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SPRING 2022

SANTA CLARA REVIEW



FEATURING
JOHN SIBLEY WILLIAMS



SANTA
CLARA
REVIEW

volume 109 / issue 02

COVER ART BY **KAPI MICHALSKA**
FRONT COVER / *IT'S ALL FUN AND GAMES UNTIL SOMEONE LOSES AN EYE*
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VOLUME 109 / ISSUE 02

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EDITOR'S NOTE

EMMA KULI

volume 109 / issue 02

DEAR READER,

Pocket these poems like the seashells you collected as a kid. Store these stories like trading cards kept in your shoebox. Tuck your experience of this art away safely. You'll want to hold on to the magic within this book.

Our magazine is the careful work of many hands. I am so grateful to the talented team behind this issue. This beautiful book came together because of the perseverance, teamwork, and dedication of our leadership staff, assistants, associates, editorial board, and faulty advisors.

I am deeply thankful for the contributors of this publication. Without the creative craftsmanship and persevering passion of these skilled storytellers, this issue would be a collection of empty pages.

This anthology is a love letter to the literary community who persisted forward against the swelling obstacles and unprecedented difficulties of the past few years. *The Santa Clara Review* holds an unfolding story of art's healing, uniting power.

My time as Editor in Chief has been a truly joyful and greatly rewarding adventure because of the incredible people by my side throughout this journey. Thank you to the unwavering guides, the literary warriors, and the dedicated creatives behind this stunning collection.

Reader, keep this issue safe. These storied pages are treasures.

Enjoy!

EMMA KULI
editor in chief

CONTENT WARNING

volume 109 / issue 02

DEAR READER,

We are so excited for you to enjoy Volume 109.2. However, we would like to warn you that some of the works within this issue cover sensitive subjects, including references to drug addiction, violence, and death. Please email santaclarareview@gmail.com if you would like more information regarding which works may merit content warnings.

Sincerely,

THE SANTA CLARA REVIEW TEAM

JOHN SIBLEY WILLIAMS

featured poet

John Sibley Williams is the author of *Scale Model of a Country at Dawn* (Cider Press Review Book Award, 2021), *The Drowning House* (Elixir Press Poetry Award, 2021), *As One Fire Consumes Another* (Orison Poetry Prize, 2019), *Skin Memory* (Backwaters Prize, University of Nebraska Press, 2019), *Summon* (JuxtaProse Chapbook Prize, 2019), *Disinheritance, and Controlled Hallucinations*. His book *Sky Burial: New & Selected Poems* is forthcoming in translated form by the Portuguese press do lado esquerdo. He has also served as editor of two Northwest poetry anthologies, *Alive at the Center* (Ooligan Press, 2013) and *Motionless from the Iron Bridge* (barebones books, 2013).

A twenty-seven-time Pushcart nominee, John is the winner of numerous awards, including the Laux/Millar Prize, Wabash Prize, Philip Booth Award, Janet B. McCabe Poetry Prize, American Literary Review Poetry Contest, Phyllis Smart-Young Prize, The 46er Prize, Nancy D. Hargrove Editors' Prize, Confrontation Poetry Prize, and Vallum Award for Poetry. Previous publishing credits include: *Best American Poetry*, *Yale Review*, *Midwest Quarterly*, *Southern Review*, *Colorado Review*, *Sycamore Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Massachusetts Review*, *Poet Lore*, *Saranac Review*, *Atlanta Review*, *TriQuarterly*, *Columbia Poetry Review*, *Mid-American Review*, *Poetry Northwest*, *Third Coast*, and various anthologies.

John holds an MFA in Creative Writing from Rivier University and an MA in Book Publishing from Portland State University. He is the founder and head teacher of Caesura Poetry Workshop, a virtual workshop series, and serves as co-founder and editor of *The Inflectionist Review*. He also works as a poetry editor and book coach. He lives in Portland, Oregon with his partner and boisterous young twins, Kaiya and Addy.

JOHN SIBLEY WILLIAMS
poetry

THERE ARE NO ANSWERS IN THE MOUTHS OF THE DEAD

or arroyos so dry / the memory of / ~~war~~ water
doesn't / hurt like a child / lost to ~~smallpox~~ war

or manhood / stitched together / from absences
threaded through / ~~entry~~ ~~exit~~ wounds / my milkwarm &

~~sanctified~~ stolen language / today the sunrise over / this sun-
less field is / still a mouth & the mouth / is still /

silent & / the silence of the ~~once-mighty~~ / river is
still / a hunger traced back to one collapsed star /

this thrill of knowing / since you are dying
now / you must have / at one point / been ~~alive~~

—for rodney gomez

JOHN SIBLEY WILLIAMS
poetry

ALMOST HALFWAY ACROSS & WE THINK WE SEE A SHORE

between the river & mothlit razor wire / between
candles imprisoned by night's rough hands &

those hushed by greater fires / between dissent
& interrogation / escape & the slowly disappearing

land we say we own / between saying & owning it /
this branchless tree one poet gracefully gluts with light

(the absence of limbs a blessing an incantation proof)
& the poems that cannot wash it free of rope & rage

/ somewhere between the bridge & the bodies
unceremoniously heaved off the bridge / the wall

& all the prayers slipped through a wall's cracks / unheard
/ this endless call & response / another dawn & our kids

out there in it skipping stones together as if skin doesn't hurt /
each ricochet translated as both entry & exit / wound & / wound /

JOHN SIBLEY WILLIAMS
poetry

EXOSKELETON

within, simply a body among bodies
delicately leaning toward the same
rootlessness

same uncanny valley as my daughter's
porcelain dolls chipped from a century's
worth of play, playing

at forgiveness, perfection, the half-mast flag
raised again the day after disaster, sacrifice
they call it when

someone takes a smaller body between their fingers
& squeezes, the third officer this week to assume
everyone's unbreakable

as concrete, save for the weeds wilding up toward
whatever sun remains us, for us it's no different
but for the briefly permanent

white shell harboring us from hurt, at least
the same hurt, within, the same soft meat
as the oyster

i teach my children to rend & swallow
in hopes there's still a pearl somewhere
inside them, inside us

lives the dead we're expected to be, to stay
the caskets we're meant to build on our own backs
& call shelter



LINGER

ELLERY BECK

photograph



DELUGE

ELLERY BECK

photograph

MARINE LAYER

I don't remember a lot of things. It's not that I'm a forgetful person; it's more like there are no memories to even recall. Most of my childhood drifted past in a haze. Growing up felt like sitting in a car passing through my neighborhood and circling the elementary school, rounding the corner to the middle school, and driving past the high school—except the car is actually parked in the middle of the road and the world itself is flying by, too fast to catch, nothing more than a blur of color and sound. My family will reference dinners, vacations, conversations that I'm convinced I'd never been a part of until they prove it to me with photographic evidence or enough details that I can envision a makeshift memory I have to slap together like papier-mâché and pray it holds.

During my winter break in college, I went on a hike in San Francisco with my dad. We reached a beach where I marveled at the open water, the ocean breeze, and the view of the Golden Gate Bridge against the muted gray sky. As I sat down to watch the waves, huddling away from the gusts of salty air blowing in from the sea, I cupped the cold sand in my hands and let it trail through my fingers. I was brushing at the wet granules that clung to the dry skin of my palms when my dad turned to me and said, *you were here only a couple years ago. Remember the beach, the windchill, the view of this bridge?*

No. I only remember the fog.

JC REILLY
poetry

FISHING ON BAYOU LAFOURCHE

Just above the bayou, where we perch with our poles
in a dinghy before sunrise, a mist hangs thick as chowder.
You say it's been too long, your voice louder
than it needs to be to wake up the fish, that our souls
have enjoyed such peace, and you'd be right. Here,
the boat gentling on the nearly waveless waves, we talk
about the sheephead and speckled trout we hope to pluck
from the water, about earthworms versus jelly lures.
I'll count on you to gut and fillet our catch
for the fish fry tonight; you're no stranger to blood.
I feel a tug on the pole—something flashes on the mud-
dy surface, where the sun creeps like a golden scratch
above the Gulf—something iridescent, quick, and red.
Love's alien as a flapping fish—or so you've always said.



THE APPORTIONMENT

ALEX HUTTON

oil on canvas

WILL CORDEIRO
poetry

SEA CHANGE

A few gulls list
and yaw
above the sandbars.

A mist stalls over
rubblestone
buildings in a village.

Fish leap—an echo
of bells. Across
the horizon, a chill

dash of breakwater at the bliss-
end of dusk. A lull
before a crush resembling ball

lightning glances the Atlantic
when a wave
pulls back and shines

into the pastel
distance.
Dune shadows thin

into swaying tassels of panic-
grass, taking
the spraying slabber

with them. Soon, night
will nestle
in the nacreous pink shell

of the vanishing
stratus. *Fernweh*.
Kelp and bladderwrack.

WILL CORDEIRO

A mermaid's purse washes up
in a skull.

Another turn to memory

which zeroes away
across the moon-
enameled linkages of islands.

Boats go out
—one by one—
like candles.



CHASING LIBERTY

DELTA N.A.
oil on canvas



STARS SHINING FOR US

DELTA N.A.
oil on canvas



LET IT FLOW

DELTA N.A.
oil on canvas

AMANDA ROTH
poetry

MY HEART IS THE OCEAN

that you hear about on the news:
a rolling boil.

 This is my first and last poem to you.
I am no longer the ribbon running
through your yard; a body to hold your waste.
You cursed me for becoming
an ocean; my lips: the parting
waves. I turned
to salt on the road
and it was holy. My hands are
no longer yours to raise
at hallelujah. The tide makes quick
work of a lie.
Or should I say this in the language you remember?
 To call me *light* makes me *fire*.
 You are right to be afraid
when my edges are the only landmarks you can name.

JAYE NASIR
poetry

RABBIT

Taste me: I'm crying river water.
I'm collapsed, a lank white sheet

without a ghost to animate it.
For days the air smells of fire,

then suddenly autumn arrives
with a sigh. The horizon wears

a mist like somebody's last breath.
You speak to the back of my neck,

against the shell of my ear, saying,
Look at her, she's happy, smiling,

she loves herself, pointing
to a photo of me at age three

dressed in a bunny costume.
You take me to the mirror and

say, Look at her smiling.
Tickle my stomach and thighs,

dry the riverbed. Hand wash my
lingerie in the bathtub. Breathe

clean air into me, blue air.
I say, I was born in the winter,

dead-of, and you were born
in a golden season. You say

the moon is made of water
because the sun is made of fire,

JAYE NASIR

which makes about as much sense
as anything else. If your light dries

my drowning away into fog
as the spring thaws the winter,

then what is left, if not rot
or even Atlantis? Here:

I see a rabbit, running, loving
herself without reason.

