

# DOOR = JAR



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Cover Image "Pillbox" by Carolyn Adams

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**Throwing Vows**

Bruce McRae

Poetry

I swear by the planet Jupiter.  
By the soul of sun and clay.  
I swear by the blood of the lamp and platypus.  
By the last light to show at solstice.  
As my teeth crumble and steps falters.  
As if a breath up a flue,  
my oath to the invisible things made principal.  
My pledge to the raven's shadow.

I'm down on my knees and under the earth.  
I sing like a cricket, the old world my song,  
promising my future will and forge of action,  
promising intention or hell or oblivion...

I swear by the good night and the night gone bad.  
I swear to the one eye and solitary heart.  
A mouse in the house of indulge,  
I stand guard at the primrose border.  
I stand beside the roaring waters named Forgetfulness.  
A sentry, with a mouthful of bone soup and air.  
A partner rhyming with devotion.

**Place Title Here**

Bruce McRae

Poetry

I feel like an abandoned suitcase  
or body found in a burnt-out van.  
I've got a head like a Soviet gulag latrine.  
My mouth, of the mudfish variety.  
My eyes like a worked-out silver mine.  
Hair that's a fire in a forest.

What a mess, o heart of horse's hay.  
Little soul, you're a joke and nobody gets it.  
You're a beggar on a downtown corner  
as the high and mighty pass on by.  
Theirs is a lofty designation.

**Machine**

Bruce McRae

Poetry

Satanic mill of the seventh circle.  
House of monsters. Thumbscrew mechanics.  
Progress dragging its sack of laments.

This machine is devoid of function.  
Old paint covers the blood and dents,  
smoke and fumes in acrid conspiracy.  
That sound you hear is its jibbering inventor,  
his madness a device with jagged edges  
and lights that cast no shadow,  
making noises like the dead make dying.

A machine for breaking other machines.  
Demon's loom. Soul press. Black factory.  
All humanity goes into it. Nothing comes out.



**Hidden River**

Anne Rundle

Poetry

Spring water gushes forth.  
This sock-soaking water freezes  
hesitation and chills thoughts midsentence.

We are in hysterical laughter stitches, echoing  
us back to the past;  
thick shaded woods are where one finds pure water.

A memory and a compass point found by accident,  
crouching under tree vines and keeping an eagle eye out  
for thorns

the abandoned source magnetizes  
us to wander its domain again and again  
every day that summer of Schwinn freedom.

After weeks of trying to find it at twilight,  
the familiar path always too dark  
to see anything but shadows and missteps

we find what had been hidden  
again, this summer. We remember  
how to wander as children, forgetting all demands.

**How I Hatched**

Anne Rundle

Poetry

Birthday turns to birth weekend  
since my feeble punches and kicks  
exhaust me, while none of my  
blows land solidly.  
In darkness, my arms and legs  
find no escape hatch.

My nose is sharp when I itch,  
my arms tickle me with feathers,  
and my toes wiggle weirdly.  
This pointy nose works hard to break  
peepholes in the walls.  
Mining this cave for air,  
I throw my body against these walls  
somehow, it's without a corner,  
circular all around me.

Another strong thrust and  
darkness diminishes,  
afternoon sun peeks in,  
but the crack I've made is too small  
to see my way.  
Not today. First, a siesta,  
a rest from all the jabs I've thrown.  
Tomorrow will be the day  
I get outside,  
I will be named, born.

**Passport Control, Heathrow**

Christopher Stolle

Poetry

Everyone here  
is in the middle  
of something.

We've come  
from different places  
and we're headed  
somewhere after this.

People talk incessantly,  
voices blending  
into hummingbird murmurs.

They reminisce  
about previous trips  
and decide how  
to get to their hotels  
and discuss how best  
to solve myriad conundrums —  
an existential exercise  
in folly and futility.

But these imperfect strangers  
find commonality  
in this singular activity.

They converse politely  
despite knowing  
they'll never  
see each other again.

No one complains  
about how long  
this is taking,  
the lips and feet  
continuing to move.

When we reach the end  
and we're assigned  
an immigration officer,  
we're so focused  
on moving forward,  
we forget to look back  
to say goodbye.

**Departed Poets and Tea**

B. C. Nance

Fiction

“Do you understand it?” He looked at me from across the table. “Do you know what it means?”

“These aren’t words, this ‘slithy’ and ‘mimsy’...” Henry began, but I held up my hand.

“I don’t know that I really understand it, Lewis,” I said, “but I love the words anyway.”

Henry opened his mouth to protest again, but I spoke over him.

“Whether the words are real or not, they roll and dance and summersault off my tongue. They create an image, bright and vivid, and I have to smile, not unlike your cat.”

Lewis smiled, too. “Then you do understand it,” he said.

“I like your cat, too,” said Langston, sipping at his tea. He looked at Henry and added, “Your work makes me smile, too, Mr. T. Your images of nature as well as your abolitionist views. I see your pond in every word.”

“And your own words, Langston,” I said, but he held up a modest hand as if to say I needn’t comment. “No,” I continued, “your words are powerful, and I think everyone should read them. You speak with humor but your message is serious.

“You’re too kind.” He patted my pale white arm with his dark brown hand.

“Another cookie anyone?” I offered the last of the ginger snaps.

Lewis took it saying, “Biscuit, my boy. It’s a biscuit.” He gave me that wide smile again.

“And now, gentlemen,” I said, “it’s time I returned to my own pen and paper. As always you have inspired me and given me a yearning to spill my thoughts in ink.”

We all stood.

“We must do this again very soon,” said Henry.

“Indeed,” agreed Langston. “I’m free tomorrow.”

“We’ll meet again soon,” I said, “but tomorrow I’m having brunch with Miss Dickinson and Dr. Angelou.” They nodded appreciatively. “Then I have decided to set out in the evening on a longer adventure with old friends. Perhaps I’ll once again accompany the dwarves to find their mountain of gold, or maybe Herman and I will help the one-legged captain find his white whale.”

We shook hands, and Henry and Langston parted, poring over a small tome as they walked together down the garden path. Lewis stood looking up at the lustrous blue sky, each of us wanting to stay as much as we needed to go.

“Brillig,” I said to him.

That smile appeared on his face again.

Then he left.

Not all at once.

But a bit at a time.

His wide smile the last to fade.

**Aubade to my father**

Robin Gow

Poetry

This morning I think of tucking you into a daffodil bell  
and sealing closed the mouth of the flower  
so that you can sleep in past 4am for once.

Inside there, the sun would be even more yellow  
on your face as it woke you. Maybe you would  
take your time with breakfast for once, chewing,

butterfly-like, the yolky pollen caked on each stamen,  
instead of standing at the breakfast counter,  
eating handfuls of dry cheerios from the bag

and sipping Diet Coke, the fizz, prickly as it mixes  
with cereal. You would have to wait for me  
to release you from the petals and I would wait

till late afternoon, till the whole day was as  
good as spent. Maybe with all that time to yourself  
you would give into a nap or two, you would

touch the pistol, the flower's female heart  
throbbing with life and something would shift  
in you and you'd decide to never return to the factory.

This would be cruel then, because we both know  
that you have to go to the factory, that you  
have to watch batteries as they crawl down

the conveyor belt, have to clip their wires in place,  
each wire thin as the necks of the daffodil  
I want to hide you in. Dad, I want to plant daffodils

inside your sunken mattress, weight of your body  
worn into that valley where you never sleep enough.  
I want to fill that valley with soil, I want you to skip

work. I want to go to the factory, and build  
all your batteries for you, but here I am with the daffodils,  
planning an impossible escape.



**Prototype**  
Deborah Purdy  
Poetry

My Barbie was no role  
model for mothering.

Rigid, ready for work,  
or a party

in a mink-trimmed coat and heels  
or an evening gown and long black gloves.

My Barbie wore gold belts  
and diamond earrings.

Out to dinner she ordered  
something expensive.

She was a hard figure  
with eyes that glanced

away, slightly sideways,  
looking into a distance

I couldn't see.  
I tried to see because I wanted to learn.

I didn't understand  
the world was never the way it was.

**Pictures on the Piano**

Deborah Purdy

Poetry

In a corner of the room  
In a corner of a life  
The piano fills the space  
Of hours now turned

Into ashes. Photographs  
On the piano remain  
The same, but one sister  
Gets older

And the other never ages  
Among the dust  
And the frames  
And the silence.

**Egret**  
Mukund Gnanadesikan  
Poetry

Evening tides bring fulfillment  
Or so I presume  
Seeing you standing guard  
In waning light  
Atop bridge span  
Asserting supreme powers  
Perched here as ancestors did  
SUVs careen past  
Society's chaotic mating call  
Rusty sign warns  
KEEP OUT  
Meant for me and my ilk  
Human intellect is deaf  
Slave to mint's green currency  
Highways widen  
Marshlands lie void  
The mudsuckers have perished  
Fly away.

**Dad signing his name**

E. Martin Pedersen

Poetry

He makes a little circle in the air first  
like a helicopter preparing to land  
on a green pad with a row  
of sharpened pencils lying beside a  
thumbed telephone directory, rotary dial phone, etc.  
he sits upright on a straight back chair, with good light,  
a proper schoolboy staying within the lines  
then his scratchy fountain pen sounds, his fountain,  
his pen, its slanty dance on delicate ice skates  
figure eights in the L and G  
tos and fros in the fs and ts  
he cuts out like Zorro's sword a shopping list or funeral  
eulogy  
Bernstein leading Beethoven, sweaty and transported  
jerky violent art.  
Take that,  
word.

