. Sorry..."

"Oh." This was both expected and unexpected.

"That's *totally* fine. I mean I'm super, y'know, busy so..." My voice dwindled down to the driest air.

Michael let out all the hot guilty air he'd sucked in before the call, "That's a relief. That you understand. It's just y'know. At the moment things are so hectic at the moment."

"Yeah. No biggy. It's the same here, just so... y'know, at the moment." My blood turned thick as syrup and pooled behind my face.

In the background I heard muffled girlish laughter and the creak of mattress springs. Something whispered: "Did she buy it?", or "Is she crying?" I couldn't make it out.

Then followed a great silence so thick I turned numb. The clock ticked slower than it had before. I looked at the patch of garden: the lawn I'd mowed

specially, the extra chair on the patio. The breeze strummed the taller weeds. Nothing else in bloom, but it won't be long.

That's when my hand, without my brain's permission, released the phone from its grip and into the coffee.

"Hello? Hello?" Little bubbles snapped at the surface and I could still hear Michael, his voice, thick from submersion.

The screen shone out from the depths of the drink, the background picture of him was swollen and magnified by the glass. I peered at him, suspended and preserved, still smiling, youthful back then.

"Hello? Hello? Can you hear me?" the tiny voice screamed through the phone.

*I can hear you, I thought. I can hear you. I can hear you, but I can't save you. You're going to drown and I'm sorry.*

The image began to waver, flickering manically at the edges. "Hello? Hello?"

*I'm here. I see you and you're not alone. Try to relax, they say it's less painful if you do.*

The screen strobed as the liquid seeped in, flashing bright and dark and bright again. Michael's face contorted to a scream, to horror, I arranged mine into a smile. *It's going to be okay. It's nearly over. This happens to us all.* The phone fizzed a little then snapped to a death quicker than a stone breaks water.

I sat up. The light was brittle, and the sky was crisp in spite of Michael's absence.

## **Robin's Tea Leafs**

Robert A. Bak

Nonfiction

When you gazed upon Robin, you would never think this sweet gray-haired lady was a fortune teller. I could not believe it myself at first, but she had been for many years. She was taught by her mother in Scotland where Robin was born. She brought this talent first to Canada and then to New Jersey, where I first saw the magical, to me, demonstration of hers.

She was also a dedicated tea drinker, and always enjoyed her favorite tea combinations. This was her secret brew of tea flavors. It was strong and bold, and a dark color, but it was her cup of tea, as they say. She had a special porcelain white cup and saucer, with lilac, peach and rose pansies hand painted around the cup. It had a strong and special handle, and you will find out why in a moment.

She started by heating the water to near boiling, and she put her tea leaves in the bottom of the cup and pour the hot water over the leaves. She let the cup steep around three minutes and then start enjoying her tea. When the tea was about all gone, Robin swirled the remaining tea leaves around the cup at least three times. Some of the tea leaves remained on the sides of the cup, and the rest fell in the bottom of the cup.

Robin inverted the cup over the saucer and leave it there until all of the used tea drained away into the saucer. Once all of the water had drained away, she turned the cup over and look at the tea leaves that were left. She looked at the rim, which designates the present time, and then the middle part of the cup which was the not far distant. Finally, she looked at the bottom of the cup which designates the distant future. These were the

three positions of the tea cup which Robin developed of the reading.

She looked for symbols which represented hearts, anchor, birds, palm trees, triangles, and animals. Each symbol gave her an idea of the person's future. Letters and numbers from the leftover leave also meant different futures depending where they were arranged in the tea cup. Robin had a chart that assisted her in the reading she was performing.

Robin was quiet at first as she was deciding what she observed in her cup for her reading for that individual person. Robin described what she had seen in the cup and what the different symbols meant for that person. No two of her readings were ever the same, as each cup held the tea leafs in different positions, and had different symbols present. Robin had performed scores of these readings and was very sure of what her tea leafs were telling her.