ANDREW WALKER
poetry

THE REASON I CRY EVERY TIME I SEE SNOW IN THE FORECAST

The tattered leather of your Dr. Martens hugs the gas
& your baby blue Buick fishtails through your mind

as the sunlight hits the snow just right—worry
distilled in your glimmering green pools over beaches

of freckles. I loved the snow until you breathed
its fear into me, as if my body were a brown bag, soft at the mouth

from your heavy hands crushing & un-crushing. Once, after
the ice danced a car through the neighbor's kitchen, you asked

what I would do if you died. I lied,
said I would quit my job, move back home with my mother, wallow

in a room no longer mine. In truth, I would rebuild you
from snow—dress you in our tiny moments & the Docs you loved

to shreds. I'd watch it melt & rinse away & then I'd build another
to do just the same, obsessive in my need for creation, for replication

until spring's explosion leaves me with just a sidewalk, cracking &
warped,
where I trip over my worried winter boots—pristine & beautifully
unloved.

DEAR VENUSIAN, I WON'T SAY THAT

it's all bad. I'll tell you what isn't.
There are nights we both wake
at the same time and see the blushing
sky try not to listen to our purring twin-engine.

We've made machines
to send each other our heartbeats. To sit with us
while we sleep. We're always other
people, always folding ourselves into new
shapes for each other, finding new ways
to wrinkle. And yes, we're beautiful—holding
the soft roundness of our bodies, turning
our nails neon pink, growing more curls
to run our fingers through. We're painting
ourselves into a cherry blossom, a full moon,
a pride of bright lions and the cyan sky behind them.

There are monsters
we're unearthing. We're trying to be wild
again. I've been teaching myself the names
of local flora—bergamot, red maple, black-eyed
Susans like the ones I used to collect for my mother.
She said we come back to each other as redbirds,
as whitetails, as the sturdy oak standing right
outside the living room window. We conjure
so many different faces and call them mother, maker,
singing each other songs about how she picks us
up when we scrape our knees and leaves on
the hallway light to help us through the nighttime.

Listen
to the music we've made of each other, how we're still
spinning ourselves into song. We're so close
to lying down with the sun and the wind and staying
with them till morning. Some days you wake early
enough to make me coffee and crawl back into bed

ADAM D. WEEKS

before my eyes crack open. Some days I get to
wake up, pull myself over the sleeping
animal of your body and bring you back to life.

BROOKE MITCHELL
poetry

MAKE ME TEA

but leave the sugar, please, I'm too sweet as it is, words sitting satin white on my tongue and twist your teeth around the lace until your syntax slips like silk between the lips, like chamomile hot and smooth down the throat, palate hollow and warm and oaky and more bitter than it should be, but so are my words, hollow and warm and oaky and more bitter than they should be, and isn't that why you keep drinking me, keep chugging me, keep ignoring the burn, because I might be more bitter than I should, but your friends think I'm so pretty and healthy and good for you, and don't you want to look like you're loving something good for you, don't you want to swallow and wince and rinse and repeat until I've detoxed your organs and there's nothing left for me to clean

MICHAEL MARK
poetry

THIS POEM, LIKE STU, ENDS BADLY

I figured the plane I made from the pizza plate would crash on some fan a few rows down and we'd duck. Stu said *Don't!* Somehow it drifted over the nose bleeds, past the middle class seats, out by the cush ones, then further over right field. *The Mets suck*, Stu always moaned, but he was loyal to all losers, me especially. The cheers started like a hum, then each time the plane dipped, swooped, the crowd got louder. More people stood, blowing at it like wishing a giant wish together. Some players pointed, the ump called time. *Plane! Plane!* we cheered. The right fielder circled, pounding his mitt like he was under a pop fly lost in the sun. *Plane! Plane!* the stadium was shaking. Stu flapped his arms, wheezing creaky. The weak valve that got him Thursday was there, in his heart counting down: fifty years, 4 months, 4 hours, 9, 8, 7 minutes. *God!* He squealed. *Look what you did, Michael!!* A few Mets threw their gloves up. Each time they missed, the crowd rooted, *Plane! Plane!* Until wounded, it skidded onto that perfect grass and the right fielder crushed it in his back pocket.

LILY ANNA ERB
poetry

I AM NEVER QUIET, I MEAN SILENT

from "Katy" by Frank O'Hara

baby I snap like a starved crocodile
up and out everything I think I want

is dangling over this small pond so I leap
I leap when did this angry life become

boring baby I'm notching my arrows
I kiss you to wake and shoot I kiss you

and forget I am hungry I don't aim
I never miss I leap Someday I'll love

Lily now let me
be alone for a little while.



STORY OF AMERICA

HENRY LARA

nikon D5600/35mm



BAJO EL HECHIZO DE LA MÚSICA

HENRY LARA
nikon D5600/35mm



DOGS RULE THE WORLD

HENRY LARA

samsung galaxy 9

RISE AGAIN

“And [Jesus said] ‘Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up.’ Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep. So then he told them plainly, ‘Lazarus is dead, and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe.’”

—John 11: 11, 13-15 (New International Version)

I never asked for anything other than the life I had:

Tending our grove of olive trees,
Watching the waxy leaves unfurl
The feathery flowers bear pale fruit.
Caring for each tree as if it were my beloved,
Running my calloused hands over gnarled trunks
Gentle as a lover drifts his fingertips over inner thigh.
Harvest-time, watching the oil slick run between the press
Of ironwood, passed to me from my father, then his,
From some Berber craftsman out of Numidia.

I never asked for anything other than the death I got:

A malaise that sunk into my bones like water,
Fever that reminded me of when I was a boy and
Fell asleep under the arbor of the vineyard,
The sun boiled my blood. Only my mother’s cool hands
Could coax me back to life then. My sisters tried—
One’s hands not cool enough for the fever that blistered my lips.
The other pried open my jaws, shoved terebinth down my dusty throat.
When that failed, they sent word to our friend.
But it was dark and cool, for a while.

CHRISTINE BOYER

I never asked for anything other than rest:

Would you like to know what it's like to be brought back to life?
To feel your soul flung back into a body already four days in the tomb?
To feel the putrefaction pull back like low tide, exposing raw nerve?
To feel muscles go stiff back into rigor, then lax again to life?
To feel the sluggish black blood start moving as the gnarl of heart
stutters back to life?
To be enfolded by death, feel it peeled like bark, baring tender
heartwood underneath?
To feel everything too bright, too hard, too sharp?
To be called forth from the tomb like an obedient dog, stumbling in
grave-clothes
Still dark with the stains of death?

All his miracles listed out: from virgin-birth to water-into-wine to
calming-a-storm.

Walking on water.

Healing the blind.

Catching a fish with a coin its mouth.

And me: the peaceful dead pulled back to life to prove a point.

CHILDHOOD REVIVALS

My mother watches her family weep
and shout for Jesus. She doesn't force
me to watch them this time. I side step
around the men lying and praying
on the dusty floor to a couple rows back
to my cousins. They're lucky to sit by a window,
to feel the fresh but humid breeze of summer
in this ancient church. We trade Pokémon cards
and Littlest Pet Shop pets, play tic tac toe
and rock paper scissors. We wave Jesus fans,
so hard we accidentally rip the plastic handle
off. We hide them from our mothers, the church
budget already so low to not buy anything.
We whisper because we can't remind
our praying family of the world outside.
Sometimes, the cries grab us, popping
our heads above the pew to see heads bobble
and bodies thrash against the benches.
Something about my mother's prayer is different,
calmer, yet sad. Her head on the bench
before her, whispering to herself. She never
stood when the others stood to sing,
when the congregation waited for the shout
of the newly saved to ring our ears.
My cousins and I always guess how soon
we would go home, another hour or three?
Service ends when they don't hear angel bells
or the voice of god. Our family members ease
onto the benches, joints crack from the hard floor
to sing a last song or prayer. The broken fan
is next to me. I look to my mother,
I position it as if it never tore.

A MEDITATION

“...his lungs...were found to be entirely gone...”
—Walter Jackson Bate, *John Keats*

Picture two wet sponges said the pulmonologist.
There’s not much to them. Billions of words
over thousands of years & not a syllable heals.

Keats: a five-foot Cockney who couldn’t spell,
silent at the end as the moon over Herculaneum.

Sixty years of hungry reading & I read nothing

in six days but the menu. No words can speak
my happy failure to cease upon the midnight.

I had little pain. On curative walks down the hall,
my son laughed at the feet we saw
through each doorway. *There’s no people, Papa!*

After they split the dead poet open,
“the physicians wondered that he could have lived

at all during his last month or two.”

What’s more precious? The warm milk
he couldn’t sip or “This living hand”?

The breath he barely drew
or “Ode to a Nightingale”?
I once thought I knew.

DEADWEIGHT

We can't change the channel. "This is why they used to put buttons on TVs," Dad said, studying the reporters on-screen. They chattered over him, gesturing.

"What did you say?" I asked, shrugging my backpack to the floor.

He shook his head. "Darn remote. Well, it'll show up." He glanced at me as I wriggled from my coat. "Boots off, too, or you'll track in mud." He had to half-shout over the reporters.

It wasn't so bad at first; our TV was always on anyway. But it wasn't usually stuck on the news, and after a few hours it started to bother me. No matter where I stood in the house, I could hear it. It never stopped talking.

*

I took the first gun today. I found the key in the top left drawer of Dad's dresser and unlocked the tall wooden cabinet and picked a gun up, holding my breath—or not exactly holding my breath, but I couldn't breathe right. I walked through the kitchen to the back door, out across the yard covered with old grey snow, and into the woods behind the house. The sound of the TV faded behind me—the first silence I'd heard all day.

I knew Dad would be home soon. We had planned that morning to make Mom's sauce for dinner, the one with sausage and oregano. Then we'd turn on the radio and see if we could beat our record for emptying the dishwasher: three minutes and forty-one seconds. I would do my math homework while Dad fiddled with the stereo, making up words to the songs he doesn't know. "That's how it goes, right?" he always teased.

"I can't do isosceles triangles with the music on," I'd say, tapping my paper.

"Triangles?" Dad would switch off the radio and sit down at the table with me. "Well, what acute angle we have here."

"Dad, no," I'd groan. "No puns."

He'd laugh. "All right, big guy, let's show these triangles who's boss."