His hand lifts anew to reveal his creation at last  
the point at the end invisible but there.

Though I don't use a fountain pen  
I do sign my name with a certain flare.

**Papa Joe**  
Tom Franken  
Poetry

The man who bent the world to his will  
is now confined to a chair, incarcerated  
by his own body, betrayed by his own mind.

He sits there numbed, his gray matter browning,  
organs swelling, lips of leather pursed shut.  
The sight of it all torches my insides blue.

This is the man who regaled me with tales  
of Siberian hell, urine freezing in midair,  
tree bark tea, lice infesting once-a-year clothes.

Now, all conversation is stifled by dementia rot.

The hands that ripped through the Iron Curtain  
now tremble helplessly as he plays with his pudding.

I wonder if he remembers clawing through  
wilderness, cracking his spine on concrete,  
daubing a free Bingo space, tossing me a Wiffle Ball.

I wonder if he knows his brain is dying.

I wonder if he mourns it.

Suddenly, his grip, steady and stone-cold,  
hooks my wrist. I meet his gaze and he  
flips me a wink.

**A mermaid loved me**

Sandip Saha

Poetry

I lived in a lonely island  
with animals and birds  
sitting at the sea shore  
listening to waves' roar.

Once a mermaid appeared  
wading through the waves  
she was agile and anxious  
stopped looking at me.

Her face was so beautiful  
a spring of affection  
innocent giggling  
dragged my eyes towards her.

She gradually came nearer  
climbed up to my lap  
caressed my face  
with her petal soft fingers.

Bountiful love from her heart  
pierced through my chest  
I could not talk to her  
nor she could talk to me.

A big wave drenched us  
I enjoyed her honey touch  
she embraced me tight  
tears rolling down her cheeks.

**Raw**  
Eimear Bourke  
Poetry

Acceptable in a fine dining restaurant  
When wrapped in seaweed  
and served with a dab of wasabi

Not with scales on  
Or bones intact  
Liable to get caught between teeth

Rawness has to be refined  
Polished and presented

Don't come to me with your pure emotion.  
Messy and unclear.

I want plated perfection.  
A mint to mask the smell.

**(This Is) Another Song About Leaving**

Kathryn Barber

Fiction

## Verse 1

the music swells up behind him, & the spotlight comes down on that little stage, looks like a dream, like a movie scene — the kind where they end up together. behind him, a window; behind him, midtown bustles & moves & swarms. his hands wrap around a microphone, his notes come over the speakers: sounds like rain on a july night, sounds strong like thunder that shakes a house, sounds like his guitar's bewitched—& how can notes like that come out of a man's throat like that? & his eyes find mine, his mouth turns up, & the rest of the bar falls sideways, until it's just me & him, me & him, me & him, & my chest trips over itself, & I breathe, breathe, breathe.

& when the guitar rests on its stand, the players behind the drums, the keys, the bass, have all gone, he comes down off that stage, takes my hand & asks my name, buys me a whiskey. his boots peek out beneath his blue jeans, the edge in his voice peeking out when he speaks, same as when he sings, & god if I can't hear music in every word falls out his mouth. I fall inside him like I fell inside his song.

## Chorus

I want his voice to kiss me like it kisses that microphone, hover over me, save me. I want his hands to run over me, run everywhere, way they run all over that guitar. want him to pierce the corners of me like he drapes the corners of this bar. I want him to want me like he wants that radio.



## Verse 2

& when the spotlight casts its circle again, I think about that circle made of wood, the one that's all he can think about dream about, only thing he really wants when what he used to want was me, just me. & I close my eyes, dive inside his song, because I have to have to find him again. find us again. & I tread in, soak up in, that lonely nashville moon, just me, always me looking for him. yesterday morning, he was in my kitchen, in his socked feet, no shirt, frying bacon & pouring coffee, & when he put his lips on mine, I ain't never felt further away from nothing or nobody. & he's standing right in front of me, same stage same spotlight same broadway bar I seen him in a hundred times, & he's right there in front of me, only he ain't — he's far away as the west coast, far away as the tip of the northeast atlantic, far away as that bus he spends his nights on, carry him away from me.

& I stay here, pray to nashville lights way I used to pray to god, pray to the music I used to fold myself into, pray to all them wives that come before me, all the ones who stayed home, watching out a bay window for headlights in the driveway, like a navy wife watching the sea, only he ain't saving nothing or nobody. days, weeks, I waited on him to come back, come home to me, and now, now he's standing right in front of me, only now, now all I wanna do is climb out, pull myself out of his song, out of whatever it is happens inside me when his voice layers a bar, scratches a record player.

## Chorus

I want his voice to kiss me like it kisses that microphone, hover over me, save me. I want his hands to run over me, run everywhere, way they run all over that guitar. want him to pierce the corners of me like he draped the

corners of that bar. want him to want me more than he wants that radio.

### Verse 3

I think god, the lights, the stars, they all stopped hearing my prayers, think they're floating on air, dancing around me, spinning me in a circle — way he used to. I threw that radio against the back wall of my bedroom, had to, had to, couldn't make his voice stop. I needed his voice to stop. I smashed that radio like I smashed his favorite guitar like he smashed me, and still, still, his ballads float in my ears, linger in my dreams — what will make his song stop?

this city's too bright, too bright too bright & I can't see his name in lights. not anymore. I can still hear them girls yelling, reaching their hands out to him, begging him calling his name, only I don't care anymore because I been begging him for years & I know don't matter if he leaves, if I leave, if we both leave — song ends just the same. it ends with me on my knees, calling his name; with him, on a stage, washed in lights & melodies & harmonies; with him, on his knees, needing them to love him because mine wasn't never enough.

### Bridge

that devil named music took him, took him from me, & I wish it was a woman, wish it was someone else, wish it was something I could hate — something I could hate for taking him from me: but it's a tour bus & it's a guitar case & it's sheets of music & this was him & this was me. this was us. & I know who I am without him, who I was before him, who I could be after him — but who is he without that microphone?

### Chorus

I miss his voice kissing me like it kissed that  
microphone, hovering over me, saving me. I miss his  
hands running over me, running everywhere, way they  
ran all over that guitar. miss him piercing the corners of  
me like he draped the corners of that bar. but damn me if  
he could ever want me like he needed that radio.

**New Things**

Mitchell Krockmalnik Grabois  
Poetry

I've been making lists of new things I might do  
now that I'm turning 65  
fresh activities  
that will enliven me

I've already rejected singing in the church choir  
despite my wife's repeated entreaties  
I hate pretending to be pious

I reluctantly reject boxing  
Even after all these years  
I still want to be a Tough Guy

I'll never be a Tough Guy  
I watch the young women working out  
in my gym  
For the most part, they're bigger and stronger  
than I am  
but I fantasize about beating them up

I'm still considering learning to play the vibraphone  
If I live to be 90, I'll have played it for 25 years  
I'll be good

I'll spend my time entertaining myself  
in my lonely apartment  
the runs of my vibes muted and wavering

**Maytag**

Mitchell Krockmalnik Grabois

Poetry

My car  
the Marvelous Maytag  
churns like a washer  
agitating clothes from coast to coast

My girlfriend sits beside me  
flexing her muscles  
and tracing the lines of her tattoos

I regret breaking her out of prison  
It wasn't a big deal — minimum security —  
the same thing I get from her  
That's all I want  
I don't even want that much

*People* magazines  
and empty cans of *Red Bull*  
litter the back seat

I'm taking the Marvelous Maytag  
demo derby  
That's the only foreseeable way  
out of this life

**A Letter**  
CL Bledsoe  
Poetry

The mountain thinks it's time  
I stomped my stupid feet up  
its face. Don't judge our

relationship. Of the many things  
I can't get used to, living is  
the one I mention least when

complaining. That path through  
the ferns that bordered the river  
has been asking after me. I can't

say it's the sniffles, keeps me  
away. Partly, it's poor time  
management, partly I forgot

that joy existed. There was a moment,  
insulated by fog, all the old  
hates quieted, I could've believed.

**Things I've been silent about**

Carolyn Adams

Poetry

weigh heavy in my hands  
tonight. If I share them  
with you, you might resent  
my candor. Your picture of me  
might change, and you'd  
see the errors in my character.  
You might hate me,  
turn away in disgust.  
I've wanted things I shouldn't  
have. I've compromised, to keep  
what isn't real going just long  
enough for me to feel at ease.  
These are just the beginning  
of the secrets that sit like stones  
at my table.

**If/Then**

Carolyn Adams

Poetry

Why am I always talking to the dead?  
Sometimes they answer,  
words that won't help me.  
Their sins remind me of mine.

Sometimes they answer:  
what I know is not enough.  
Their sins remind me of mine,  
luxuriant, devastating.

What I know is not enough;  
I always ask for more.  
Luxuriant, devastating,  
this hunger and defeat.

I always ask for more.  
I never stop asking.  
This hunger and defeat  
echo in empty rooms.

I never stop asking.  
Words that won't help me  
echo in empty rooms.  
Why am I always talking to the dead?



**The Freudian Dream**

Carolyn Adams

Poetry

He seems to enjoy what  
he's doing to me.  
There's a smile on his face  
as he's pleasuring.  
But it's what he's wearing  
that bothers me.