Some of her friends and family did not exactly believe in her out of the ordinary readings. But there were occasions when what she had seen in her tea cup came to be true. It was hard to tell what a certainty was, and what was in her mind at that time. But Robin took this very seriously, and she read for anyone who asked. I had the pleasure to have more than one of her readings, but I do not remember what my future was going to be. I think Robin only give me the good news and not the bad omens which she may have perceived.

Robin kept her secret charts secret and did not pass on her ability to anyone else. This was her special ability; my family did not get to follow her footsteps. To this day, I always enjoy a good cup of tea, but now I use tea bags and not tea leafs.

I really enjoyed the time we spent together, it was just the two of us, and of course her tea cup. What Robin

saw or perceived in her tea cup was a special event, or as she called it her interpretation.

Maybe I should start and try it for myself. What do you think?

**Topoi**  
Gary Mesick  
Poetry

The Greeks recommended  
Assigning each idea to an imaginary room  
Where, the more outrageously displayed,  
The more readily the mind  
Could retrieve the thought at will,  
Without wasting time searching shelves  
Or rummaging through cluttered drawers.  
The key to memory was to find  
A home for each, and keep it there.

To them, a topic, as the root implies,  
Was a place as much as a conception,  
As palpable as the dog.  
Thus, in the salon of our brain,  
We might discover, in some untidy corner,  
The head of state, executing a handstand  
(For reasons that need not concern us now).  
And once so stationed,  
His position is inviolable,  
Lest the notion slip away.

And the better minds still emulate  
The Greek example, organizing thoughts  
By cluttering rooms. So perhaps  
Now you understand why I couldn't possibly  
Help you straighten up this mess.

**Little League Mom**

Gary Mesick

Poetry

It will be his first important catastrophe.  
His bat tentatively circles an oversized helmet  
Suspended by wing-ears.  
He works his toe into the dirt,  
Searching for purchase against  
The big kid on the mound with the armpit hair.

Fastballs create the fear. But the curveball  
Turns the guileless into sophisticates,  
And drives many to other, consolatory pursuits.

Sex is nothing more than sublimated baseball.  
All subsequent amusements devolve  
From whether or not a twelve-year-old  
Can go with the pitch. Those who can will play.  
The rest must acclimate to disappointment  
And start dating. (Witness that prepubescent  
Swapping spit against the corner locker.  
Rest assured that he tried cheating his Destiny,  
Anticipating instead of laying back and waiting.)

Now a one-two breaking pitch arcs uncontested  
For a called strike three, and from the bleachers ring  
His mother's profane and anguished screams,  
Her inarticulate supplication to the umpires  
And the Fates that they grant her son  
Just one more cut at youth.

**Spring Cleaning**

Gary Mesick

Poetry

Start with your husband.

Offer his golf clubs  
To panhandling vagrants  
At freeway on-ramps  
(One to a customer, please).

Then, separate his possessions into piles:  
Flammable. Non-flammable.  
Set fire to both.

Take everything that didn't burn  
And set it on your front porch.  
Invite the neighbors to pick through it.  
Leave it there until Boxing Bay.

The next time he threatens to leave,  
Insist that, if he does, he forsake everything.  
He won't stay,  
But he will fight for his half.  
The de-cluttered house will feel airy.

Redecorate. Remarry. Repeat.



**Your Lobster**  
Russ Bickerstaff  
Fiction

You've decided that you really want the lobster as a pet. You don't know why. maybe you're feeling lonely. Maybe you've decided that this particular lobster is appealing for some reason. Or maybe you just suddenly noticed that it's always there and you feel the need to do something about it. Whatever the reason might be, you've decided to go ahead and allow the thing to become a pet. You hadn't consulted anyone else on the matter. You didn't feel the need to do so. You just went right ahead and looked at the thing and decided to keep it as a pet.