Dad was not home yet, though, and the sun had sunk so low that only the tops of the trees were still golden. I walked fast, my fingers freezing on the metal, until I found a good spot. I carved out a hollow in the earth with my pocketknife, placed the gun in the hole, and pushed the dirt back over it, then the snow, then a layer of pine needles. Safer already.

*

Every year on Mom's birthday, we visit her grave in the cemetery. We spend all day telling a rock stories over a picnic lunch on the frozen ground. If there's one thing Mom's good at, it's listening. I don't remember the sound of her voice.

On that day, Dad and I talk, but not to each other. I talk about sledding at the golf course and learning the trombone and visiting her parents over the weekend. Dad talks about his work and how her garden is ready to come to life, even though there are still weeks of cold left. He pulls me close and I roll my eyes, but really his hugs are okay if they aren't in front of my friends. He tells her how proud he is of me, how beautiful the day is. I think winter is gross, but Dad loves the white skies and the breathless cold.

We sit in the cemetery all day, shivering through the chilly afternoon. Sometimes I can hear the icicles cracking like gunshots. March is mountain lion and wolf season, no more than one per hunter. This year I'm eleven and the boys in my grade are learning to hunt big game. Meanwhile, I'm in the cemetery, talking to rocks.

I know bodies go under graves, but when we're there it feels like the ground beneath us is hollow, and we are heavy standing over it. It makes me think about how much fun people have until their kids come along and make them fat and wrinkly, weigh them down. A kid is a weight on your arm, in your shopping cart, on your grave. I look at the stone and feel like the ground could cave in below us. Nothing is there.

*

Last week, wrist-deep in dishwater with his back to me, Dad said, "It might be time to try again, Paul."

I looked up from my worksheet. "What?"

"I haven't pushed it, but you're way behind, big guy. We haven't even gotten you started at the range and a lot of kids your age are moving up from the small stuff."

"Good for them."

He shut the sink off and turned to face me, leaning on the counter with the stomach of his t-shirt striped with water. "I don't think it's good for you to still be afraid."

I stared at him.

"I'm here to teach you," he insisted. "You don't have to be scared."

"I'm not scared, exactly," I said. "I just don't want to."

Dad reached for the next dish in the sink. "It's been seven years. Long enough to understand it wasn't the gun's fault, or anyone's. She had

an accident.”

“I’m going to watch TV.” I slipped from the table towards the stream of syllables pouring into the living room. But under the noise, I could hear the silence of the cabinet standing mute in the corner of my vision as I tried to watch the screen. It was so quiet it clogged my ears and I ran upstairs, suddenly knowing what I was going to do.

*

I was five when Dad first decided it was time for me to learn to shoot. Most kids my age already had. We drove to the range, and he unstrapped me from my booster seat, wrapped his gloved hand around mine.

I remember watching him and putting my mittens in my mouth. They tasted like used Kleenex, like everything kids touch. I didn’t see him take out the gun but suddenly it was there. He raised it to his shoulder and pulled the trigger. Boom.

When I threw up, I didn’t even realize I felt sick but there it was, yellow chunks that tasted like metal. It’s funny, isn’t it? Some kid puking his guts out onto the snow, crying at a sound, at nothing.

When I opened my eyes, Dad was holding me, curled beneath the trees. The winter branches were black on white and slanted like cursive.

“Pauly-Paul,” Dad said to me, over and over. “Paul, little man, it’s okay.”

I didn’t learn to shoot that day. I didn’t learn to shoot any day after, either.

*

Dad doesn’t sing along to the radio outside the house. That’s only between the two of us. He’s quiet in a way that people appreciate. You’ve probably heard him say, “Good morning,” and not much else. He’s popular at work.

He goes to shoot every weekend. His dad taught him, and his dad’s dad taught him and his dad’s dad’s dad taught him. When he gets back on those days, he’s different: singing more and smiling all afternoon, talking to my mother when he thinks I can’t hear. It’s like he brings her back with him.

People like to say, *Our guns are our right*. I say nothing. I stay home sick every year on the day the National Parks ranger comes in to talk about the science of thinning herds, flashing his badges and gun. I yawn when people talk about it, like it’s the most boring story I’ve ever heard. Sometimes I have to shut my eyes during crime movies, and I don’t go near

the cabinet in the living room unless I have to. The glass panel looks like a smiling mouth with a whole bunch of teeth. Obviously it's not—but it looks like it, that's all.

*

A robin once fell from our beech tree and floundered around the yard with one wing bent beneath her. I was five and thought it was a game. When I ran after her, giggling, she squawked and thrashed along the ground in terror, heaving against the weight of her wing, tiny claws scrabbling in the dirt.

At the sound, Dad rushed outside and pulled me away. “The bird doesn't want to play right now, Paul. Her wing hurts. How about you go inside for a bit?”

I watched from the window as he carried a bowl of water to the bird's side and sat in the grass nearby. He hummed softly, and the panicked chirps grew softer and softer as the afternoon passed. He didn't move for an hour.

When he shut the door behind him, clearing his throat, the robin was gone.

“Did you fix her wing?” I asked.

He turned to the sink. “She'll be fine.”

He rolled up his sleeves and swirled water around the bowl, warm soapsuds on the backs of his hands. I knew, then, that he could do anything.

*

I took the second gun today. I found the key in Dad's bottom dresser drawer under his sweaters—he'd moved it. The TV talked at me while I fumbled with the cabinet lock and walked from the house. The gun was heavier, or maybe the weight was sitting at the bottom of my stomach. My hands were sweaty and cold as I pushed dirt and pine needles back over the metal.

When Dad got home yesterday, he didn't notice that the first one was missing until after I was in bed. Actually, I wasn't in bed—I was at the top of the stairs, listening for him to take the key from his dresser and unlock the cabinet and clean them as he often does at night when the house is quiet. My mom used to do it. She was the expert, Dad says.

He was humming to himself as he cleaned the first one. Then he stopped humming. I heard him put the gun down, close the cabinet, then open it again. He felt around once, twice, in all the back corners. He

cleared his throat. He began to open drawers around the living room and the kitchen, then grabbed his keys from the counter and marched outside. Watching from the upstairs window, I saw him open all the car doors, then disappear into the garage. He came out empty-handed, of course, and as he turned towards the house I saw the sick, worried look on his face.

This morning, Dad didn't say anything about it. He stared at the paper while I made my own sandwich and pulled on my coat and boots as fast as possible.

"Bus'll be coming," I said, turning towards the door.

He looked up. "Leaving, big guy? Not without a hug!"

"Come on, Dad," I moaned, a cold spike of fear catching in my throat. Would he sense the secret, somehow, when he pulled me close?

Dad wrapped his arms around me and pressed my face against his shoulder, which smelled of clean shower water and coffee. Then he said, "Hey, Paul, what's the deal?"

I pulled away, tongue dry. "Huh?"

"What do I keep telling you about wearing your snow boots in here?" he scolded. "Put them on at the door. See all that dirt?"

I glanced down, warm with relief. "Sorry. I can sweep it—"

"Don't worry about it this time." He tugged a zipper on my backpack closed. "Run for the bus, okay? I'll see you at five."

I pulled away. "I thought four. Are you working late?"

"I've got to swing by Sam's to check something."

"Oh." My breakfast flipped in my stomach.

"Love you."

Sam's Gun Shop is my least favorite store in town, even worse than Boyd's Custom Tailor where the salesman pinches me and the suits remind me of funerals. I ran for the door, the TV babbling behind me.

*

Dad is tearing apart the living room. He said he's looking for the remote, but maybe he found the second gap in the cabinet's teeth. The TV talks over him. A commercial for a mop, the traffic, a shooting, death.

I watch from the top of the stairs as Dad pulls the couch away from the wall and dumps all the cushions on the floor. Then he flips them over one by one, as if the remote strapped itself to their undersides. He throws open all the drawers on the television stand. He picks up the rug and smooths it flat, then straightens up and stares at the babbling TV with his hands knotted at the nape of his neck. The noise is making my face ache,

and I press my palms into my eyes.

Dad unfolds every blanket and overturns the coffee table. He shakes out the curtains and pushes the couch back into place. I watch as he turns towards the cabinet. He kneels beside it to look underneath—then pauses, as if he’s noticed something on the floor. I see it the same moment he does.

Dirt. Dried winter mud from the bottoms of my snow boots.

He looks at it. Then he peers under the cabinet, pulls out the remote, and turns off the television. Silence glides into the house. Everything is still.

Dad knows I don’t touch that cabinet. And he’s looking right at the tracks on the floor.

“Paul,” he says. “Can you come here?”

*

After my mother died, Dad always left the TV on.

“How about a little noise in here, huh?” he would say, reaching for the remote. I was four and played with styrofoam puzzle pieces on the living room carpet while he watched the news. He would lean forward from the couch, elbows on his knees, and shake his head. “Paul, we’ve got to be safe, you and me,” he’d say.

He started calling me big guy. He bought more guns. He filled the cabinet with teeth.

*

“I found the remote.” Dad holds it up to show me as I trudge downstairs.

“Finally. We can get a break from the news.”

“Mhm.” He tosses the remote onto the coffee table and looks at me. “Have you been moving the guns around?”

“What?”

“Two guns are missing. I’m not mad, but I need to know where they are.”

“I didn’t touch them.”

“Paul.” He crouches onto his heels so he’s shorter than me, looks up into my face like it hurts. “It’s not safe to mess with those. You know that better than anyone.”

“Well, they’re not safe in there, either,” I mumble.

“What do you mean?” Anger folds his face, then softens into creases of worry. “We keep the cabinet locked, and they’ve all got the safeties

on.”

It’s impossible to argue with my dad; he means every single thing he says. So I shrug and say, “Sure.”

He stands up again, crosses his arms. “Where are they, big guy?”

“Who are you even talking to? Who is ‘big guy’?”

“I’m trying to ask nicely.”

“Ask someone else.”

“I’m asking *you*—” He stops and sighs, gazing at me, weighing my expression. “Stubborn like your mom. Don’t you think she wouldn’t want us to be arguing and hiding things and—”

“How should I know what she’d want?”

“You can’t steal guns!” he barks. His fists clench around empty air. “Do you—can you even fathom how dangerous—” He takes a big breath, then restarts. “They’re not safe for you when you don’t know the first thing about them.”

“They’re not safe for *anyone*,” I retort.

“I know how to handle them—and damn it, I’d teach you if you weren’t so scared.”

“Quit saying I’m scared!” I yell. “Even if I were, it makes sense to be.”