He's wrapped in brown  
bramble bushes,  
from his neck  
to his lap.  
They're flowering to pendulous  
yellow blossoms that hang  
like grapes below  
his knees.

I'm propped up on elbows,  
watching him transform.

He's now a tree,  
rough bark extended,  
bare limbs budding green.

And I marvel,  
because I've never had  
this effect on anyone  
before.

**Pillbox**  
Carolyn Adams  
Art



**Sky Flowers**  
Carolyn Adams  
Art



**A Joke**

Mir-Yashar Seyedbagheri

Fiction

Nick tells jokes. He doesn't know what else to do. Mother left, Dad's a drunk, people tell him to be strong. Don't talk about feelings. He tells abortion jokes. Mother once wanted one. So Dad says, when he's drunk, filling Nick with unease. *Why did the aborted fetus cross the road? Because someone moved the dumpster.* If something's funny, it takes away fright, the sense of not being wanted.

He tells jokes about cripples buying chicken legs, mentally impaired folks, people worse off. For a moment, words sliding with ease, he imagines everything's all right. That is, before the tears rise.

## **Distance between the 27<sup>th</sup> floor and the Ground**

Mehdi Hasan  
Nonfiction

It felt like my left side was hit by a something soft, like a soft blab of meat. I could only feel the impact, how fast I fall into the ground. There was no pain or no sound. I remembered a word then, the one I saw behind a car almost a year ago and around that same time heard from a man I didn't know, yet I knew his face and something that I had written around that time. That word was "Go." That also brought up memories of having conversations with a lovely middle-aged woman back and forth.

I had about a week left in China, of my four months stay. It was my last few days there. I was trying to take some memories with me, some photographs to remind me of this place, the life I had there yet couldn't make it mine. I went out to eat at the restaurant I have always went for last couple of months for my lunch, checked it from the balcony if it's open or not. Also, checked again what would happen if I jumped off from the balcony. After locking my door, I went out, it's a pretty good neighborhood. High rise apartment buildings, spacious streets, you can see the mountains miles and miles ahead. Beautiful Chongqing. After crossing the streets, there I was in the restaurant. My usual meal, Eggs, Vegetables, Beef and Rice. Not to forget the beautiful lady of the owner and their daughter, I enjoyed their company even though I couldn't speak Mandarin at all. After having belly full of food, I hopped into the subway, went to the parts of Jiangbei, which photographs I haven't taken yet.

Sprawling mountains covering the whole city, it's like a living Great Wall of China. Spent as much time I could

as it was getting dark. Since i was walking most of the time, it didn't really surprise me how about nine to ten hours went by.

Returned to the Yuzhong, the last subway took off around 10:35 am, found myself in a night club, talked to the bouncers earlier about how long does it stays open. I was tired and hungry. But couldn't eat yet cause doing so would slow me down and my photography work. Bright flashes of colorful lights, loud music and all the chatters. The crowd, dancers, party people and all that shit. DJ's blasting music I never heard of, people dancing like a Maniac, and here I was soaking it all in, photographing every last detail.

Finally took my time off, went out of the club to eat something. Around that place one of my favorite dish was steamed pork rice. It was delicious. Had a small bottle of vodka and a couple of beers. I was at peace then. Returned to the club, found a couch and fall down. Body and mind both being numbed by the tiredness and the alcohol. Time went by really fast; I could barely keep my eyes open. Walked more than twenty kilometers that day, people were slowly fading. It was around 3 or 4 am, I don't know. Finally found the motivation and strength to get up and went to the washroom. My head was buzzing, took out my phone and found a semi-nude photo of the dancer. Started jerking off to the stripper, with loud noises coming from the club, it was hard time getting my dick hard due to the exhaustion and the alcohol, and the lack of sleep. After trying for a while jerked off to her. Felt the release of feel good hormones.

Came back to the couch, the club was now almost closed, only few people remained tired and rolling around. Everything seemed like a sweet ass to me then, regardless of their gender. I was numbed yet smiling. Not a worry in the world, I was dozing off. But the club

closed around 4.30 am so I had to make my bed outside on the concrete couch under the open sky.

Had another bottle of my favorite Tsingtao beer, had some fluffy meat buns. I was filled then, R by Niha was playing in the background and the light was just starting to appear.

The life I wanted to live, the future that I dreamt of, all the plans and shit, this was all that I had left. Around a week left, I wasn't feeling anything. Numbed myself with the vodka and beer, and beautiful people and nature of China.

I still haven't figured out this feeling to this day, I wonder does people who knows that their certain death felt like that before their life ended. The prisoners who will get death penalty or the terminally ill patients who only have a few days left.

It was getting bright, the sunlight. Around 6 am I woke up from my slumber, and went for dim sum breakfast. To get the strength I needed, to return to my apartment at 27<sup>th</sup> floor in which I spent wondering and calculating angles would I die instantly if i jumped off from the balcony. Or be severely damaged for the rest of my life. Hopped onto the first Subway at 6.30, barely arrived at my apartment, overlooking the balcony I still was having the same thought that I had yesterday before leaving. Would I die instantly if I jumped off from the balcony?

After the impact I was laying on the ground for couple of moments. It was pitch black; all I could see was the darkness of the night. It took me few seconds get back up standing.

I didn't die, and I was working as a Researcher in a village I arrived yesterday.

I kept walking to reach my destination, I was just hit by a battery driven rickshaw. The speed of that thing knocked off my balance and I fell to the ground.

I wasn't in China anymore, came back to  
Bangladesh and almost a year has passed already.

The feeling of that night remained.

And the distance between 27<sup>th</sup> floor and the Ground  
is 94.5 meters or 310 feet.



**Nightfall**  
Sandy Coomer  
Poetry

how many times  
death comes  
as a dark mist  
inching across grass  
we blink, rub our eyes  
the image fades

you stand  
in your hospital gown  
laughing, barefoot  
your head tilted  
your hair disarrayed

you say something  
called from the window  
and you were scared  
but you climbed  
out of bed, parted  
the blinds, saw only dusk  
draping a sweater  
over the fading day

your face bears  
a sweet innocence  
eighty-one years  
tucked and smoothed  
your voice, a bright beacon  
explaining  
you're not sleepy yet

**Therapy**  
Sandy Coomer  
Poetry

The therapist wants me to unwind myself  
like thread from a spool, lie flat

in grass beneath a willow. He speaks  
with his measured and restrained therapist voice,

asks if I need tissues. Crying is a release,  
a washing clean, a settling of heat. I listen,

because I'm supposed to listen. That's what  
I'm paying him for. I want to remind him

of the private nature of pain, how it's thicker  
than thread, more like 8-gauge wire, how it

refuses to be straightened. I sit in meditation,  
see the hues of my breath moving between

my lungs. I feel my heartbeat in my eyes.  
I know I am alive, reflected in early spring

forsythia and tulips. I cup my hands and drink  
the water of my worry, my fearful wounds.

The therapist asks if I can carry stress  
in my body forever, if I deserve happiness.

I watch the blue-sky filter between clouds,  
busy wasps building a nest in the window.

The therapist asks if I can do one good thing  
for myself every day. I smile. He doesn't know

what it cost to get here. He fishes for clues:  
the way I hold my hands, how my shoulders

droop, if I cross my legs when he mentions  
a name. I'm listening to traffic on the street,

the urgent horns. I think about the road,  
the painted yellow lines, the stones

I carry in my fist in case what unwinds  
needs a weight to hold it cleanly down.

**Elizabeth**  
Layla Lenhardt  
Poetry

Mother of my mother, her knotted knuckles cradled  
my scraped elbows, the heaviness of my childhood  
heart. Her beauty unrepeatable, blistering. She stands  
hunched over the sink, peeling potatoes, buttering bread,  
in the yellow light of the pre-war kitchen she is ageless.  
When I think of home, I think of her,  
kindness dripping from her embrace like honey.  
The wrinkles of her cheeks soft, like crushed velvet.  
We are the same faux rose in a dusty, crystal vase.  
I am cut from the long sinews of her arms,  
I am stitched together with her veins.  
The treble of my voice is the child of her voice,  
that timeless, velvet rasp.

**Mongolian Cashmere**

Layla Lenhardt

Poetry

The summer you drown stuck  
our legs to leather seats like chewing gum  
on the bottom of a shoe. You were pulling  
handfuls of buffalo grass while the boys  
played bocce behind us. You said

the grass was soft like infant hair.  
You wanted to capture it, keep it  
green, in your velvet pouch  
where you kept the baby teeth.

Those little, ivory jewels. You'd wear  
them like pearl earrings if you could.  
You never told us what happened, but  
you were steadfast in collecting

your pieces. You planned to make  
yourself into a human mosaic.  
You wanted to rebuild the child  
in your eyes. The baby goat sheared  
for its virgin wool.

**Your Northern Wild**

Layla Lenhardt

Poetry

There's a wilderness in here.  
Confusion branches out of tree trunks,  
sadness grows in small shoots at knee height.  
The birds clear their throats with high pitched abandon.  
The moon's violent pull causes an impossible upheaval  
on the once placid lake. The vines' long, clawing  
hands try to take hold, while the mud deeply inhales  
the soles of my boots. I am no Jacques Cousteau.  
How do you expect me to trek so gingerly,  
to leave no trace,  
while still pushing my way through this brush?

**Muted Mixtape**

Layla Lenhardt

Poetry

That winter split me  
like firewood. I was smaller,  
splintered, Elliot Smith would play  
on cassette in my blue Volkswagen  
while our breath coursed  
through flared nostrils and damaged lungs.