The formal adoption of the lobster was really more of a formality than anything. By the time you had actually recognized that it was there it had been accompanying you everywhere for quite some time. Theoretically anyone else noticing the lobster might have found its presence a little confusing, but they totally failed to notice it for the same reason you did: it was a lobster. People don't always notice lobsters. Even when they really need to. Even when their lives might depend on noticing the lobsters, they might go completely unacknowledged. And so the lobster that had been following you around wasn't exactly anything that anyone was going to make too much of a fuss about until you decided to adopt the thing as a pet.

You could have simply decided to consciously acknowledge that the lobster was there and leave it at that. Had you done as much, things might have gone differently. Had you simply decided to let the lobster into your life without changing your lifestyle at all, you might well have attracted no additional attention at all. And maybe you might have let the full reality of the

lobster rest in the background of your consciousness without calling any more attention to it at all. No one had noticed that it was there at all because your behavior hadn't changed at all.

Of course, your comfort with the lobster and its presence in your life had gradually come to be something that was more and more prominent. Your comfort with the cute, little crustacean was not something you even noticed right away. Maybe you would make notice of it as you left a room and made some sort of motion to follow you. It was following you everywhere anyway. It's not like you NEEDED to make am motion for it to follow you. And maybe there were a few others who had begun to notice that there was something strange about the way that you would exit a room by glancing over at this thing that they didn't seem to be able to notice, but they weren't exactly unnerved by it at that stage. It is entirely possible that, had it been left at those strange little quirks around the edges of your behavior, no one would have been at all aware of it. This was not to be.

In time you might well have found yourself reaching out to the thing and coaxing it into your lap. Maybe you were watching TV or reading a book or scrolling through social media and you just sort of decided that you wanted it near. You'd reach out to it and it would scuttle its little body over to you and hop into your lap. And this too might have gone unnoticed had you only done it while you were alone. But in time you had started to pet the lobster on public transit and at your desk at work and in the middle of some rather important meeting.

And at this stage it might have been something that friends and co-workers may well have been a bit concerned about. They might well have begun to look at you and wonder what the whole deal was with the

lobster. They might have been discussing the matter behind your back, but they would not have been engaging in their concern about it on all that active a level. After all...you weren't harming anyone by having a lobster, so it wasn't really anything that they needed to worry about.

Of course, things would have been a bit disconcerting for others who might have had occasion to drop by your place and notice the food dish that you'd put out for the lobster. And then there was the tiny lobster bed that wasn't far from yours. Checking-in on social media with the lobster at a few different locations in the course of your day might have been a bit of a concern, particularly as you had put together a profile for the pet. And by then it's entirely possible that the whole thing was a matter of concern for others as well. It might well have been the case that things had gotten too far for anyone to feel all that comfortable saying anything about it at all...especially what with how popular the thing had been getting on social media.

Somewhere along the line you might have noticed that people weren't exactly all that comfortable around you. You'd notice fewer and fewer people saying hello on the street and in the office. You would make some sort of a presentation in a meeting and people might glance away from you and fidget uncomfortably. And then maybe you would start to notice this discomfort in others from out of the corners of your consciousness.

And maybe quite unaware of how the discomfort of others may have been edging into your own mind, you might look down to see that you're eating lobster. And maybe there might be some sense of loss regarding that, but there might well have also been some sort of awareness of the fact that there was something dragging along the edges of everyone else's daily lives. Maybe you'll start to notice cute, little scuttling along the edges

of everyone else's paths. And maybe you'll start to wonder how long it'll take for them to look back and be aware of what you might have lost.