“Will you stop being such a kid?”

“I am a kid!” I lean into his face. “I’m a kid. Why would I want to kill some stupid deer, or wolf, or even a bird? Don’t you ever think someone misses them when they’re shot dead?”

He stares at me, agape. I turn away, but he seizes my shoulder and spins me around.

“You don’t know anything.” His face is inches from mine, shaking. His fingers dig into my skin. “Not about guns, or being safe, or missing someone. You hear me? Nothing.”

“Who’s going to tell me?” I say. “Is it like the shootings? Is it on TV?”

He stumbles back. I lean against the wall, heavy. We are silent for a long time: the cabinet, the TV, and the two of us, breathing.

At last he says, “Show me where they are.”

Through the kitchen to the back door, then out across the yard covered with old grey snow, into the woods behind the house. We walk all the way to the spot where I reach for my pocketknife and dig up the pine needles, the snow, the dirt.

CLAUDIA SCHATZ

Dad nods. He clears his throat and looks up, like he's about to speak—not to me, but to someone. He passes a hand over his face once, then twice.

Here, the earth is full. I'm not afraid of how heavy our feet are.

THE DEATH CHILD

Every night, it spawns from my
head, my guileful warmonger,
ugly thing, wrinkled thing.
It has skin like a tire and
a mouth like an eel.
I am its sorry mother.

I wake to it sitting on my heart.
It is stitching my mouth
closed with invisible ink.
It is clawing my chest
with dagger fingers.
It wants to suck.

I kill it before my cup of coffee.
I kill it as the lips latch on.

Every morning is a murder.
It is as regular as the
newspaper crossword.
It is my daily prayer.
It rings from my body's
high minaret, crying,
I will do anything to live.

When the thing is safe and dead
I take it in my arms to feel
the weight, hold my only child,
my vicious offspring. I say,
maybe if you had a better mother.
The body is snow in my hands.



SCORPIO

TANYA L. YOUNG

analog collage



DOPPELGANGER

TANYA L. YOUNG

photograph

STEVE FAY
poetry

AND I ALONE LIE SLEEPLESS

after Sappho

I'm a trembling thing, like grass
and inch from mowing, like wind
on the creek bank, splintered by
the crowns of those old sycamores.

Among shadows of their dying leaves,
still, I raise my voice and sing
that song of the fat land, as Orion rises
and the milk-froth moon goes down.

ANDREW WALKER
poetry

GRASSHOPPERS AND ORB-WEAVERS

for Bee

That summer they were locust-like,
that is to say, our brutal gift
sent from God, bits of green oil
jumping from the hot pan

of Earth. But so too were
the spiders, weaving webs
so perfect they transformed
our barn into a house

of worship. We'd spend our days
running back and forth through the field
until the grasshoppers began to plague,
launching their tiny bodies

at us like a sacrifice. We
caught them mid-air, cupping
them carefully in our palms—
the way you hold a piece

of Christ—so we could peel off
their twitching legs, taking
their useless lumps
to the barn where we threw them

into the silk Empyrean, never
worrying that we'd destroy
the work of the weavers, waiting
and watching as they crawled

ANDREW WALKER

from rafter to pulpit, atlasing the world,
to devour our gift. Swallowed
by their beauty, we buried the guilt
of our cruelty under swarms of laughter.

DUPLEX

You catch me under the moon, and waiting.
Stars eat fire, the way I eat my love for you.

Eat fire, eat earth, eat air, all for you.
Love was a hat too big for my head.

Love is a hat more grandiose than any head.
Even God has to tie the strings beneath his chin.

God ties the strings. When my chin
Tips up, I study the clouds that crawl by

Like drunk men, off-balance and gray. Buy
me some time. Why do pomegranates disappear?

Sometimes, pomegranates, like mice, disappear.
I wish to keep you close as deer.

You cannot keep hearts close that spring like deer.
The moon finds me fire-hungry, and waiting.

MARY E. CROY
poetry

ROYAL BLUE

yes, you could say it is like the smell of polyester, fresh out of the dryer
almost burnt, but that's not it
the fabric supporting it—richer, like velvet
when painted in the night sky

it's not quite the smell of a cold day
that is too sterile, and doesn't wrap you the right way
coming down too cold in the lungs

it is what it is set against—
hard white stars
the beige living room on a November evening
when the wind doesn't know which way to blow

it is the smell of something
rich
plush
frankincense or myrrh maybe
it shouts midnight
and soft fabrics
something imported from far away

SOMEWHERE IN BETWEEN

“Violence is not a catalyst but a diversion.”

—Joseph Conrad

He sat on my bed every night, the floral duvet cover burrowing itself through thick wrinkles to avoid his touch. Blue jeans. He was wearing blue jeans, and his shirt was tan. Beige? His face existed just as simply as it didn't—the ashy promise of something I never should have forgotten. *How can I not remember his face*, I plead with my reflection, the only one who's seen both all I have, and all I've done. She's a good listener, I've found, as the screams of absence in memory tear at me with a shameful need. They need to be watched, feared, and through humiliation, embraced.

2015

My hair is still long and I am only mildly familiar with loss. My breasts stand higher and sobriety is still for the weak. I made a bold move in my early partying days—I never drank from a red plastic cup. Instead of dancing with a senior when someone's parents were out of town, I went straight for gold. I landed on a slow, numb suicide. As an edgy teen, mushrooms soon found me. I grossly overpaid. Two hours later, I pushed the domino.

2016

I don't know whose house I'm in. The late summer heat is dry and obnoxious. We're calling it a party but I can only faintly hear music and I'm mostly sure it's just the *Cheers* theme song in my head. There are men yelling in Polish and women sleeping peacefully in their vomit. The rest of us are nodding in the bigger, shittier room and just trying to get by, whatever that might take. An abandoned blunt left smoking in a can stays our faithful watcher. This is the closest I come to any sort of connection anymore. None of them exist in my world when I'm sick.

There's only one clean needle left. One of the men closer to my age takes it, falling back on a wooden chair riddled with silent promises of slivers and ghosts who've sat before him. No one finds this chair by mistake. He has a white shoelace substituted as a tourniquet on his left arm. I look

EMILY CASSIA

down. One of his shoes is missing a lace. I'm not sure what I was expecting.

I won't try to explain to you why I did it. I won't tell you how much he begged or why.

I put it in his arm when he couldn't.

I have since cried out his name countless times through years of therapy, but it is useless to you, and even more so him.

2017

I tell someone. Only about the nightmare, first. The doctors tell me it's sleep paralysis from PTSD. I don't believe them. I'm still using. I don't believe anyone.

I tell a police officer what I did. We're currently handcuffed together in a hospital room after an attempt at the finale. He tells me it wasn't my fault. I cry, begging him to arrest me for it. There is a mattress as thick as my index finger and a steel toilet facing an expensive camera. Alive, terrified, and in between fixes, it was just another night.

I grow increasingly hysterical that he doesn't charge me or call me a murderer. I have no closure and am dripping from every orifice with guilt. He tells me I only need help. I feel I have to prove to him just how despicable I am. He doesn't understand that I don't deserve help. I start yelling confessions and beg him to arrest me once more as snot and tears form a medley down my abscessed neck. He says nothing until the air is stale, then chuckles and admits to seeing a future where I send him Christmas cards. I feel dizzy and betrayed.

2018

They give me a pill to take away my sleep paralysis, which had escalated to every night. I begged for him to go away.

The Morning After

He never came. The foot of my bed is barren. I weep for loss.

I am so sorry

I am so sorry I made you leave after I owed you so much

I am so sorry I never heard your cries. I try to imagine them sometimes. It feels nice to listen to them. I promise I will never let myself forget.

Now

I stayed in the hospital for nine months, and every year, the

EMILY CASSIA

now-sergeant gets a hand-written Christmas card. It later turned out that he had asked quite a few people to help him inject throughout his addiction. Maybe he got a bad bag. Or packed his shot too full. I don't know. I'm still finding out where wounds go when they heal.



I DREAM IN ENGLISH

RIA UNSON

digital composite of pencil,
gouache, digital paint, photography



I WISH I HAD WARNED MY NEIGHBORS

RIA UNSON

digital paint on paper



TATLONG MUSKETEER

RIA UNSON

altered book: oil, acrylic, ink, graphite on paper

STEVE DEUTSCH
poetry

HEY MOM,

I started to clear the cobwebbed attic—what’s it been, five years since you passed—and the first box I dragged to the light was labeled Billy. Inside, as I expected, were his drawings of ships crayoned on grocery bags—a poor child’s canvas. I told Billy Dad had gone to sea, rather than “Dad ran off with the girl from the lunch counter.” And my little brother watched Navy shows—from *Victory at Sea* to *Run Silent, Run Deep* and drew warships with guns blazing. Billy searched every episode for a man he’d never met. I can’t believe you saved the pictures, Mom. Steeled against the spidery things I go looking for the box with my name.

NIGHTSTANDS

We have two, matching, on either side of the bed, given to us by my husband's mother when we couldn't afford furniture. They are teak, from one of those Scandinavian stores, bought in the 1970s I'm sure, because I don't think his mother ever bought furniture after her husband, Todd's father, died unexpectedly. She had taste, however subtle. Square, modern, like all the designs from those countries. They have a simple single drawer and a large space below for whatever you like. We keep our reading pillows in each hollow.

Growing up, my parents always slept apart, in the beginning sharing a nightstand between twin beds in our small ranch house. Later we moved to a 1933 Tudor, myself still sibling-less, where their bedroom was big enough for two double beds. My mother did the ironing in the den on the main floor, facing the TV set, which was a piece of furniture back then. One night, she was pressing the upper third of a bedsheet—the only part she ironed, for looks—and dropped the iron on the gold, tight-looped carpet. She was drunk. Upstairs, I slept. My dad had been working late, which was sometimes true. In the morning, my mother showed me the perfect imprint of the iron, the little steam holes evenly defined, which always reminded me of bull nostrils—not the shapes, but just the idea that steam came out of both an appliance and an animal. In the morning, she said to me, “I told your father about what happened and his first question was ‘were you hurt?’” She wanted to focus on the kindness, so I wouldn't comment about why it happened, which I wouldn't have anyway; we never talked about her drinking.