\*

I hid my pain like a sick dog. I slinked  
out, under the back deck,  
I swallowed some pills.  
In those hideous places  
I can still smell the acrid, peaty heat  
of your breath, reeking like remorse.

\*

But even though you swore that you left  
I still caught you shoplifting.  
Greedily, you shoved  
every broken piece of me  
into your pockets.

\*

The more you took, the more  
I couldn't help but remember you  
feeding our cats, their tails licking  
around your ankles like muted flames.  
And now I'm jealous of people  
I don't know. I want to be that stranger  
sitting across from you on the subway.  
I want to claim the dust you leave behind.

**I Tell You, It Was Me**

Linda Malnack

Poetry

You and your brother  
were small and I got angry  
for some reason and  
slammed the ketchup bottle  
down on the table, and  
ketchup flew up  
and splattered all over  
the ceiling. That is how  
a negative constellation  
came to be over our heads.  
There.

Now you know  
the truth.

Now you know  
it wasn't you. It isn't  
your fault, It's my fault.  
The dark stars  
no amount of scrubbing  
will erase.



**The Brachiosaurus**

Linda Malnack

Poetry

She always suspected that a brachiosaurus lived in the basement.

One day she caught him taking a bowl of cereal down the stairs. She shouted at him as his tail disappeared around the corner. *Quit hoarding the bowls! We can't eat our soup up here.*

The only sound was the sound of his bedroom door closing.

The next morning a stack of bowls and 12 spoons were soaking in the sink. A note was on the counter written in pencil on a piece of notebook paper: *I need more Lucky Charms.*

The wrinkled ten on the counter looked as if it had been pulled from a deep pocket in the earth.

## Shorthand as a Second Language

Alice Lowe

Nonfiction

I was steered into a commercial track in high school, office skills classes — typing, shorthand, bookkeeping — that would qualify me for a “pink collar” job. It was a respectable path for working-class women in the early sixties, a step above shop, restaurant, or factory work.

I took to the program as if born to it. I was the fastest typist in my class, clocked at more than a hundred words a minute on clunky manual Underwood typewriters, but it was Gregg shorthand that won my heart. The phonetic system of dots and dashes, swoops and curves, loops and hooks, each symbol coded to a letter, word, or phrase, became my own silent language. At home I practiced with radio and TV announcers for fun. In class we were expected to take dictation at 80 to 120 words a minute and transcribe it accurately; certificates were awarded for achievement. I topped out at 160 in tests, higher in class exercises. It was a keen competition among classmates, but the real thrill was surpassing my previous bests, setting new personal records like a marathon runner.

The Roman slave Marcus Tullius Tiro developed the Tironian shorthand system in 63 BCE to record Cicero’s speeches. Early systems in English date back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Thomas Shelton’s Tachygraphy counted Samuel Pepys, Isaac Newton, and Thomas Jefferson among its eminent users. Gregg shorthand, invented in 1888 by Irish immigrant John Gregg, became the dominant form in the U.S., while the earlier Pitman system was more popular in the U.K. Teeline, spelling-based rather than phonetic, was developed in the 1960s and used primarily by journalists. Speedwriting and Stenoscript use letters of the alphabet to abbreviate

words and phrases, like texting today. Dozens of other forms, in numerous languages, were created before the advent of dictating and recording machines. Then computers, which led to a decrease in the use of written shorthand in the workplace and the cessation of classes in secondary and vocational schools.

Gregg Shorthand uses lines and strokes of varying lengths for each letter of the alphabet, with standard abbreviations — called brief forms — for most articles and pronouns and for commonly used words and phrases, like “please,” “sincerely yours,” and “thank you very much.” The brief forms are the system’s key feature, since approximately 60% of spoken English consists of around 600 common words. Users frequently develop their own shortcuts for terms they use frequently. Gregg was revised several times, as late as 1988, adding and changing abbreviations to facilitate greater speed and precision. In competitions, Gregg champions reached 280 words a minute with 99% accuracy. But how fast did the rest of us, the everyday users, need to be? The average person speaks only 125 to 150 words per minute.

Over the next twenty years I held positions that ranged progressively from clerk-typist to executive secretary. My bosses — all male in those days — were confident that all they had to do was speak, and minutes later their words would appear almost magically before them on company letterhead, attractively typed and error-free, margins and spacing just so. With shorthand I could catch their halfway-out-the-door requests too — call so-and-so, write a thank you letter to John Doe, send flowers to my wife (yes, we did that back then) — as they headed off to their three-martini lunches.

Shorthand came in handy in my everyday life as well. Not least of all, I could make private notes, undecipherable to others. My daughter was a pop music

buff from the age of ten, long before the internet and You Tube, and she would call out urgently when a favorite song came on the radio. “Mom, quick, copy down the words for me!” In early Peanuts cartoon strips, Snoopy would dictate, and Woodstock, his little yellow bird buddy, would scribble squiggly hieroglyphics on a miniature steno pad. It was Gregg shorthand, in flawless accuracy, and, like a party trick, I’d amuse family and friends by translating Snoopy’s consumer complaints and love letters. Years later, an on-screen page of shorthand notes in an episode of *Mad Men* had me baffled. It appeared in the opening scene as a reporter interviews Don Draper. I froze the screen repeatedly but couldn’t make sense of the almost-but-not-quite-familiar doodles. I finally decided it must be Teeline or Pitman or “stage shorthand” (i.e., fake); it couldn’t be Gregg.

I wasn’t able to maneuver myself onto an executive track like Peggy in *Mad Men* or Donna in *Suits*, so after two decades of “take a letter” and “pick up my dry-cleaning,” I enrolled at San Diego State University. Working part time, my skills supported me through five years of school, and shorthand was my well-honed weapon. My younger classmates looked on with envy as I took fast and fluent lecture notes. With my master’s degree I re-entered the working world in nonprofit management, where shorthand continued to be useful, at meetings, on the phone, jotting down my own on-the-fly reminders.

I’m retired now and writing. Shorthand notes still inhabit my calendar, to-do lists, notebooks and drafts. A few quick strokes on a cocktail napkin or a Trader Joe’s receipt enable me to capture the elusive idea that flashes into my head and might slip away if I wait too long. Gregg shorthand is embedded permanently in my brain — I even catch myself thinking in it. Like the Pig Latin and “obby-dobby” we spoke in elementary school to

keep secrets from the boys, Gregg is a foreign language at which I'm proficient; now I need to find others with whom to converse.

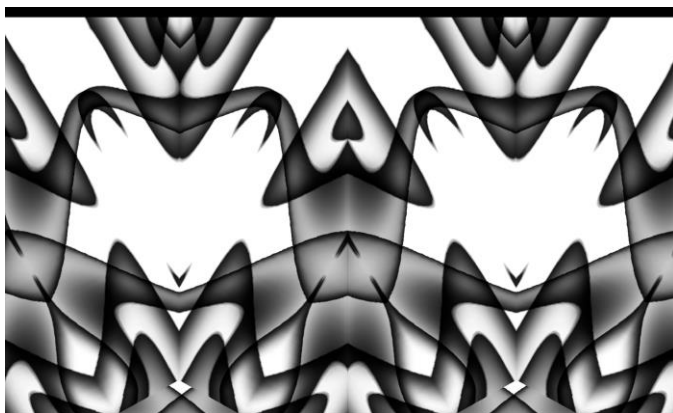
**Asphyxiation**

Michael Estabrook

Poetry

She insists  
she was in the room witnessed  
her mother kneel on the floor  
stick her head in the oven  
after turning on the gas  
asphyxiating herself to death.  
“I was only three  
but remember like it was yesterday.”  
Of course it didn’t happen that way.  
According to the  
obituary article she wasn’t  
even in the kitchen or the house  
when her mother took her own life.  
But I don’t correct her anymore.  
She’s 92 now and  
for some reason needs to take  
this memory to the grave with her.

**The Tinman's Heart**  
Edward Supranowicz  
Art



**Ring. Ring. Ring.**  
Shelbey Winningham  
Fiction

If you don't want to answer the phone — but you don't want to deal with the repercussions — you have to come up with a believable cover story. For instance, tell everyone you know, in the most annoyed tone you can muster, that the line has been down for ages. Or else, change your voicemail to something along the lines of *I'm sorry I am unable to take your call, I have been called away to deal with an emergency. Please leave a message, and I'll try to get back to you.* That way, when you go on not answering the phone and then someone confronts you about it, you can blame it on the repair man who doesn't exist or the emergency that you made up. And what's more, if they ask about the emergency, you can just look off into the distance and say *it's really so sensitive, I wouldn't want to say, not my place to go spreading gossip.* Now, you can avoid all phone calls, from colleagues and relatives and Drew or Zach or Matthew or whoever that man was you went out with last Friday night and never intend to speak to again. Now when the phone goes ring. ring. ring. you can just sit back in your chair and smile and let it ring right off the bloody hook. You aren't responsible for it anymore. You aren't responsible for anything.



**The Thing**  
Shelbey Winningham  
Fiction

The police ask me to describe the perpetrator. They expect me to say he was a man, in his mid to late twenties, that he was of average height and build, that he had a scar or a tattoo on his face that would make him easily recognizable. The first mistake the officers make is assuming the attacker was a man — that the attacker was human.