**Annihilation Lovers**

Kristyl Gravina

Poetry

An everyday in our life  
Silence thick, cut with a knife  
Broken only by the sound  
Of constant bullets whizzing past  
As they pour from your sensuous lips  
Directed solely at myself  
Each time you breathe  
In the same proximity  
As me

**Beneath the Surface**

Kristyl Gravina

Poetry

Beneath the surface,  
The hatred is alive; bubbling  
It thrives whenever you think of me  
The abhorrence burgeoning;  
Spawning venom

I wonder why you relish  
in feeding the poison  
delighting in contempt

Tonight,  
I'll drink myself to a stupor  
So, when sun will rise again  
I'll think it was just another nightmare  
And watch the gentle waves dance on the surface calm  
The flawless deception

**JUST ROOMMATES**

Brandon Noel

Poetry

The last time I was in  
this Youngstown parking lot,  
I was sick.

So sick — I couldn't stand upright,  
couldn't hold my booze,  
couldn't keep any food down.  
Everything came up.

It was New Year's Eve,  
and in the backseat  
of my friend Sam's BMW I prayed  
that I wouldn't shit my pants.

Tonight, I'm drinking \$2 drafts  
and staring down all the whiskey bottles  
on Suzie's high wooden shelf  
I can't afford any of them.

I'm gonna go home,  
but it isn't home  
the way I wish  
it was home, no —  
it's the memory of a thing.

I have been working out.  
People say I look better.  
I tell *other* people I am better.

But it's harder to get drunk  
or feel drunk  
or stay drunk and

that makes all this even harder.



**ON 7 EAST**  
Brandon Noel  
Poetry

They made me pull the ribbon  
out of her blue leather Bible  
As I wrapped it around my fist  
in front of the nurse  
and yanked it from the stitches  
I saw her maiden name in gold script  
printed at the bottom

They don't allow strings for safety  
no hoodies no belts  
no laces in anyone's shoes

The pencils I brought her had a metal clasp  
where the eraser was held in place  
and they wouldn't let them through

She asked the woman behind the desk,  
*what's your role here!?*  
The silver haired nurse wasn't phased  
but I —

try to remain calm  
it's ok it's ok I said

nothing ends the night like Haldol  
a little Band-Aid on the shoulder  
a few laps around the ward  
I couldn't tell you were sleepy  
until you laid down

The nurse said I could stay  
but you would sleep

At home on the porch  
my cocktail is the inside color of a charred barrel  
like the darkness of an unfamiliar room

I can't reach the other side  
I can't feel the outer gut of this void neither  
but I dive down in it and make a noise

**there is no tide in this crescent bay**

Suzanne Rancourt

Poetry

a gray of mist stirred  
 by ghostly currents left by fishing boats  
 and Peloponnesian marauders

they are all here as remnants in the sulfur cleansed air  
 volcanic waste, and olive trees  
 what ships moored here?  
 what widows wailed at Acropolis Oya?  
 yes  
 even here  
 overlooking the distance of difference  
 the foolhardy believe in differences  
 as though my mother's body was a different body  
 a different mother at the head  
 than at the feet

"into the fog" a warrior's mantra —  
 if we are not warriors of the mist  
 then  
 who are we as women?

i skim along the calm of saliferous currents  
 i am watching  
 and to the son of suns in my soul  
 don't think i don't grieve for those who don't return

i stand at the altar of broken jars  
 i sing a yodel of grief to the mourning vapors  
 like a breath of feathers  
 it settles a wash of touch on my face

my soul —  
a broken piece of pottery  
for every time  
the sun burns through

**Resting Place**  
Jeremy Mifsud  
Poetry

*after Topaz Winters*

He asked me to stay the night.  
I borrowed his umbrella.  
The rain soaked my clothes —  
shields can't withstand storms.  
I stepped in a puddle,  
socks drenched and soggy.  
I'm unworthy  
of his love.

**Reminiscence**  
Jeremy Mifsud  
Poetry

A guy's sweater  
brushed my neck.  
I sank in my seat,  
cheeks flushed,  
reminiscing  
on the last time  
I was held  
in a man's arms.

**Molten**

Jeremy Mifsud

Poetry

When the words  
r e f u s e  
to become verse,  
          don't force their tameness;  
scorch the paper,  
melt the ink  
& mould it  
into new lines  
          that blow away  
          the old's ashes.