Because they'd been in twin beds before moving, I got those, and my father took my double bed for himself. It fit perfectly in the bedroom's large square alcove that was even wide enough for a nightstand. At an estate sale, he bought my mother a bed for across the room, but it wasn't just a bed, it was an antique set made of reddish mahogany—a dresser with an attached mirror, a “commode,” and a bed with an imposing headboard and footboard. The commode served as her nightstand. In the cupboard of it, she put an antique chamber pot handed down from my great-grandmother, as if we were living at Monticello. There was a crack in the rim. The other side had drawers and, like the dresser, they did not glide smoothly. A small Westclox always occupied my mother's night-

stand, but she never set an alarm in her life. She just woke up. All those hangovers and still up every morning cooking breakfast.

My father's nightstand was maple, matching the old double bed and not matching her new set. Like our nightstands now, his had a drawer in the top and a space below where he kept a red reading pillow. On the surface he also had a small clock that wasn't the same as my mother's. Both required winding up. There was a reading lamp with a parchment shade, and a squeaky toy—a little boy in a diaper with his fist up, about four inches tall. I don't know why he had that doll. It didn't fit my father at all, he was mister suits-and-business, though he had a big sense of humor. The little doll seemed to say, "don't mess with me," like it could protect him. I think he pretended a lot of things. I couldn't find that squeaky doll when he passed away, hard as I looked.

When Todd's mother died, there was more Scandinavian furniture—a sideboard from the dining room, and a matching table, her own set of nightstands, ones she hadn't offered us. His brother rented a truck and moved the teak to Portland after the memorial. Todd's mom had just been getting old, forgetful—even to eat sometimes—but she still knew us. Todd was with her the night before she died, fixing soup (Todd loves to make soup) and setting up her bed with the reading pillow and wall light on. She crawled in with her crossword puzzle and he kissed her good-night. In the morning, we returned to take her to the doctor, whom we were sure would say it was time for a nursing home, and we were taking her there because we were too afraid to say it ourselves.

But she was not alive in the morning.

I'd never seen a dead body. It was like everyone said, the peace in the room was palpable. I don't know what caused that peace, but it spread inside us and made accepting her departure much easier. The thing I liked the most was that the wall light was off. She had finished her puzzle, set it on the nightstand, and put the reading pillow down on the floor. Goodbye.

Todd said we had to call the police, which seemed to fly in the face of that peacefulness. It wasn't a crime scene. But I suppose it could have been. We paced, waiting. We were bored and felt guilty being so. We couldn't just stand in the bedroom doorway and stare at the body; it didn't seem right. But we did keep peeking in, as if she might have moved.

They were very courteous, the two young officers. I suppose it was routine. We leaned on the harvest gold kitchen counters while they were

in the bedroom. When they finished, their heavy footfalls brought them into the kitchen and one stood in front of me and said, “How do you feel? You’re in shock.” I didn’t think this was true. Not shock, just astounding sadness.

In her nightstand drawer and on the kitchen table were small piles of paper. Notes. Lists. A clipped article. A doctor’s business card. I carefully merged the piles and set them next to the stove. But then I realized the valueless nature of the papers. Her pocket calendar book, free from Hallmark, birthdays transferred each year, family mostly. Those things, so important to the person, but of no use to anyone else when you’re dead. I swept them into the recycle bin with Todd’s consent, though it felt wrong to do so.

I did keep one thing, a scissored picture of Todd’s mom and him when he was two. Someone had been cut out. I keep it in my nightstand drawer. I’m not even sure Todd knows it’s there or has ever seen it. I loved Todd’s mom, more than my own. The photo lingers in there with an acrylic coaster, a pad and pen for night notes, a tiny plastic toy gun that makes Star-Wars-sounding noises with blinking red lights. I don’t know how the gun got there, but sometimes I activate it while Todd’s brushing his teeth. It’s louder than Sonicare. Old bookmarks, a birthday card Todd gave me one year that makes me laugh. A five by seven headshot of my dad the year I was born; a black and white business portrait of hope. He wanted me to be a boy.

Todd’s drawer has a squishy ball, the kind you grip for exercise, that he believes will ward off the arthritis that runs in his family. When he forgets to do the regimen, it sticks to the drawer bottom. He has a flashlight for emergencies that we are reminded needs batteries when we employ it to hunt for something under the bed. There is a packet of marijuana edibles—strawberry, I think—that we sometimes share to help us sleep. We have to split one or in the morning we are zombies who miss the buses we take to work. A bottle of lotion we now need for sex. A note I wrote him years ago, “I love you like crazy!” This is still true.

There is other junk, tidbits in both. A bracelet that needs restringing that I forget about because it’s buried in the drawer. The timer we attach to my reading lamp when we go out of town, its little teeth punched in to chosen hours.

You can still open the drawers, it’s not like they’re stuffed, but

MARTHA CLARKSON

little things accumulate. I tell Todd we should clean them out so whoever finds us when we die doesn't have to, but he says no, the drawers hold stories. I open mine and look for a title or a plot, and sometimes I think I see the last chapter.



GOLDEN HOUR BLUES

MAX FREY

kodak ultramax film



VIOLET FLOW

MAX FREY

*lomo*chrome purple film



THE BOY WITH THE BIKE

MAX FREY

lomochrome purple film

AMANDA COYNE
poetry

PLEASE DON'T MAKE ME GO TO THE METAVERSE

The dark corner of a bar;
your baby's chubby leg in my hand.

He sleeps, heavy and warm on my lap while we pass
a beer back and forth
over his head.

I never pictured something like this;
but I like it so much.

JAE EASON
poetry

THROUGHOUT

for Grandmama

Baby, could you get me the comb from the bathroom?
she asks me. I trudge to the sink, where the teeth are

entangled with hair. Her hands glide
the back of my neck, picking up strayed hairs.
She hums in my ear; runs the comb throughout my

hair. I hum along with her. Gospel fills our mouths,
we lull in harmony as she rips out my knots.

ESTHER SADOFF
poetry

HORSESHOE

I never took horseshoes for good luck.
Rusty shoes big enough to break any spine,
even my sister's, picking each
mud-clopped hoof from behind.

I craved blue ribbons unspooled
like braids, though the only ride
I remember, I begged, *Don't run*

as my sister trotted her chestnut mare,
my heart racing as I bobbed and slid.
Don't go where I can't follow.

THE SNITCH

“Can I hide in your condo?” Taraneh asked me while framing her alarmed face with her floral-print headscarf. Buttoning up my manteau, I motioned for her to follow. We dodged the others who were grabbing what they could before rushing to the bedroom wing of the condo. Someone had already turned off the music.

In the foyer, Milad’s mother was draping herself in a black chador and looking through the peephole. I heard the elevator chime.

“Mrs. Qaani, we want to go back to my place,” I whispered.

We heard heavy footsteps. Milad’s mom looked through the peephole again and wagged her finger, shooing us away. The ring of the doorbell was followed by pounding on the door. Both Taraneh and I retreated back into the living room. I caught a glimpse of pine-green uniforms when Milad’s mom opened the door. We joined the other girls in one of the bedrooms.

“I cannot go to jail,” Taraneh whimpered, her eyes darting around the bedroom. I looked at her dark expressive eyes and wondered if I looked as terrified as she did. We sat on the edge of the bed and I held her hand, partly to reassure myself.

A few girls were still buttoning up their manteaus or tucking away their hair under headscarves, while others were frantically texting. I looked at the ones with bare legs and felt thankful for the pink paisley-print maxi skirt I was wearing. My wristwatch said it was a quarter to midnight. I noticed my painted fingernails and wondered if wearing nail polish still counted as an offense.

I only knew Taraneh, Aida, and Elnaz from our high school days. I scanned the room for Elnaz, but she was nowhere to be seen. The warning call from the building night guard had come about half an hour after Elnaz’s arrival. She had pushed fashionably late into a ridiculously unfashionable realm by showing up at her boyfriend’s party two hours late. She blamed the beauty salon for the delay, but not for the makeup and geisha-like foundation that was dripping from her face. I grinned at her vanity when she took off her headscarf and manteau to reveal an elaborate hairdo and a skimpy light blue dress. Even her boyfriend’s birthday had to be about her.

I looked at the other girls again. *Why am I here?* Milad and I had

only exchanged a few pleasantries in the hallway, so I was surprised when he invited me. It surely wasn't because of Elnaz, since I was no longer talking to her.

*

"Why invite me?" I had asked my mother. "I'm not in medical school with him, and I'm not a party girl."

"He's probably inviting you to make sure we don't snitch," my mother said.

"How about we assure them that we will be respectful of the party?" At twenty-two, I still didn't know how to turn down a request. I was nervous about going to a mixed party and wanted my mother to make the decision for me. My mother had been observing the hijab since my parents' pilgrimage to Mecca, so I found it easier if she told me not to go. We had always been close, so maybe I was just clutching to the last straws of being a mama's girl.

My hijabi mother shrugged. "It's up to you. We are right next door if you need us."

I finally voiced my concern, "But what if someone calls on us?"

"I think you're safe," she said. "Last night, when I was coming back from the pool with Mrs. Sooratgar, I saw Milad's mom in the lobby. She said that Milad has asked for permission from the other neighbors on our floor and one floor above and below. I think he also invited their college-aged kids."

My ears perked at the last sentence. That meant Hessam was invited.

I still wasn't comfortable going by myself, so I called Aida, who was a classmate of Milad, to find out if she was attending.

"I'm going," she said.

"After all Elnaz did to you?" I asked. First Elnaz had used Aida to win Milad, and then bad-mouthed her throughout the medical school campus.

"It's Milad's party," she said, nonchalantly. She wouldn't punish Milad for what Elnaz had done. If Aida ever founded her own religion, I would have been her first follower. I closed my eyes remembering how manipulative Elnaz had been. I had known her since sixth grade, so I felt like an idiot for not seeing through her. In sophomore year, she took sudden interest in hanging out again. I was having friend problems at college and felt grateful for our renewed friendship. She would stop by frequently

to go for walks around the neighborhood or chat. At the time, our building was one of the hippest places to live in town. Not only because it was a newly built high-rise with many modern amenities, but also because most of the one hundred units were owned by professors or doctors, which meant many of Shiraz's popular and affluent kids lived in the building.

It took me a few months to realize that Elnaz was only using me to cast her net for the neighbor's son. I didn't confront her, but she wasn't bothered when I stopped calling her. She was dating Milad at that point, so as far as she was concerned I had served my purpose.

I opened my eyes. "Fair point. Do you know who else is invited?" The medical school crowd were known to be pretentious.

"Mostly my cohort, plus girlfriends from other colleges. Taraneh is also invited. It should be fun."

I thought again of the possibility of Hessam being there. It would be my chance to show I was sophisticated enough to hang out with the cool kids.

"I'll go, then," I said.