I don't know how to tell the officers that what came at me on the dark street was not a man or a woman. And it wasn't your traditional monster, either. It didn't have a corporeal form. It didn't appear as an apparition. And what's more, I don't know how to tell the officers that the thing that attacked me on the street came from inside of me. They'd never believe me. They couldn't quite possibly understand.

You see, there is something inside of me. It lives in the dark recesses of my body, somewhere in the deep pit of my stomach, behind my belly button. Sometimes, it stretches it's legs, takes a few laps around my lungs — I know when it's in my lungs, because they feel heavy. It gets hard to breath. Like I am drowning on dry land. Sometimes the thing that lives inside of me is quiet and still, but I know it isn't gone. I can feel it twitch occasionally, involuntarily.

And sometimes, the thing that lives inside of me gets too big for me to handle; it gets too large for my body, and it claws its way up my throat and out of my mouth and then it is outside of my body and god if that isn't almost worse than having it nestled there inside of me. You see,

when it's outside of me, it can hurt the people around me. Its rage knows no bounds. It doesn't believe in remorse or guilt or mercy. And when it gets this big, it can hurt me, too. It takes over my body. It tells me that feeling pain is better than feeling nothing, that hurting others is better than being hurt myself.

To be honest with you, I feel lonely when the thing is not inside of me. I have grown so used to the way it curls into my belly. Sometimes, the thing and I are so close that it feels like the thing doesn't live inside of me...sometimes it seems like the thing *is* me.

**Sunset**

Kirsty A. Niven

Poetry

When you died, the sky seemed to fade,  
dissolving like diluting watercolour.  
One black drop growing, expanding  
its many limbs across the page.  
The colour blotted to monotone,  
scribbled over in indelible ink.

I unravel a poem with lacking words,  
read it aloud and only bubbles come out —  
floating into the atmosphere.  
I imagine you catching them somewhere,  
bursting each hollow tone  
before they hit the greying sand.

It is black too soon. I'm not finished.  
The paper drops from my hand,  
sinking into the saltwater,  
pulled down by some unseen hand.  
Silence washes over with one last breath,  
as a lone star winks down on me.

**One Night**  
Kirsty A. Niven  
Poetry

In the still of the night the moment pauses.  
Heartbeats hushed. Voices lost to lust.  
This dead-end dark could make me anyone.  
I'm sure that's the only reason you're here.  
Lips continue on regardless, not caring anymore;  
happy to be broken, just to feel something.

Light interrupts. Lust flees. Life rushes on.  
I can never be the girl that you want.  
Fluorescence ravages that illusion instantly.  
No parts of our bodies are touching anymore  
and the familiar numbness settles in again.  
Your voice ends it with words I forget.

**The Gaslit Lion**

Kirsty A. Niven

Poetry

You can lock her in a cage,  
silence her voice, hurt her more,  
convince her that meek mice  
were never supposed to roar.

Bolt the door, keep her trapped,  
tell her only you can hear her purr.  
Starve her until she is weak,  
watch the matts form in her fur.

The animal in her will survive,  
salivating for one final fight.  
If you hold a lioness captive,  
who do you blame when they bite?

**Eye of the Storm**

Kirsty A. Niven

Poetry

Breaths ricochet in the dark.  
Bitten tongues hold back so much,  
words I cannot form or actualize —  
words your ears cannot yet hear.  
Your willowy body keeps me standing,  
responsive to every movement,  
reacting but entirely solid.  
Our heartbeats whip up a hurricane,  
surrounded by an eerily still calm.  
They batter through wrecked ribs,  
desperate to reach each other.  
In an eruption of heat and colour,  
they meet for a moment that hangs blissfully.  
Everything slows, pulses become a breeze.  
Breaths ricochet in the dark.

**Divorce Papers**

Gregory T. Janetka

Fiction

It took Edward two hours to move and two months to move on, two months of staring at her dog-eared copy of *The Odyssey*, two months of listening to the metal-on-metal *skree-skree-skree* of Charles' wheel to nowhere. Finding \$20 the morning of the settlement was more than auspicious, it was a necessary act of a vengeful god. The judge had muttered something about "child support" and "grievous moral misconduct," yet there were no children, no morals, only self-loathing all around. He played the day back: coffee, courthouse, broke. Broker than broke — lacking the basic understanding of money, of which piece of paper was to be exchanged for goods and services and which was kindling for the grill. Fishing the *Tribune* obituaries from the trash, he compared it against the \$20. Both had pictures of the deceased, both had fancy signatures from a time when people still gave a damn, but only one could survive the wash and that made it worth killing for. But why paper? Why not empty Coca-Cola bottles or outdated geometry books? Something bulky with weight, something you knew you lost when you lost it. Who's in charge here, goddammit? The claustrophobic room gave no reply. Get yourself together, man. Okay, what was left? What's your ROI? There was Homer, unmoved, staring from the table, warning of sirens and storms, and Charles, who just defecated in his food bowl. Homer was reduced to words on a page but Charles, Charles had tubes to hide in, a wheel to keep fit, glass walls a hundred feet high to keep out the world. Scoffing at the unearned luxury, Edward threw the money and newspaper on the stove, lit the gas, and watched as both burned without a single care for the unending desires of man.

**In the morning, he'll be in Costa Rica**

Devan Burton

Poetry

and the ink used to wish him well dries on a birthday card.

He wants a land where I'm not his father.

He grows into being his own man, I cannot bother.

With enough time, he compares the landscape before him.

In East Tennessee, the mountains possess smoke.

In Central America, earth's surface talks to the clouds.

Our hearts beat the same when we see something new.

Our voices are closer than we thought they would be.

For his 18th birthday my son travels, and his birthday card ages.



**Black Lives in an Apple Orchard**

Devan Burton

Poetry

Red apples are above us.  
Crimson but we do not think of blood.  
First fruits kiss the sunrise  
(or maybe the sunrise kisses the first fruits)  
in an orchard, in the morning.  
Rust-bathed trucks stand still.  
The men have left them  
telling people holding an apple nearby,  
'that's a good one.'  
The Tennessee apple orchard  
was a former plantation and we are black.  
With our arms are locked (my wife),  
no one doubts that we are together.  
When we step in unison,  
no one shares their disbelief.  
We stand where Adam and Eve  
could have stood, and like the first couple,  
we are banished. The apples in front of us  
remain there.

**What Rain Knows**

Devan Burton

Poetry

The rain has a secret.  
We know when she arrives.  
The clouds applaud,  
the sun hides,  
and all the birds  
fly  
to the places  
we pray to see.

Little drops  
turn  
into puddles.  
The creeks and ponds,  
they belong somewhere, too.

If we ask the rain,  
she will be polite.  
The lady will wait  
until we're ready  
for an answer.

**Breakfast Poetry**

Devan Burton

Poetry

Let us have breakfast  
while the receding darkness  
comes to terms with its function.  
The coffee brews,  
the light shines from the ceiling,  
and the traffic clocks in.

This breakfast is not extraordinary.  
Man has the meal every morning.  
Woman thinks about the eggs  
before the rest of the family.  
Let us have breakfast,  
because it is the right thing to do.

The blessed fast  
we break  
because we can.  
Toast and tea.  
You and me.  
At a table scattered with poetry.

**The Myth of Frank Sinatra**

Devan Burton

Poetry

Every man thinks they're Frank Sinatra  
when the moon is close enough.  
We raise our hands  
as if  
the light flourishes  
because we snap our fingers.

With our close friends  
we answer to Francis,  
and the music is sharp —  
ice cubes clinking  
in a small glass of whiskey.  
Dignified for Sunday night.  
Sustainable for Wednesday evening.  
Bold and intoxicating,  
like sailors on shore leave.

The Hoboken poet scats his way to Las Vegas,  
and again we think of the moon,  
witchcraft, and the gender of luck.  
With a black fedora crooked on the head,  
we hum a tune  
pondering the amount of string it takes to hold the world.

**Leaving**  
Matthue Roth  
Poetry

putting you to bed before my flight  
you're hushed, thoughtful, unfighting  
so peaceful I worry

you don't know what I'm doing  
till you say, *Papa airplane?*  
and nod with knee-jerk knowledge

everything goes exceedingly well  
till after your water, your sheepy, your  
blanket, no blanket, then blanket

you settle in peacefully and I doubt myself.  
I close the door. A scream on that side,  
a sigh on this. I will come back. Everything

will be normal again.

**Barrier**

Mirana Comstock  
Poetry

and the barrier goes up

like a passing limo's tinted window  
I stare into  
and see only me  
looking back

and the barrier goes up

like a sliding patio door  
a partygoer stumbles into  
that wasn't there  
a moment before

and the barrier goes up

like a sunrise-reflecting high rise  
unsuspecting birds fly right into  
I too was fooled  
when we soared

and the barrier goes up

but I have learned  
to turn away

**Disaster Math**  
Mirana Comstock  
Poetry

12, 18, 6  
the number of inches at which  
you lose control  
and water takes over  
a car, SUV, me  
suddenly  
swept away

12, 18, 6  
funny how comforting  
disaster math can be  
as if knowing the formula  
contains the solution  
as if seeing something coming  
can make it turn away

but the storm-carved dune  
I scrambled up on  
crumbled beneath my feet  
and the deepening rivulet  
made a U-turn behind me  
cutting off the street  
like one of those  
weather-porn videos  
on cable TV

12, 18, 6  
the numbers at which  
you lose control  
eventually

as if seeing something coming

ever made anything  
stay away



**His Last North Beach Tour**

Mark J. Mitchell

Poetry

Heroic ghosts trail him, soft as flags, still hip  
after decades in books. Words drop from trees  
in Washington Square. They lodge in pavement.  
His route's a circle. He talks it all twice.  
Spiced air floats above pale girls with dark lips.  
Italian drifts on the 4 o'clock breeze.  
He guides, his voice lowered — not a lament —  
a prayer to honor the late Elvis Christ.