## Contributor Bios

Robert A. Bak

Robert has been involved with the entertainment business for many years. First starting as a stage manager Off-Off Broadway in NYC, and then working in Los Angeles and Albuquerque. He has been a director and producer of plays with national award-winning playwright William Derringer. In addition to his involvement in theater, Robert has written a number of short stories, essays, and plays.

Russ Bickerstaff

Russ Bickerstaff is a professional theatre critic and aspiring author living in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, with his wife and two daughters. His short fictions have appeared in over 30 different publications including Hypertext Magazine, Pulp Metal Magazine, Sein und Werden, and Theme of Absence.

Kasi Bitter

Kasi Bitter is a first-year MFA Candidate at Chatham University, who survives off chai tea lattes and convincing herself that procrastinating is okay because it would be rude to remove her cat, who is a useless freeloader, from her lap. (Twice, she has been awarded “Cat Lady of the Year” by her sorority.) She secretly still wishes she could be a mermaid instead of an adult, but she, surprisingly, doesn’t write much fiction. Her nonfiction writing is fueled by her awkward relationships with her dad and her ex-boyfriends and her daily “therapy sessions” with her mother. All she wants in life is to be able to provide endless hair ties for her fur child and not worry about running out of almond milk.



### F.S. Blake

F.S. Blake is a Bronze Star decorated U.S. Army Veteran. He is a published photographer, traveler, advanced SCUBA diver, philanthropist, entrepreneur, and proud husband and father. He has poems published or forthcoming in *O-Dark-Thirty*, *As you Were*, *The Military Review*, *The Wrath-Bearing Tree*, and *Line of Advance*. His poetry career began during his sister's wedding.

### Kateryna Bortsova

At present time Kateryna Bortsova is a painter – graphic artist with BFA in graphic arts and MFA. Works of Kateryna took part in many international exhibitions (Taiwan, Moscow, Munich, Spain, Macedonia, Budapest etc.). Also she win silver medal in the category “realism” in participation in “Factory of visual art”, New York, USA and 2015 Emirates Skywards Art of Travel competition, Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Kateryna is always open for commission and you can view her work on Instagram: @katerynabortsova or on her website: <http://bortsova6.wix.com/bortsova>

### Dan Brortzel

Dan is the winner of the 2018 Riptide short story competition, and was highly commended in the Manchester Writing School competition 2018. Other competition shortlists include Flash500, Sunderland University/Waterstones, To Hull and Back, Fish and Retreat West. He has words in *Ellipsis*, *Reflex Fiction*, *Cabinet of Heed*, *Bending Genres*, *The Esthetic Apostle*, *Spelk*, *Ginger Collect*, *Fiction Pool*... His first collection of short stories, *Hotel du Jack*, will be published early 2020; he is also co-author of a comic novel about a writers' group, *Kitten on a Fatberg*, available now to pre-

order from Unbound.

[<https://unbound.com/books/kitten-on-a-fatberg/>](https://unbound.com/books/kitten-on-a-fatberg/)

Devan Burton

Devan Burton lives in the Knoxville Tennessee area. He is an Assistant Professor of English at Walters State Community. Devan Burton's debut novel — *The Will of the World* — is a Black Rose Writing Publication (available March 2019).

Dan A. Cardoza

Dan has a MS Degree. He is the author of three poetry Chapbooks, and a book of fiction titled *Second Stories*. Partial Credits: 101 Words, Amethyst, UK., Chaleur Magazine, Cleaver Magazine, California Quarterly, Dissections, Entropy, Esthetic Apostle, Foxglove, Frogmore, High Shelf Press, Oddball, Peeking Cat, Poetry Northwest, The Quail Bell, Runcible Spoon, Skylight 47, Spelk, Spillwords, The Fiction Pool, The Stray Branch, Urban Arts, Unstamatic, Vita Brevis and zeroflash.