*

"I shouldn't have come." Taraneh's pleading brought me back to the interrupted party. I squeezed her hand and mustered a reassuring smile. Her worried face made me wonder why she was at the party. I was Milad's neighbor and Aida was his classmate.

"Who invited you, Taraneh?" I whispered.

"Elnaz," Taraneh replied. "They didn't have enough girls."

I nodded. Obviously girls were hesitant to join some guy's party. But then no one could brag about a party, where the guys outnumbered the girls.

"How stupid of me," she continued.

"You're not the only stupid one," I whispered, squeezing her hand again. Hessam wasn't at the party and I was too proud to ask if he was invited. Too late, anyway.

If anyone spoke, it was brief and hushed. Aida knew most of the other girls and exchanged glances with them as she paced the room. I looked across the Bidjar carpet, at the glasses of alcohol and appetizer plates, which explained why some guests had been slipping away from the living room. I was curious to hear what was happening in the foyer, so I made my way to the bedroom door, careful not to knock over anything. I held my breath and listened, but I couldn't make out what Milad's mom

was saying to the police—or was it the morality police? I didn't know which authority had jurisdiction over parties—specifically mixed parties. The rest of the apartment was silent.

I caught Aida's eye. "Where is everyone else?" I asked.

"The guys took the fire escape," she whispered, then went back on pacing the room.

I instantly wished I had thought of it myself. The fire escape was only accessible through Milad's unit on our floor, the combined genius of the architect and building official leaving the rest of us with no means of egress if the main stairwell was compromised during an emergency.

I felt better. Even if the police came in, we were just a bunch of girls.

But as I sat back next to Taraneh, my heart sank. Just a bunch of girls—in a room with alcohol. I didn't know which one was a worse offense—mixed parties or alcohol. I racked my brain, but I didn't know of anyone who had been apprehended for attending a party. Neither did I know the punishment for alcohol, but for some reason lashings came to my mind. I took a deep breath. There was no reason to scare myself over something I hadn't consumed.

A skinny guy with chestnut-brown hair walked into the bedroom. He was wearing tight jeans and a light blue button-down shirt.

Aida tried to shoo him away. "Why are you still here?" she hissed.

"Someone has to take care of the arak," he countered a little too loud, his words slurring. Aida rolled her eyes, but didn't continue. The other girls were too preoccupied to pay him much attention, but I watched him out of curiosity. He bent over to pick up two glasses, poured the contents of one into the other, and then looked around the room, contemplating what to do with it. The kitchen was too close to the foyer, so I figured he was going to dump it in the toilet down the hall.

Then to my amazement, he drank the contents. Happy that he'd figured out what to do with the evidence, he staggered around the room drinking away what was left in more than a dozen glasses, transforming himself into walking evidence. When he wobbled towards the two bottles in the corner of the room, I was sure he was going to drink them too. He stared at them for seconds before stumbling towards the built-in closet. He swung open the door, crouched down to put the bottles in the back of the closet next to some shoes. He then looked through the adjacent drawers until he found some linens, and placed them in front of the bottles

before shutting the door and turning the key. His unfocused gaze went back to whatever was left on the carpet.

“Potato chips and shallot yogurt?” he said slowly.

Aida hushed him.

“Why, they would know what goes with that,” he continued.

He went around and piled the appetizer plates into one neat stack. Then he took the bowl of shallot yogurt and sat on the floor next to the nightstand. I stifled a laugh when he started scooping the yogurt into his mouth with the serving spoon. I elbowed Taraneh and nodded towards him. She managed a tremulous smile.

*

The drunk guy had fallen asleep hugging the yogurt bowl when Milad’s mom appeared in the door frame. We all looked at her, hoping for the best, but expecting the worst. “They’re gone,” she said with a smile, folding away her black chador. The tension in the room dissolved into sighs of relief. I looked at my watch. It had only been fifteen minutes, but it had felt like hours.

“Did you have to bribe them?” a girl asked.

She shook her head.

“How did you do it, then?”

“I insisted that it’s a family gathering for my son’s birthday,” she replied. “I also gave them my brother’s name. He’s an officer.” Her eyes shined, clearly proud of her brother.

“They bought it?”

“They still wanted to check inside, since someone had complained,” she said. “But I told them over my dead body.” Her smile made me realize how charming she was. I imagined a young officer being too shy to push away someone the same age as his mother.

“Did they say who reported us?” I asked.

“My bet is on Dr. Ramzi,” she said. Dr. Ramzi had a reputation of being the most pious neighbor in the entire building complex. He didn’t allow his wife or daughter to use the pool and spa even though men and women used the facility on different days. He’d knocked on the doors of his immediate neighbors multiple times, asking them to lower the sound of their music because he didn’t want his teenage son to hear the voice of female singers.

“But he lives in another tower,” I said.

“Who else would call?” she said. “Now, enough of this, my dear.

You all should resume the party. I promised we will lower the volume, though.” She looked down the hall. “Where is everyone else?”

“They left through the fire escape,” Aida said. “I just texted a few of them to come back. I hope they have their phones on them.”

We found the living room in disarray. The disco ball was still casting colorful lights around the room, reflecting off the aluminum foil Milad had used to line all the window panes. *If this is what cool looks like, I haven't missed much being a dorky architecture student*, I thought. The dining table was still heavy with platters of Olivier salad, samosas, dolmas, olives, roasted eggplant topped with whey, feta cheese and herbs, lavash bread, a variety of puff pastry and mille-feuille.

Milad's mom and Aida started straightening the chairs. I looked at Taraneh. “I'll help cleanup and then go home. Do you want to come with me? We can call you a cab from my place.”

“I have my mom's car,” she said. “But I will also head out.”

We straightened some chairs and took the dirty plates to the kitchen. I found my purse hanging from the back of a chair. The guys along with Milad and Elnaz trickled back in through the fire escape door. After each group shared their side of the story and cursed Dr. Ramzi, someone turned the music back on. Shouting over Arash's Temptation, I told Milad's mom I was heading out.

Her face fell. “But they're gone, my dear,” she said. “And you haven't eaten much.” The worry of being a good hostess suddenly clouded her cheerful expression. She waved for Milad to come over.

“I had plenty of food,” I said. “The whey-eggplant was delicious.” “You can't leave now,” Milad said, a gracious host like his mother. “Elnaz just got here.” Elnaz didn't even glimpse in our direction.

“Thank you for inviting me. I had a lovely time,” I lied, smiling at both of them. “But I'm not used to staying up late. It's midnight.”

I glanced at Taraneh.

“I'll stay a little longer,” she said.

I waved at Aida. “Leaving,” I mouthed.

She followed me to the foyer. “You shouldn't allow them to ruin your fun.”

“I don't even know why I decided to come, Aida. Enjoy the rest of the night.” I managed a smile.

I paused in the elevator lobby to collect myself before unlocking the door to our apartment. I hung my headscarf and manteau on the coat

rack in the foyer and ran my fingers through my hair to feel the soft curls. My aunt had twisted out my hair the day before so that I had a head of beautiful curls for the party. I could hear the latest song of The Pussycat Dolls, “Don’t Cha”, playing next door. I found both of my parents awake in the living room.

“What happened?” my mother asked. “The music stopped for a while.”

In the safety of my own home, I let out a nervous laugh, which sounded more like a sneeze as I tried not to wake up my sisters.

“Someone called on us,” I said, catching my breath. “But Milad’s mom didn’t let them in.”

“Well, I’m glad we don’t have to collect you from some Comité station,” she said, coolly, as if she’d been picking up her kids from Comité stations all her life. She yawned as she got up. “Well, I’m off to bed. Good thing tomorrow is Friday.” She had stayed up hours past her normal bedtime. Her cool-headed response didn’t fool me.

“Who would have called?” my father asked, looking concerned.

“Probably Dr. Ramzi,” I said.

“Did you have a good time, at least?” he asked.

I thought of the beginning of the party. I had nibbled on some food and politely declined when a few guys asked me to dance. The whey-eggplant really was delicious. “It was OK,” I said, yawning. “Good night, baba.”

Too tired to brush my teeth, I changed into pajamas and fell into a deep sleep despite the loud music from next door.

*

On Friday, the day of rest, the building pool was reserved for women in the morning and men in the evening. I packed a towel and change of clothes in a small duffle bag to go for a swim. When I crossed the vast lobby to get to the pool entrance, I saw Dr. Ramzi with his thick beard and prayer beads heading towards the front courtyard. When he noticed me, he lowered his eyes to the smoky gray quartz floor. Even though I knew it was an act of piety, I couldn’t help but think that he was hanging his head out of guilt. In the pool locker room, I saw Mrs. Sooragar, the housewife from the first floor. She had already changed into her bright teal swimsuit, her plump arms and fleshy midsection signaling that she was approaching middle-age. She was a very attractive and pleasant woman, and I could imagine how stunning she must have been

in her youth as her two teenage daughters looked exactly like her.

“Any news from Kuwait?” she asked as I hung my headscarf on the hook inside the locker. There had been no American Embassy in Iran since 1979, so I had applied for a student visa at the American Embassy in Kuwait earlier that month.

“Not yet,” I replied, unbuttoning my manteau. “The clearance takes time. I’ve heard of people waiting for months.”

She leaned in close. “I heard there was trouble on your floor last night.” Despite her known tendency to spread the building gossip, news sure reached her quickly.

I giggled as I slipped out of my jeans. “I know. I was there.”

Her worry lines deepened. “Why, you poor thing,” she said.

“It wasn’t too bad.”

“But you must have been terrified.”

The severity of the night before suddenly dawned on me. “Well, it was a close call,” I admitted, feeling troubled.

“I’m glad you’re fine,” she said. “Let me know when you hear about your visa application.” She checked the lock on her locker before walking out to the showers.

I took off my corrective glasses and placed them next to my flip-flops. I slammed the door and sat on the bench with my hands folded over my stomach. When I had called Aida earlier, we both laughed really hard recalling the absurdity of our predicament. But the truth was, we had been fortunate. In addition to jail, fines, and the hypothetical lashings, we could have been expelled from the university.

Hessam’s mother came into the locker room wrapped in a sapphire blue bath towel. I jumped to my feet to say hello, then walked towards the showers holding my swim cap and goggles.

By the tenth lap, the uneasiness had vanished. I did another ten laps before climbing out. Everyone in the pool was a blur, so I only stopped to chat with the lifeguard before heading out towards the spa. Right before the bend to the footwash recess of the spa entrance I heard a familiar voice.