**Jambalaya House/ Dead Mailman**

David Lewitzky

Poetry

Dead mailman comes to me  
Unsettling my declining days  
Mine shaft eyes, a zero mouth  
Blood bandanna round his neck  
He shows me what's what  
In my juba-juba house

Dead mailman brings me tidings from beyond  
Mailbag's full of mushroom dust  
Scorched spoons and last year's apples  
The walls and ceilings mutter things  
I do not understand  
In my Jekyll /Hyde house

Dead mailman comes in hob-nail boots  
String tie and studded vest  
He's got a scraggy mailbird on a leash  
My windows all are black  
And mean me no good  
In my Jeremiah house

**Animal Attraction**

Lindsey Kinsella

Fiction

He was standing on the cathedral steps at 10am, high enough to get a good view of anyone purposely emerging from the market throng towards the grand building. Kay hid a little distance away for a moment, watching to be sure it was him.

She wasn't surprised to notice his profile picture was up to date, which was honest of him. *I wouldn't be meeting him if I didn't think he was trustworthy.* She knew Matt taught at the college on the outskirts of the city — the Christian one — which she took as a good sign, although she wasn't a believer. Online dating is fraught with danger; you have to minimise the risks from what you can glean.

*Handshake or a kiss on the cheek? Not both cheeks, surely. No, he wouldn't be the type to expect that.* Matt waved to her, smiling with recognition and then, as she presented herself beside him, placed a guiding hand at her back — problem solved.

"Hi Kay." His voice was as gentle as she had expected. "Coffee?"

"Yes, morning Matt. Isn't this strange? You live in my computer, don't you?"

And soon they were sitting in the spring sunshine outside a bistro on the edge of Market Square sipping overpriced, supposedly Italian coffees with vegan milk, awkwardly chatting and people-watching.

"Have you noticed how many couples look like each other?" he asked. "Perhaps that's what the attraction is, or maybe they start to look alike over time."

They slipped into a game of 'match or mismatch' to test his theory: each couple spotted was declared a match or a mismatch based on their looks and expressions, then

an estimate was made of how long the oblivious pair had been together.

“Do you think anyone playing our game would say we were a match, Kay?”

“Well, they’d guess we recently met because we’ve actually been talking. Couples run out of things to say once they know everything there is to know about each other.”

“Perhaps they just don’t bother eventually,” Matt suggested. “Or they could be hiding their inner thoughts to stay out of trouble.”

“Maybe *she*’s given up trying to convince *him* she has her own opinions and there’s more to her than being his wife,” Kay guessed, noticing a weary middle-aged woman walking ever so slightly behind her confidently striding man.

“Sometimes people think they know you and it’s not always wise to correct misconceptions,” he answered. “You might disappoint them.”

That was the trigger. She didn’t seem to be able to hold back. It was a risk, but he seemed genuine and, if this was going anywhere, she would behave with integrity from the start. People’s assumptions had worn her down over the years and today was an opportunity to show her true self, even if his Christian sensibilities meant he would be repulsed.

“... I was only a little girl. Who in their right mind thinks a cattle market is a suitable place to take a four-year-old? It was terrifying. The noise, the smell, the inhumanity. I’d cry into my dinner for weeks after, gagging on the meat my mum insisted I ate. So, when I left home, I was finally able to become a vegetarian. I didn’t have to eat creatures ever again.”

Matt laughed at “creatures.”

“Since then and especially now that I’m vegan, everyone wrongly assumes I love animals. Vegans are

animal lovers by default, you see. They almost always have pets, which I don't agree with. Animals belong outside, not in houses and it freaks me out to see them trapped in tanks and cages or on the end of a lead attached to their throats. They must be furious about it. Furious and unpredictable.

I hate all animals, although I've never been able to admit it to anyone. Even people who hate cats apparently love dogs, don't they? Ugh! I think they're all vile and now you think *I'm* vile." *Oh Gawd! Did I just accuse this decent, Christian man?*

Matt's head dropped as he looked down at his hands. The sudden silence told Kay he was deep in thought and she noticed he was holding his palms together. *Is he praying for me?*

"I do understand," he finally mused. "You see, everyone assumes I believe in God."

**Break Room 3:43 Wednesday**

Marc Janssen

Poetry

It's raining

The assertive click of heels disappears behind the sound  
of a closing door.

Mismatched chairs

Jostle around tired silent sleeping tables, empty, messy,  
and worn.

The break room

Is full of the sound of vending machines and vents and  
fluorescent light tubes.

It's raining

Reflected through the window where the world is muted  
and I can see myself.

**Ceiling Tile  $\approx$  Andromeda**

Marc Janssen

Poetry

Above and depart,  
 Embracing — enveloping — holding —  
 When the hallways fill with jealousy, laughing, doubt-  
     The adolescent clang of love and lockers;  
 The off-white cloudless sky, tunnels the sound, jumbles  
 it, confuses.  
 An empty surface to slap back the footsteps of dancing  
 janitors  
 Perched and all seeing, constantly above.

$\approx$

Chained to the deep sky —  
 Furiously waiting for flying horses and telescopes,  
 For the stabbing knives of science  
     To be blunted by unconscious imagination.  
 Dreams echo in the blackness of space, shifting stars  
 Into connect-the-dot patterns.  
 And turn the jealousy of gods to stone and fire —  
 Perched and all seeing, constantly above.

**Moss**

Anastasia Cojocaru

Poetry

I'm here. You just don't know it yet.  
Come closer. See me growing.  
There is a kingdom that I'm building  
with every red brick that I climb,  
with every tree I cover  
and here and there I come and grow  
no harm.

A young man put his head on my pillow,  
my pillow made of weeping green.  
He slept for hours and hours  
in a moist embrace.  
Let me fill the deepness of your heart,  
let your heart become my forest and just  
sleep on.



**Inside out**

Anastasia Cojocaru

Poetry

Come closer to the place  
where a journey that  
has waited for you all your life  
is about to start.  
You're lying on the ground  
listening to the earth beating.  
Just open your eyes to see  
the tree inside your ear;  
hear it growing from inside out.

**Indefinite shapes**

Anastasia Cojocaru

Poetry

Looking through the hole  
dug in the center of a glass ball  
I see the world upside down;  
humans walking  
with their heads turned  
to the unpredictable sky  
instead of facing the earth.  
Their hands gently brushing the grass,  
their steps leaving no prints  
in the fresh moist ground.

**Daisies**

Anastasia Cojocaru

Poetry

on meadows  
behind  
this row of  
houses  
you're walking  
past  
you'll find us  
waiting  
for little  
girls  
to make them  
queens  
with our pierced  
stems  
bleeding mute  
green  
in countless  
crowns  
on dainty  
Heads.

## **A Civilization Heads to Extinction**

Sankar Chatterjee

Fiction

### Part I

It was a well-folded colored poster came along with a plea for a charitable donation in day's mail from an UN-affiliated humanitarian organization. A recent photo covered one entire side, while the other side described the organization's mission of helping displaced refugees within the borders of different host nations. It has been estimated by UN that 1% of current world population of seven billion has now been living as refugees; that would amount to 70 million of the world's citizenry. The picture was taken by an Italian photographer, from a hovering news-gathering helicopter over the Aegean Sea in a dark night. The searchlight from the helicopter illuminated an open-air boat, jam-packed with humans of all ages, from Asian and African subcontinents, attempting to enter into European territory without any permit. A closer look would spot an Asian soccer-fan wearing an Argentinean uniform of Lionel Messi, while one from Africa wearing a New York Yankees baseball cap. They were from many different poor nations fleeing poverty, civil wars, religious persecution, and many other conflicts. Human smugglers found them, charged them heftily, while offering the chance of a better and safer life on the other side of the turbulent sea. Already, several thousand perished in past few years attempting to cross this strait in flimsy boats like that one in the picture. But the hope of a better future made another new group fearless, taking part in this treacherous journey. What's there to lose?

Senator Beamy Tucks, a newly minted US policymaker looked intently at the poster. Four years

ago, she stepped on a roadside home-made crude explosive device, while serving her country in a faraway war. Her both legs flew away, while the blood-soaked mangled body lay motionless until she was rescued and air-lifted. After several critical surgeries and fitted with two titanium legs, she would return to life sitting in a wheelchair. During her recovery, she never lost her hope of coming back to a regular life against the fear of being a burden to the society. In last election, she defeated an opposition career politician whose supporters unabashedly criticized her novice political platform by chanting “She has no legs to stand on a strong platform.” She would respond “In fact, I do stand on two unbuckled tungsten ones.” Voters would elect her for service to the country, bravery, and optimism. She took another look at the poster, murmuring “Hope, the savior.”