Sarah Cash

Sarah Cash is a writer who is just starting to send her work out in to the world. She is perusing a writing degree at Central Washington University. For a day job she has worked in archaeology in the Pacific Northwest for the past five years.

Darren Demaree

My poems have appeared, or are scheduled to appear in numerous magazines/journals, including *Hotel Amerika*, *Diode*, *North American Review*, *New Letters*, *Diagram*, and the *Colorado Review*. I am the author of nine poetry collections, most recently "*Bombing the Thinker*" (September 2018), which was published by Backlash

Press. I am the Managing Editor of the Best of the Net Anthology and Ovenbird Poetry. I am currently living and writing in Columbus, Ohio with my wife and children.

Marie Fields

Marie Fields lives in the greater Boston area. She has been writing off and on for most of her life but has just recently found the courage to publish her poems. She currently has a poetry e-book available on Amazon called Marie! (mah-RIE!).

Kari Flickinger

Kari A. Flickinger's poetry and short stories have been published in or are forthcoming from Written Here: The Community of Writers Poetry Review, Iron Horse Literary Review, Ghost City Review, Eunoia Review, Riddled with Arrows, Moonchild Magazine, and Panoply, among others. She is an alumna of UC Berkeley. When she is not writing, she can be found playing guitar and singing to her unreasonably large Highlander cat, as well as obsessively over-analyzing the details of neighboring trees.

James David Fox

I have a handful of smaller writing credits for fiction and essays, including such venues as The Huffington Post, LYRA Magazine, Platforms and Flash Fiction Magazine.

Kristyl Gravina

I am from the island of Malta and my work has appeared in several publications including Down in the Dirt magazine, Haiku Journal and The Literary Hatchet as well as a previous issue of Door is A Jar.

Dom Hewett

I am a librarian and poet based in Oxford. I have brown hair, brown eyes and brown boots. My poems have been published in The Oxford Review of Books, Door is A Jar (Issue 3) and The Cadaverine, and my writing has appeared in the Oxonian Review, The ISIS and elsewhere.

David E. Howerton

David is a part time programmer and lives in the American River Canyon outside of Auburn Ca. He has done landscaping sign painting cooking and made jewelry to pay the bills. He and his wife live with two bossy cats. He has three adult daughters and eight grandchildren. His hobbies include type design, soapstone carving, walks in the woods, collecting dragons, and a growing library of Science Fiction.

Dianne Hunter

Dianne M. Hunter, Professor Emeritus of English at Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut, has published psychoanalytic essays on Thomas Kyd, Shakespeare, Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, Mary Godwin Shelley, Edgar Allan Poe, LeRoi Jones, Virginia Woolf, Sylvia Plath, Ted Hughes, Adrienne Rich, and Juliet Mitchell, website: [trincoll.academia.edu/DianneHunter](http://trincoll.academia.edu/DianneHunter)

Dorothy Kollat

Dorothy Kollat is the author of the romance novellas, Oasis Resort series, and the novel The Writer's Desire. She lives in California.

Louella Lester

Louella Lester is a Winnipeg-based writer and poet, and an amateur photographer. She always has some writing project on the go or is wandering about taking photos.

Louella's blog, *Through Camera & Pen*, can be found at [louellalester.blog](http://louellalester.blog).

### Gary Mesick

A Seattle native, Gary Mesick spent some time as an infantry officer, and he now works in aerospace analytics. His poetry has appeared in *North American Review*, *New American Writing*, *Sugar House Review* and elsewhere. *General Discharge* (Fomite Press, 2019) is his recent book of poems.

### Jeremy Mifsud

Jeremy Mifsud is a queer and autistic poet. His ambitions cannot be contained to the small island of Malta, which he lives in. He has a disdain for writing fun biographies due to his struggle with social communication. He marches to the beat of his own drum, having self-published a collection in 2018. His biggest achievement is writing this biography without giving up.