“The Qaanis had a party for their son last night,” said the voice. I stopped in my tracks. The acoustics of the labyrinthine hallways somehow carried the voice over to where I was standing. Curious, I silently inched away from the gurgling sound of the hot tub to the locker room, where the voice seemed to come from.

“They were too loud,” continued the voice. “I called the police on them.”

I stopped at the bend before the locker room.

“You could have called the nightguard to ask them to lower the volume,” said a second voice. “Why call the police?”

“Why not?” the first voice said.

“They hadn’t invited my daughters.”

Someone with daughters. I slipped back to the footwash recess, then casually walked toward the showers with a friendly smile pasted to my face. I could feel my heart pounding in my chest. I glanced inside the locker room and made out the blur of Mrs. Sooratgar’s bright teal swimsuit, sitting on the bench. I couldn’t see the lines of the second woman’s face who was still in her dark manteau, but she was removing her headscarf and I recognized the shock of platinum blonde hair. It was Mrs. Khajou, a friend of Mrs. Sooratgar, one of the few non-residents who paid a monthly fee to use the pool and gym facilities. Clearly, she wasn’t the one who had been in the building the night before.

I pulled a shower curtain, turned on the tap, and waited a long time under the hot water before returning to the empty locker room, where I dried off, got dressed and left.

The noontime call to prayer was echoing throughout the lobby.

Hurry to prayer, hurry to prayer.

I caught sight of Dr. Ramzi in the front courtyard and picked up my pace. He was walking towards the building with a wrapped bread cloth hanging over his forearm.

Hurry to salvation, hurry to salvation.

The automatic entrance doors slid open before I could get past them.

Hurry to the best deed, hurry to the best deed.

The aroma of freshly baked lavash made my stomach grumble. I lowered my eyes to the smoky gray quartz slab.

PAUL DAVID ADKINS
poetry

I WAS ONE OF THE THUGS OF MELROSE PARK, FLA., JULY, 1967

My neighborhood friends and I ran our neighborhood like jackals,
played “Ring-and-Run” on the crippled hag,
roamed the streets with my home’s last eight eggs
while mother was dreaming omelets.

We unscrewed Christmas lights with a damp rag,
popped them on the curb.

We midnight-phoned the woman with cancer—

Your refrigerator’s running!

You better go catch it!

We called her

Ma’am.

We patrolled the sidewalks with rifles
that clacked and popped and sparked.
Our pistols were spooled with caps.
We waved them at police,
who flashed their lights and smiled.

We piled pine needles on anthills,
lowered a dented Zippo.

Our map marked “X” in Mrs. Clemons’ garden:
ten dollars tucked in a buried sock.

We heaved her bulbs by the spadeful.



SU'S MONGOLIAN BBQ

CHLOE KURZENKNABE

acrylic on canvas



ALISON ELLIOTT

LAWRENCE BRIDGES

35mm film negative



CROP DUSTER ORLANDO, FL

LAWRENCE BRIDGES

35mm film negative

THE SPOT WE MOVED ON FROM

A plane flies backwards in the sky.

Is this a dream? asks the tree,
who can finally move its arms
as it grows thin, shrinks
until it disappears into
the ground.

A flock of gulls implodes—Back
into their shells, eggs
dropping down from the clouds
like hail.

& suddenly, there
you are again: smiling,
your green eyes blinking
& dry, grabbing
your homemade bouquet from my
hands, then walking away,
off placing the plucked daisies
back into the grass
where you found them,
like nothing happened.

GRANT CHEMIDLIN
poetry

THE MAN WITH WORMS FOR FINGERS

The man with worms for fingers
always walked with his hands in his pockets
wherever he went,

was always getting in trouble at his desk job
for not typing fast enough,
always accidentally writing words
in all caps, too many b's where v's
should be.

On spring days, he avoided parks,
their fresh trees, full of hungry
mama birds & their babies.

At night, he sat alone in his room,
soaked his tired hands in potted plants,
let his pink fingers squirm
in the cool, brown dirt.

Lonely, desperate for acceptance
from this bony, stiff-fingered
world, until he wasn't,
was out shopping

for groceries
when he bumped into a woman
buying algae, noticed
curled around the jar

five sweet, suckling guppies,
where fingers
might have been.

GRANT CHEMIDLIN

She looked up,
smiled
at his worm hands dancing.

MARC JANSSEN
poetry

DISTANT BEHEMOTHS SLEEP

Lazily shifting in their chains
Shackled east of Astoria
In a grey rainy afternoon.

You can hear them
All these miles away
Grumpily floating
Waiting for a direction.

NICK MINGES
poetry

SOME DHARMA

They said the world would end today so I got up early. I did some real stretches. I whipped out *Function of the Orgasm* & I took some notes I thought I'd need. I called the insurance company, which was very busy. I put a little coffee on and some Miles Davis and waited. I sat by the window and tried to read a book. People were staring out their windows at other people in the street staring at the sky, at their hands. That made me uncomfortable. I put on some more coffee, dug in the closet. Grabbed matches. Butter dishes. Several almanacs, etc. I spent hours twisting, poking and hammering only to find that I was several feet of kite string short. I heated up some beans on the stove and ate. By then the sun was going down. I put some coffee on and looked around the room. Definitely tomorrow, I thought. The lid over the world.



NO SMOKING

KAPI MICHALSKA

digital paint



IT'S ALL FUN AND GAMES UNTIL SOMEONE LOSES AN EYE

KAPI MICHALSKA

digital paint

DONNA PUCCIANI
poetry

TRINITY

My trees arrived today for planting.
Balled and burlapped, they slide in turn
from truck to dolly, peppered with shouts
of workers, then wheeled out back.

I'd chosen them for hardiness
and beauty, a difficult combination
in Chicago's clay soil and wild climate:
Norway spruce, serviceberry, redbud.

They have souls. Holes are dug,
roots established. I pray over them
in some ritual of new beginning.
I baptize them with a hose dribbling grace.

In the mulched earth they will
outlive me. I shall christen them
Faith, Hope and Charity. Bring on the bells,
the choirs of angels. Let the hymns begin!

But it is the trees who are
praying over me, sifting pure sound
through air clouded with a vague smoke
from fires out West.

In a stranger's garden,
three trees speak in tongues
as the wind blows through them,
a fierce and wondrous noise.

PEN PAL IN PRISON

Dear S.: Through letters you express
today (last week in postal years)
how blank you feel, hollow
because the blue-eyed Circuit Judge
spoke the word ‘consecutive’—
an ugly term unless you’re bowling
or matching numbers on a lottery ticket.

I’ve been where you are, hearing hurt words
said by red-tied jokers
with magic gavels &
Rules of Criminal Procedure.
One made a joke at my expense
as though the tragedies of Shakespeare
were more lighthearted than his jests.

No epistolary script saves you
from consignment or curt demands
of days & jailers,
another orbit around the sun.
I write to you nonetheless,
offering empathy & laughter
in hope that you might rob them of an hour.

CHRISTINA GESSLER
poetry

BURN AFTER READING

Some people write their secrets and sorrows on small scraps of paper
and then burn them, believing the flames will bring warmth or light;

but Fire gives as much as it takes, so
Sacrifice something, it says,
seldom letting anyone choose:
oxygen,
hope,
or trees.

I have nothing more to give to grief, except this.
Please burn after reading.

CONTRIBUTORS NOTES

volume 109 / issue 02

Martha Clarkson's writing and photography can be found in *F-Stop*, *Clackamas Literary Review*, *Seattle Review*, *Portland Review*, *Black Box Gallery*, *Tulane Review*, *Feminine Rising*, and *Nimrod*, *Tipton Poetry Journal*, *Rattle* and many more. She has two notable short stories in *Best American Short Stories*. Martha attended University of Oregon's Creative Writing Program and was a past poetry editor for *Word Riot*. Her website is www.marthaclarkson.com.

Lawrence Bridges' photographs have recently appeared in the Las Laguna Art Gallery 2020, *Humana Obscura*, *Wanderlust a Travel Journal*, the London Photo Festival, and are currently on display at the ENSO Art Gallery in Malibu, California. You can find him on Instagram: @larrybridges.

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Ace Boggess is author of six books of poetry, most recently *Escape Envy* (Brick Road Poetry Press, 2021). His poems have appeared in *Michigan Quarterly Review*, *Harvard Review*, *Notre Dame Review*, *Rhino*, and other journals. An ex-con, he lives in Charleston, West Virginia, where he writes and tries to stay out of trouble.

Christine Boyer has been published in numerous literary journals, and her essay "Second Person" was named a notable essay of 2020 in the *Best American Essays* anthology. She lives in Massachusetts, and she can be found at www.christine-boyer.com.

Emily Cassia is a 21-year-old new writer, passionate about detailing her experiences in recovery. She writes mainly nonfiction and has articles on women's and lgbtq experiences scheduled to come out in 2022-2023. She works on an advisory committee for a housing development to aid women, sexworkers, and addicts in recovery.

Grant Chemidlin is a queer poet living in Los Angeles. He is the author of two collections of poetry, *He Felt Unwell (So He Wrote This)*, and *Things We Lost In The Swamp*. He's been a finalist for the Gival Press Oscar Wilde Award, the Philip Levine Prize for Poetry, and is currently pursuing an MFA at An-

tioch University-Los Angeles. Recent work has been published or forthcoming in *Tupelo Quarterly*, *scissors & spackle*, *Nixes Mate Review*, and *Sky Island Journal*, among others.

Will Cordeiro has work published or forthcoming in *AGNI*, *Bennington Review*, *Copper Nickel*, *The Threepenny Review*, *THRUSH*, and elsewhere. Will won the 2019 Able Muse Book Award for *Trap Street*. Will is also co-author of *Experimental Writing: A Writers' Guide and Anthology*, forthcoming from Bloomsbury. Will co-edits Eggtooth Editions and teaches in the Honors College at Northern Arizona University.

Amanda Coyne teaches English at the University of North Carolina Wilmington and lives in Wilmington, NC with her husband and cat.

Mary E. Croy lives in Madison, Wisconsin where she works as an administrative assistant. She spent nine years teaching English Language Learners in Ha Noi, Viet Nam. During her free time, Mary likes reading poetry and hanging out with her cats, Buster and Gabby. Her work has appeared in *Better than Starbucks*, *Woven Tale Press*, and *Valley Voices*, among others.