Her phone rang. An aide informed that the nation’s immigration bureau was about to deport a decorated veteran. Born in Mexico, the fellow came here as a child, later becoming a naturalized citizen to join the army. Engagement in multiple international wars from last few years started to take a heavy toll on returning vets who served in various war theatres. Drug-addiction, suicide, and violence against family members had been all too common and prevalent now. This particular fellow was arrested in a street-corner drug-bust, branding him a criminal. Recently passed xenophobic new immigration law immediately stripped him off his foreign-born citizenship status, making him an *illegal alien*. Looking at her own artificial legs, Ms. Tucks pondered “But, what about his service and sacrifice to our nation?” At the same time, the image from that poster flashed in her brain. She now wondered “And his hope of a better and safer life staying in the richest country on earth!” Soon, her colleagues heard the noise from her speeding wheelchair through the hallway en route to the senate

chamber to introduce a new bill banning this cruel aspect of the new law, especially when it came to foreign-born patriots.

## Part II

It was a gorgeous summer day in Cape Breton in Nova Scotia in Canada. Max and Cathy were exploring the natural beauty of the region for its mountains, lakes and coastal landscapes. Nova Scotia (New Scotland) was originally inhabited by indigenous Mi'kmaq population, later to be settled by migrants from Europe and loyalists from the US revolutionary war. One early morning, the couple ventured into a locally famous breakfast place, when Max picked up a copy of the day's newspaper. He noticed a strange front-page image of what appeared to be a little red doll curled up on a beach somewhere. As the couple sat down, Max started to read the caption as well as the associated story with the image. And that's when enormity of this seemingly simple image revealed itself. In fact, it was not a washed-ashore doll of a little girl from somewhere far, but a life-less body of a little Syrian boy. The story went on to describe how he, along with his parents as well as other desperate refugees, was trying to flee a war-torn country. Human smugglers, after charging heftily, put the whole group in a dingy boat to cross the Aegean Sea. In a stormy dark night, the boat capsized. While some swam and some were rescued, this little boy drowned. Mighty waves then carried him to the shore of promise land of Europe. The Italian photographer, covering the mishap, ventured a couple of miles extra on the beach to discover this little boy's unresponsive body. In an irony, the boy and his family were in the process of legally coming to Canada with the help of his uncle, a naturalized citizen of the country. But the bureaucratic delay in processing the

paperwork forced the family to take this alternate dangerous adventure. Now, the sad and devastated citizens of Canada were feeling remorseful in their failings.

Two years later, in another gorgeous morning Max picked up his daily newspaper from the driveway of his home in the suburb of New York in US. Immediately, his heart started pounding. There was a front-page image. A little boy, wearing a blue ruffled uniform with number 38 on his front and sleeves, was standing in front of what seems like a cage. Recently, rumors were circulating that current xenophobic administration ordered border security-guards to practice inhumane separation of little children from their parents who were attempting to enter the country fleeing poverty, crimes and violence from their own countries. Now, a brave photographer, in the dark of the night, was able to snap a few shots to document the events unfolding.

Max, the only son of holocaust-survivor parents, suddenly remembered the blue prisoner's number that was permanently etched on his now deceased-dad's arm by the Nazis in the Auschwitz death camp. Max stood still on driveway. Inside his brain, his dad's prisoner number and this little boy's uniform number raced towards each other like two giant distant stars. And then they collided with a big bang!

**I don't believe**

Christine A. Brooks

Poetry

calls were made, to loved  
ones & friends  
a small room existed just  
for me, with soft pink  
lampshades and morning light  
beaming in warm rays  
across my small nursery room  
as diapers were stacked,  
toys placed carefully, but  
not stacked  
in a soft white toybox

names were chosen,  
plans were made, people  
lined up to smell my  
head

you didn't want me



**life**

Christine A. Brooks  
Poetry

it's not Russian roulette if there  
are no bullets,

it's not Russian roulette if there  
is no gun

no, you see  
there is no gun no bullets & no  
sweat beading up  
in the creases of my pants  
causing me to slide around  
just a little, as I wiggle  
to get comfortable,  
wiggle to arrange & rearrange  
my ugly beige work pants

to soak up the puddle I sit  
in now  
of sweat and dots of urine &  
blood from my stomach that  
leaks

insisting it knows better  
how I should eat, what & how  
much I should drink  
and what I think about when  
the lids finally  
— finally get heavy

it's not Russian roulette you  
see, if as the lids  
heavy now with drink &  
drug and exhaustion

close and twitch

no  
it's not Russian roulette at  
all

under those lids that think  
about the sweat and blood  
and stink of Tuesdays  
it's something worse that as  
the blackout comes, I nod  
knowing this thing we live  
the menial job and small talk  
will not take me

it's not Russian roulette if I  
never die

completely

## Contributor Bios

### Carolyn Adams

Carolyn Adams lived all of her life in Houston, Texas, where she developed a love of poetry as a teenager, eventually finding publication and community as an adult. She was even a finalist for Houston Poet Laureate in 2013. Then, in 2017, she moved across the country with her husband, and now lives in Beaverton, Oregon. It was hard at first, leaving behind her family and a broad network of fellow poets who felt like family, but she persevered. Now, she loves her adopted state, is an associate editor for Mojave River Review, and she has even more poet friends who nurture her.

### Kathryn M. Barber

Kathryn M. Barber lives on the coast of North Carolina, where she teaches English and Creative Writing at the University of North Carolina Wilmington. Despite having grown up a preacher's daughter in the south, she finds the shore of the Atlantic the most appropriate church. Originally from Tennessee, much of her writing is informed by mountains, classic country music, and place. On the days she misses living in Nashville, she opens her office door so she can hear Clyde Edgerton playing his banjo across the faculty hallway. In graduate school, she was voted most likely to hold a book launch party at the Grand Ole Opry.

### CL Bledsoe

CL Bledsoe's latest poetry collection is *Trashcans in Love*. His latest short story collection is *The Shower Fixture Played the Blues*. His latest novel is *The Funny Thing About...* Bledsoe lives in northern Virginia with his daughter and blogs, with Michael Gushue, at <https://medium.com/@howtoeven>

Eimear Bourke

Eimear Bourke is an Irish idealist and perpetual dreamer.

Christine A. Brooks

Christine A. Brooks is a graduate of Western New England University with her B.A. in Literature and her M.F.A. from Bay Path University in Creative Nonfiction. Most recently a series of poems, *The Ugly Five*, are in the 2018 summer issue of *Door Is A Jar Magazine* and her poem, *The Writer*, is in the June, 2018 issue of *The Cabinet of Heed Literary Magazine*. Three poems, *Puff*, *Sister* and *Grapes* are in the 5th issue of *The Mystic Blue Review*. Her vignette, *Finding God*, is in the December 2018 issue of *Riggwelter Press*, and her series of vignettes, *Small Packages*, was named a semifinalist at *Gazing Grain Press* in August 2018. Her essay, *What I Learned from Being Accidentally Celibate for Five Years* was recently featured in *HuffPost*, *MSN*, *Yahoo* and *Daily Mail UK*. Her book of poems, *The Cigar Box Poems*, is due out in late 2019.

Devan Burton

Devan Burton writes poetry knowing that it will take time and toil. "My goal is to be readable and to create poetry that encourages a reader to contribute a verse of their own." Devan Burton is an Assistant Professor of English at Walters State Community College, and he is the author of *The Will of the World*.

Sankar Chatterjee

Sankar Chatterjee, a minority immigrant in US possesses the passion for traveling worldwide to immerse in new cultures and customs to discover the forgotten history of the societies while attempting to find the common thread that connects the humanity as a whole for its continuity.

His most recent essays appeared in *Parentheses*, *Boston Accent*, *Foliate Oak*, *Wilderness House Literary Review*, *Door is a Jar*, and *Pamplemousse* (in press) among others elsewhere.

Anastasia Cojocaru

Anastasia Cojocaru and I am a graduate of The University of Aberdeen in English and International Relations. I have also completed a master's degree in Environmental Policy at Sciences Po Paris. I am a queer woman of Romanian heritage. For the past four years, I've been dealing with depression and other mental health issues. Writing poetry for me is an outlet as well as a way to communicate my experiences. My poetry and short prose are inspired by my memories growing up in post-communist Romania, the time I spent abroad, and Romanian superstitions, myths & folklore.

Mirana Comstock

Raised in a family of noted creatives, Mirana Comstock's award-winning screenwriting, photography and music continue to have a strong influence on her poetic voice. She has won and is currently in contention for multiple screenwriting awards. Mirana has also created multi-media advertising campaigns for such clients as Timberland, Seagram's and JBL. Her photographs have been exhibited extensively and are in the collections of the 9/11 Memorial Museum and the NY Historical Society. A Juilliard-trained musician, she is mixing new music as singer/songwriter/ keyboard player for alt dance duo Theory of Tides.

Sandy Coomer

Sandy Coomer is the author of three poetry chapbooks, including *Rivers Within Us* (Unsolicited Press) and a full-length collection, *Available Light*, (Iris Press).

Sandy is the founding editor of the online poetry journal Rockvale Review, and the director of Rockvale Writers' Colony. Her favorite word is "believe."

Michael Estabrook

Michael Estabrook small press poet since the 1980s striving always for greater clarity and concision rendering language more succinct and precise more accessible and appealing a Sisyphean adventure for sure. Retired now writing more and working more outside just noticed two Cooper's hawks staked out in the yard or rather above it which explains the nerve-wracked chipmunks. *The Poet's Curse, A Miscellany* is a recent collection (The Poetry Box, 2019).