### Keith Moul

Keith Moul is a poet of place, a photographer of the distinction light adds to place. Both his poems and photos are published widely. His photos are digital, striving for high contrast and saturation, which makes his vision colorful.

<http://poemsphotosmoul.blogspot.com/>

### Dev Murphy

Dev Murphy is a writer and artist from Ohio, now living in Pittsburgh. Her writing has appeared in *Entropy Magazine*, *Occulum Journal*, *Jellyfish Review*, *Persephone's Daughters*, and elsewhere, and her art has been featured in *Brevity Magazine*, *New Ohio Review*, *Anti-Heroine Chic*, and elsewhere. She tweets @gytrashh.

Kelly Nickie

Kelly Nickie is an avid reader, writer, and coffee drinker living within the perimeter highway of Winnipeg, Manitoba Canada. She finds mundane objects and phrases of the everyday, and turns them into second thoughts. Her work has been published in the Resistance anthology, Juice, Generation, Cold Creek Review, and in the Winnipeg Free Press.

Brandon Noel

Brandon Noel (He/Him), lives in Northeastern Ohio and has worked as a machinist for the last ten years while writing on his breaks and brief moments of down time. Poetry is this struggle he can't seem to quit. Sometimes he wins and other times a poem stumble out. He facilitates a local monthly writers group called, "The Makeshift Poets". Brandon turned 33 last December and has two daughters, ages 10 and 5, whom he raises with their mother. He has self-published two poetry collections: Mongrel (2015) and Infinite Halves (2017), which are available at <http://www.lulu.com/spotlight/BrandonLNoel>

Caitlyn Parris

I am currently a Tennessee resident and English as a Second Language teacher. I have been writing my whole life; from my yard-sale bought type-writer days when I wrote my "family newspaper," to now, as I teach my students, playing with language has always been a beautiful part of my life. I also enjoy reading, yoga, hiking and cooking with my husband, as well as cuddling with my cat (Momo). In all these things, even the mundane everyday things, I see the intersection of the mystical; inspiration is everywhere for me.

Suzanne Rancourt

Of Abenaki / Huron descent, Ms. Rancourt's book, *Billboard in the Clouds* won the Native Writers' Circle of the Americas First Book Award. *murmurs at the gate*, is forthcoming May 2019. Her work appears in *Big Pond Rumours*, *Tiny Flames Press*, *Quiddity*, *River Heron Review*, *The Gyroscope Review*, *theSame*, *Young Ravens Literary Review* # 8, *Tupelo Press Native Voices Anthology*, *Bright Hill Press 25th Anniversary Anthology*, *Dawnland Voices 2.0* #4, *Northern New England Review*, *Snapdragon Journal*, *mgversion2>datura*, *Sirsee*, *Slipstream*, *Collections of Poetry and Prose*, *Muddy River Poetry Review*, *Ginosko*, *Journal of Military Experience*, *Cimarron Review*, *Callaloo*. She is also a Veteran.

Marco Randazzo

My name is Marco Randazzo and I am a MFA Student at Chapman University in Orange, California. I write mostly fiction, but love dabbling into my poetic side every so often. I have been published in a Chapman University Journal called *Anastamos*, an *Interdisciplinary Journal for Graduate Students*.

John Riley

John Riley is the founder and publisher of *Morgan Reynolds*, an educational publisher located in Greensboro, North Carolina. He earned a Masters in English Education from the University of North Carolina — Greensboro. His poetry and fiction have appeared in *Smokelong Quarterly*, *Connotation Press*, *Fiction Daily*, *Dead Mule*, *St. Anne's Review*, *Metazen*, and many other anthologies and journals both online and in print.

### Anum Sattar

Anum Sattar is a senior studying English at the College of Wooster in Ohio, USA. Her poems have been published in many national and international journals. She won the first Grace Prize in Poetry and third Vonna Hicks Award at the college. Whenever possible, she reads out her work at Brooklyn Poets, Spoonbill and Sugartown Bookstore, Forest Hills Library in New York City and the Cuyahoga Valley Art Center at Cuyahoga Falls, OH. And she was recently interviewed at Radio Free Brooklyn.