Steve Deutsch lives in State College, PA. Some of his recent publications have or will appear in *Santa Clara Review*, *Sangam*, *Poetica Review*, *Lothlorien*, *Muddy River Poetry Review*, *Silver Birch*, *Backchannels*, *Red Weather*, *The Drabble*, *Sheila-na-gig*, *The Rush*, *Pirene's Fountain*, *Evening Street Review*, and *Schuylkill Valley Journal*. He is poetry editor of *Centered Magazine*. Steve was nominated three times for the Pushcart Prize. His Chapbook, "Perhaps You Can," was published in 2019 by Kelsay Press. His full length book, *Persistence of Memory* was published in 2020 by Kelsay. Steve's third book of poetry, *Going, Going, Gone*, was published in 2021.

Jae Eason is a poet from Long Island, New York. They studied English Literature at Arizona State University. While there, they won a Swarthout Award in Poetry. They currently work as an Office Manager at Brooklyn Poets and an English Teacher in South Korea. If they are not up to all the normal things people usually do, they're most likely having an existential crisis.

Lily Anna Erb studied poetry at Eckerd College in St. Petersburg, Florida. In 2019, she was awarded the Michener Scholarship for Creative Writing. Her work can be found in *Poet's Choice*, *The New York Quarterly*, and *North of Oxford*, among other places. You can find her on twitter at @lilyannaerb.

Steve Fay writes poetry and prose fiction, and makes photographs. His collection of poems, *what nature* (Northwestern UP, 1998) was cited by the editors and board of the Orion Society as one of their 10 favorite nature and culture related books of the 12-month period in which it appeared. His work has appeared in *Ascent*, *Field*, *Beloit Poetry Journal*, *Spoon River Poetry Review*,

Hiram Poetry Review, *Hamilton Stone Review*, and *TriQuarterly*, as well as other journals and anthologies, and has recently appeared in *The Comstock Review*. He lives in Fulton County, Illinois.

Max Frey spends a lot of time in his head. We live in chaotic times and it's easy to get caught up in all the disarray. Photography, for Frey, is to capture the spirit of the moment—not a moment spent worrying about the future but living in the now.

Dr. Christina Gessler is poet, historian, and photographer interested in how we tell nonfiction stories and those we never tell. She currently lives with her small dog in a small cottage not far from the sea.

Maryam Ghatee is an Iranian-American Rhode Islander, a mother, and an engineer. Find her on Twitter @MaryamGhatee.

Alex Hutton lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. He received a BFA from the Cooper Union in 2014. He has shown work in group exhibitions at Project V Gallery, Site:Brooklyn, and Magenta Plains Gallery. His work will be featured in this year's Issue 13 of *Maake Magazine*.

Marc Janssen lives in a house with a wife who likes him and a cat who loathes him. Regardless of that turmoil, his poetry can be found scattered around the world in places like *Pinyon*, *Slant*, *Cirque Journal*, *Off the Coast*, and *Poetry Salzburg*. His book, *November Reconsidered* was published by Cirque Press. Janssen also coordinates the Salem Poetry Project and a weekly reading, the annual Salem Poetry Festival. He was a 2020 nominee for Oregon Poet Laureate.

Chloe Kurzenknebe is an artist from Gilroy, California. She is currently completing her Studio Art degree at Santa Clara University, along with another major in Psychology and a minor in Art History. In previous years, she has been inspired by pictures she has taken from places around home or on adventures, but right now she is working on more message-oriented feminist work for her senior exhibition.

Henry Lara was born and raised in Los Angeles. His beloved city of Los Angeles and its people inspire his photographs and stories. His work has appeared on *Dryland*, *Zyzzyyva Literary Magazine*, and *The Los Angeles Review*.

Michael Mark's poetry has been recently published or is forthcoming in *Copper Nickel*, *Pleiades*, *Ploughshares*, *Poetry Northwest*, *The Southern Review*, and other places. He was the recipient of the Anthony Hecht Scholarship at the Sewanee Writers' Conference. He can be found at Michaeljmark.com.

Kapi Michalska paints original graphics and custom portraits. Michalska

has a degree in graphic design and painting. They create most of their current work digitally with a stylus and tablet and print on high-quality paper.

Nick Minges is a poet in Davis, California. His work has been in *HASH*, *The Bat City Review*, *Borderlands*, *Sheepshead Review* and others. He is a former reader and copy-editor for the late *Levee Magazine* and a current MFA student at Saint Mary's College.

Brooke Mitchell is a first-year creative writing major at Susquehanna University. She grew up in rural Pennsylvania, dotting between a few homes in Perry County before settling in a small town along the Susquehanna River with her family. The dotting, the settling, the small town, the river all have taken turns inspiring poems to burn out of her. Her work has been featured in literary magazines like *Le Spectre Politerary Journal* and *Shippensburg University's First Light* among others. Currently, she has work to be published by *Susquehanna University's Rivercraft*. The same university is also in the process of publishing her chapbook, *Sunspots*.

Delta N.A., paired in art and life, works simultaneously with a shared language that speaks directly to the heart. The duo spent years traveling to discover the world and their identity, and this experience has deeply marked their artistic expression. They combine poetry and strength in a constant search for harmony, portraying the infinite dream of an exhaustive well-being.

Jaye Nasir is a poetry and fiction writer based in Portland, Oregon. Her work has appeared in *Echoverse Anthology* and *Lammergeier Magazine* and is forthcoming in *Sidereal Magazine*, *Cellar Door Anthology*, and elsewhere.

Chi Ngo was born in San Jose, California and is (hopefully) a very recent graduate of Santa Clara University. She isn't sure what to do with her biochemistry degree, but she's excited to find out. Along with writing for fun, she finds joy in a good story and a simple cup of coffee.

Donna Pucciani, a Chicago-based writer, has published poetry worldwide in *Shi Chao Poetry*, *Poetry Salzburg*, *The Pedestal*, *Voice and Verse*, *ParisLitUp*, *Agenda*, *Gradiva*, and other journals. Her seventh and latest book of poetry is *EDGES*.

Anna Rajagopal is a South Asian Jewish student writer in pursuit of their bachelor's degree in English & Creative Writing at Rice University. Her work primarily focuses on the intersections of individual identity and collective peoplehood through an anti-imperialist lens. Anna has been published, quoted and interviewed for their writing, but never for her poetry (until now).

JC Reilly has work published or forthcoming from *Rougarou*, *Barely South Review*, *Pine Row*, *Louisiana Literature*, *The Antigone Review*, and else-

where. Her Southern Gothic novel-in-verse, *What Magick May Not Alter*, was published by Madville Publishing in 2020. When she's not writing, she crochets or practices her Italian, and serves as the Managing Editor of *Atlanta Review*. Follow her on Twitter @aishatonu, or follow her cats on Insta @jc.reilly.

John Repp's most recent book is *The Soul of Rock & Roll: Poems Acoustic, Electric & Remixed, 1980-2020*, published by Broadstone Books. Information on this and his other publications can be found on his website: www.johnreppwriter.com.

Amanda Roth (she/her) is a poet whose work explores motherhood, embodiment, and the climate crisis. Her full-length collection, *A Mother's Hunger* was released in 2021. She is featured/forthcoming in *Rappahannock Review*, *Marathon Literary Review*, *MAYDAY*, *Moist Journal*, *Blood Moon Poetry Press*, and elsewhere. Find her on Twitter @amandarothpoet.

Esther Sadoff is a teacher and writer from Columbus, Ohio. Her poems have been featured or are forthcoming in *Drunk Monkeys*, *Roanoke Review*, *South Florida Poetry Journal*, *Wingless Dreamer*, *Free State Review*, *Parhelion Literary Magazine*, *Passengers Journal*, *SWWIM*, *Marathon Literary Review*, *West Trade Review*, *River Mouth Review*, *Penultimate Peanut*, as well as other publications.

Claudia Schatz (she/her) lives in Philadelphia and is a writer, bike mechanic, triathlete, and editor of *The Spotlong Review*. Her writing has appeared or is forthcoming in *West Trestle Review*, *The Green Hills Literary Lantern*, *Glassworks Magazine*, *Blue Earth Review*, and *Mezzo Cammin*. More of her work is at claudiaschatz.weebly.com.

Caleigh Shaw is a poet from Canton, Georgia. She is currently an MFA candidate at Oklahoma State University, where she is an Editorial Assistant at the *Cimarron Review*. She received her BA in Writing & Linguistics from Georgia Southern University and is the 2015 Brannen Creative Writing, Nonfiction Award winner. Her poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in *8 Poems*, *Ghost City Review*, *Roanoke Review*, *Maryland Literary Review*, and *Moon City Review*. You can find her on social media @caleighcal14.

Ria Unson works with hybrid workspaces, blending traditional and digital media to mirror cultural collision, working in between spaces the way she navigates worlds and countries. Unson's art is an archive of her research and lived experiences and how she grapples with the fracture and complexity that comes with being a migrant and post-colonial subject.

Andrew Walker is a writer currently living in Denver, Colorado. He is a poetry reader for *No Contact* and his poetry, fiction, and CNF has appeared in or is forthcoming from *HAD*, *Crow & Cross Keys*, *Zero Readers*, *Apricity Press*,

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Adam D. Weeks has a BA in Creative Writing from Salisbury University and is currently an elementary literacy tutor in Baltimore. He is the social media manager for *The Shore*, a poetry reader for *Quarterly West*, and a founding editor of *Beaver Magazine*. He won the 2022 Third Wednesday Poetry Contest, has been a Pushcart Prize nominee, and has poetry published or forthcoming in *Fugue*, *Poet Lore*, *Sugar House Review*, *Sweet: A Literary Confection*, *Sycamore Review*, *Thrush*, and elsewhere.

John Sibley Williams is the author of *Scale Model of a Country at Dawn* (Cider Press Review Poetry Award), *The Drowning House* (Elixir Press Poetry Award), *As One Fire Consumes Another* (Orison Poetry Prize), *Skin Memory* (Backwaters Prize, University of Nebraska Press), *Summon* (JuxtaProse Chapbook Prize), among others. A twenty-seven-time Pushcart nominee, John is the winner of numerous awards, including the Wabash Prize for Poetry, Philip Booth Award, Phyllis Smart-Young Prize, and Laux/Millar Prize. He serves as editor of *The Inflectionist Review* and founder of the Caesura Poetry Workshop series. Previous publishing credits include *Best American Poetry*, *Yale Review*, *Verse Daily*, *North American Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, and *TriQuarterly*.

Tanya L. Young is a Washington based poet and artist. She is an MFA candidate at Western Washington University. Her work has been featured in *New York Quarterly*, *Burningword Journal*, *Jeopardy Magazine* and more. She is currently a staff poetry reader for *The Bellingham Review* and *The Maine Review*.

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