Tom Franken

Tom Franken is a graduate of Youngstown State University in Youngstown, Ohio. He is the co-founder of bone&marrow, an upcoming online literary magazine. His work has appeared in, or is forthcoming in Penguin Review, Havik, Eskimo Pie, Hare in Flight, The Magnolia Review, Dirty Girls Magazine, and Volney Road Review. You can follow his ramblings and memes on Twitter and Instagram @TomFranken21

Mukund Gnanadesikan

Mukund Gnanadesikan lives in Napa, CA. He is a poet, novelist, and children's story author whose work has been published or is forthcoming in Adelaide Literary Magazine, The Ibis Head Review, Tuck Magazine, The Bangalore Review, Bloodroot Literary Magazine, Blood and Thunder: Musings on the Art of Medicine, Tanka Journal, Junto Magazine, Cathexis Northwest, and The Cape Rock.

### Robin Gow

Robin Gow's poetry has recently been published in POETRY, New Delta Review, and Roanoke Review. He is a graduate student and professor at Adelphi University pursuing an MFA in Creative Writing. He is the Editor at Large for Village of Crickets and Social Media Coordinator for Oyster River Pages. He is an out and proud bisexual transgender man passionate about LGBT issues. He loves poetry that lirts in and out of reality and his queerness is also the central axis of his work.

### Mitchell Krockmalnik Grabois

Work by Mitchell Krockmalnik Grabois appears in magazines worldwide, including DOOR IS A JAR. Nominated for numerous prizes, he was awarded the 2017 Booranga Centre (Australia) Fiction Prize. His novel, Two-Headed Dog, based on his work in a state hospital, is available for Kindle and as a print edition. His poetry collection, THE ARREST OF MR. KISSY FACE, published in March 2019 by Pski's Porch Publications, is available here. Visit his website to read more of his poetry and flash fiction.

### Mehdi Hasan

Having a multidisciplinary background, Mehdi Hasan is a Researcher by profession, who chugs tea whenever he can. Check his portfolio for more work and details.

<https://mehdihasan.portfoliobox.net/>

### Gregory T. Janetka

Gregory T. Janetka is a writer from Chicago who knows a little about a lot of things. His work has been featured in Foliate Oak, Glass Mountain, Gravel, Heartwood, and other publications. He is currently looking for representation for his first novel and novella. More of his writings can be found at [gregorytjanetka.com](http://gregorytjanetka.com).

### Marc Janssen

Marc Janssen was formerly a lot of things. Now he is the coordinator of the Salem Poetry Project as well as the Salem Poetry Festival. His work is scattered around the internet and publications and anthologies like Penumbra, Slant, Cirque Journal, Off the Coast, and The Ottawa Arts Journal. He is known as an open mic warrior and occasional featured reader.

### Lindsey Kinsella

I am an English teacher, academic writer, non-fiction blogger and writing enthusiast. My essays from the point of view of a fifty-plus female are available to read on my blog: [closetdramablog.wordpress.com](http://closetdramablog.wordpress.com)

### Layla Lenhardt

Layla Lenhardt is Editor in Chief of 1932 Quarterly. She has been most recently published in Poetry Quarterly, Pennsylvania Literary Journal, The Opiate, The Charleston Anvil, and Scars. Her forthcoming Poetry Book, These Ghosts are Mine is due for publication this fall. She currently resides in Indianapolis.

### David Lewitzky

I'm a 79 y. o. former social worker/family therapist living in the sad and funky city of Buffalo, New York. As a young poet I studied with Charles Olson. He is my spirit father. In 2002 I resumed writing poetry after a 35 year hiatus. During that time I walked around with a sandwich board in my brain declaring me: Poet. Not writing! I've published about 100 poems in a variety of journals such as Nimrod, Passages North and Red Rock Review.



### Alice Lowe

Alice Lowe reads and writes about life and literature, food and family. Recent essays have appeared in *Ascent*, *Bloom*, *Concho River Review*, *Hobart*, *Superstition Review*, and *Waccamaw Review*. Her work has been cited in the Best American Essays and nominated for Pushcart Prizes and Best of the Net. Alice is the author of numerous essays and reviews on Virginia Woolf's life and work, including two monographs published by Cecil Woolf Publishers in London. Alice lives in San Diego, California; read her work at [www.aliceloweblogs.wordpress.com](http://www.aliceloweblogs.wordpress.com).

### Linda Malnack

Linda Malnack's poetry appears in *Amherst Review*, *Blackbird*, *Pontoon*, the *Seattle Review*, and *Willow Springs*. She has been nominated twice for the Pushcart Prize and won a Writers Award from *The Nassau Review* in 2014. Linda's chapbook, *21 Boxes*, was published by dancing girl press in 2016. She is a long-time Co-editor for the on-line poetry journal, *Switched-on Gutenberg*, and an Assistant Poetry Editor for *Crab Creek Review*.

### Bruce McRae

Bruce McRae, a Canadian musician currently residing on Salt Spring Island BC, is a multiple Pushcart nominee with over 1,400 poems published internationally in magazines such as *Poetry*, *Rattle* and the *North American Review*. His books are 'The So-Called Sonnets (Silenced Press); 'An Unbecoming Fit Of Frenzy; (Cawing Crow Press) and 'Like As If' (Pski's Porch), *Hearsay* (The Poet's Haven).

### Mark J. Mitchell

Mark J. Mitchell's latest novel, *The Magic War* just appeared from Loose Leaves Publishing. A Full-length collection of poems will be released next year by Encircle Publications. He studied writing at UC Santa Cruz under Raymond Carver and George Hitchcock. His work has appeared in the several anthologies and hundreds of periodicals. Three of his chapbooks — *Three Visitors*, *Lent*, 1999, and *Artifacts and Relics* — and the novel, *Knight Prisoner* are available through Amazon and Barnes and Noble. He lives with his wife the activist and documentarian, Joan Juster and makes a living pointing out pretty things in San Francisco. A meager online presence can be found at <https://www.facebook.com/MarkJMitchellwriter/>

### B. C. Nance

B. C. Nance is a writer who has not given up his day job. Professionally he is a historical archaeologist who literally knows where the bodies are buried. After wandering the neighborhood in the evening looking for his lost waistline, he writes fiction and poetry.

### Kirsty A. Niven

Kirsty A. Niven lives in Dundee, Scotland. Her writing has appeared in anthologies such as *Landfall*, *A Prince Tribute* and *Of Burgers and Barrooms*. She has also featured in several journals and magazines, including *The Dawntreader*, *Cicada Magazine*, *Dundee Writes* and *Word Fountain*. Kirsty's work can also be found online on sites such as *Cultured Vultures*, *Atrium Poetry* and *Nine Muses Poetry*.

### E. Martin Pedersen

E. Martin Pedersen, originally from San Francisco, has lived for over 35 years in eastern Sicily where he teaches

English at the local university. His poetry has appeared in *The James Dickey Review*, *Ink in Thirds*, *Mused*, *Oddville*, *Former People*, *The Bitchin' Kitsch* and others. Martin is an alum of the Squaw Valley Community of Writers.

Deborah Purdy

Deborah Purdy lives and writes outside Philadelphia. She has worked as a research scientist and as a reference librarian. Her poems have appeared in *Gravel*, *Cleaver Magazine*, and *The American Poetry Journal*. She enjoys reading and creating fiber art. She collects found objects to incorporate into her art.

Matthue Roth

My work has been published in *Ploughshares* and *Tin House*, and I was shortlisted for *The Best American Short Stories 2018*. My picture book *My First Kafka* was called “eerie and imaginative” by the *New Yorker*. By day, I’m a writer at Google.

Anne Rundle

Anne Rundle’s poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in *Artful Dodge* and *Common Threads*. She has a Master of Fine Arts from Ashland University. She taught high school English for seven years, but now works for a local community college. Her poem “Now the Teacher Becomes the Student” won the 2017 Ides of March contest. Anne resides in Westerville, Ohio.

Sandip Saha

Sandip Saha is a chemical engineer and doctorate (PhD) in metallurgical engineering from India. He is a scientist, an engineer and a poet. He spent his service life till 60 years of age in science and engineering. He started devoting time in poetry writing at the last stage of

service career. He likes traveling and traveled many countries including US, UK, France, Russia, Singapore and more.

Mir-Yashar Seyedbagheri

Mir-Yashar is a graduate of Colorado State University's MFA program in fiction. He is the recipient of two Honorable Mentions from Glimmer Train and has had work nominated for the Best Small Fictions. His work has appeared or is forthcoming in journals such as *The Write City Magazine*, *DREGINALD*, *The Ekphrastic Review*, and *Sinkhole Mag*.

Christopher Stolle

Christopher Stolle's writing has appeared most recently in *Tipton Poetry Journal*, *Flying Island*, *Edify Fiction*, *Contour*, *The New Southern Fugitives*, *The Gambler*, *Gravel*, *The Light Ekphrastic*, *Sheepshead Review*, and *Plath Poetry Project*. He works as an acquisitions and development editor for Penguin Random House. He lives in Richmond, Indiana.

Edward Supranowicz

Edward Michael Supranowicz grew up on a small farm in one part of Appalachia. Both sides of his family worked in the steel mills and coalmines in other parts of Appalachia.

Shelbey Winningham

Shelbey Winningham is a senior Creative Writing major at Hendrix College in Conway, Arkansas. An Arkansas native, Shelbey has always harbored a love for reading and writing. Her work has appeared in *Underground*, *Arkana*, and the *Hendrix Aonian*.

## **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.

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.

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

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 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)