### Claire Scott

Claire Scott is an award-winning poet who has received multiple Pushcart Prize nominations. Her work has been accepted by the Atlanta Review, Bellevue Literary Review, New Ohio Review, Enizagam and Healing Muse among others. Claire is the author of *Waiting to be Called* and the co-author of *Unfolding in Light: A Sisters' Journey in Photography and Poetry*.

### Mir-Yashar Seyedbagheri

Mir-Yashar is a graduate of Colorado State University's MFA program in fiction. His work has appeared or is forthcoming in journals such as *Sinkhole Mag*, *Gravel Magazine*, *100 Word Story*, and *Ink In Thirds*. He lives in Fort Collins, CO and considers himself a Romantic and Big Lebowski devotee. His most fantastic goal is to become czar of Russia, and his realistic dream is to write the great American short-story collection.

### Maria Simbra

I am a reporter at KDKA-TV News in Pittsburgh where short and conversational is the name of the game. When I'm not writing for television news, I'm writing my memoirs.



### Thomas Simko

Thomas Simko is an author and English professor living with his daughter in a 200-year-old farmhouse on the outskirts of Allentown, Pennsylvania. He publishes both creative and academic work, both fantastic and fantastically dry. Currently, he is shopping his first novel and editing a collection of poetry and prose.

### Lisa Stice

Lisa Stice is a poet/mother/military spouse. She is the author of two full-length collections, *Permanent Change* of Station (Middle West Press, 2018) and *Uniform* (Aldrich Press, 2016), and a chapbook, *Desert* (Prolific Press). While it is difficult to say where home is, she currently lives in North Carolina with her husband, daughter and dog. You can learn more about her and her publications at [lisastice.wordpress.com](http://lisastice.wordpress.com) and at [facebook.com/LisaSticePoet](https://facebook.com/LisaSticePoet).

### Edward Supranowicz

Edward Michael Supranowicz has a grad background in painting and printmaking. He is also a published poet. He grew up on a small farm in Appalachia.

### Marc Alexander Valle

Marc Alexander Valle is an English teacher from eastern Pennsylvania. He's a certified karaoke geek and cinephile. In fact, where others have had themselves banned from casinos for excessive gambling, Marc has had himself banned from the Criterion section of retail stores for excessive spending. He's had his stories and poems published in *Lehigh Valley Vanguard*, *The Drabble* and *Beechwood Review*. Visit his blog at [mavthewriter.com](http://mavthewriter.com)

### Shane Wilson

Shane Wilson wrangles composition students into writing passable research essays before going home and chasing the day with a bourbon and a rerun of *The Office*. He tries to play the guitar, and his friends are supportive enough not to laugh. He has published books. Maybe check those out sometime. @ThatShaneWilson on all of the required social media channels.

## Submission Guidelines

Door is a Jar Magazine is looking for well-crafted poetry, fiction, nonfiction, drama and artwork for our digital publication. Please read over these submission guidelines carefully before submitting any work.

Contributors can submit to multiple categories; however, only submit once to each category until you have received our decision about your piece.

Our publication steers away from academic writing and publishes short, conversational works that use familiar language. Our magazine features new artists and writers and works that are accessible for all readers. Please look at our current and archived issues before submitting your work. Works that are confusing, abstract, or unnecessarily fancy will not be considered.

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

Upload your submissions to Submittable with the category you are submitting to and your first and last name as the filename. Within the cover letter please include your full name, contact info, and 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.)

We accept simultaneous submissions; however, please notify us immediately if a piece is accepted elsewhere. We reserve first initial publishing rights and then all

rights revert back to the author. We do not pay contributors at this time.

For more information please visit  
[doorisajarmagazine.net](http://doorisajarmagazine.net)