

The Watermark

UMass Boston's Literary & Arts Journal

Volume XXIX

Fall 2019

Acknowledgments

Editor-in-Chief

Joy O'Halloran

Associate Editors

Brittany Pereira

Isabelle Racette

Cover

Archana Shinde

Volunteers

Tichaona Chinyelu

Michael Donahue

Taleisha Tomaso

Advisor

Charles Henriques

Editor's Note

As always, the *Watermark* would not exist without the efforts of many people. Creators need to write, rewrite, paint, draw, photograph—and have enough faith in their creations to share them with the world. And no journal would ever see the light of day without the tireless work of our editors and volunteers, nor the support of faculty and administrative staff.

Our gratitude goes to all the faculty in the English and Art departments who allowed us to visit their classrooms to advertise the *Watermark*. Special thanks to Daniel Remein in the English department for his help in contacting the winners of the 5-10 Line Poetry Contest.

Welcome to another semester's publication. Enjoy!

Joy O'Halloran
Editor-in-Chief

Table of Contents

5-10 Line Poetry Contest

7	Katherine Morrissey	He wasn't Lazarus and neither am I	<i>First Place</i>
7	Lizzy Gagne	my best tinder date yet	<i>Second Place</i>
8	Tanairi Sorrentini	untitled	<i>Third Place</i>
8	Lizzy Gagne	there's a sign at the train station advertising a suicide hotline, y'know, so people won't jump	<i>Honorable Mention</i>
9	Gabrielle Grant	Strong Roots	<i>Honorable Mention</i>
9	Matt L. Hall	Write About Things You Care About	
10	Mikhail Schuster	Xanax	
10	Beighly Weiss	Imperfect	
11	Yana van de Sande	Tide	
11	Vuong Tran	Misspoken	
12	Kyle Sleeper	Dreaming for Summer	
12	Ipek Tashkin	Throne of Solomon	
13	Alexander Burton	Paradox of Lust	
13	Shelele Moreira	Truth Is	
14	Annemarie DeMarco-Alfama	Siren Song	
14	Hellora Silva	Why Do I Bleed?	
15	Alma Bocaletti	Niente, Per Il Mio Coure	
15	Rosalie Groleau	Please Don't Forget	
16	Harley Monteiro	My Dog's Heart	
16	Alpha Bathol	Who Is She	
17	Eliza Anise	Burned Out	
17	Dave Capone	In the Room of a Sub-Sub Librarian	

Poetry

18	Zoya Gargova	How to write a poem?
19	Sonia Valentine	The Apprentice
20	Zoya Gargova	Where do flowers go?
24	Zoya Gargova	The End of Summer
30	Alexandra Ranucci	Walking Poem
34	Madison DeBaker	phalanges
36	Annie Jang	Choice
38	Kate Flaherty	Cloud II
40	Zoya Gargova	A Few Elements of Loss
44	Kate Flaherty	Cloud Nine
45	Elaine Happnie	Wall Street Beat
46	Zoya Gargova	Insomnia

48	Menaka Ravikumar	Happy
50	Julie Van	Do you remember 1968?
51	Ann Doyle	Downtown Crossing
52	Elaine Happnie	The Red Line
53	Julie Van	unapologetic
60	Sonia Valentine	rainstorm
61	Sonia Valentine	Tempted
62	Julie Van	Ruined Thoughts
64	Anonymous	The Bully
70	Julie Van	Temporarily There
72	Ann Doyle	My Mother Smelled Like Sunshine
74	Julie Van	Automatic Setting
75	Julie Van	Stillness
85	Kate Flaherty	Prelude to Winter
87	Kate Flaherty	Snow

Prose

27	Hugh Stringer	An Accidental Death
32	Matthew Urdan	Delta
42	Victoria DiPrizio	Bare Feet
54	Ann Doyle	Pete's Gone
68	Ann Doyle	Brenda
76	Andy Robles	Mission Control to Suitcase
80	Bobby Aarons	Heading Inland

Visuals

21	Ashley Lemus	Eternal Spring
22	Savitha Rajamani	Sunflower
23	Savitha Rajamani	Dried Up
25	Savitha Rajamani	Ladybug
26	Savitha Rajamani	Spire
29	Ellen Foust	Last October
31	Ellen Foust	Boston Skyline from Harbor Walk near JFK Library
33	Ellen Foust	The Bike Rack Outside the Integrated Science Center in the Rain
35	Elaine Happnie	A Kiss
39	Elaine Happnie	Foss Chocolates
41	Savitha Rajamani	Arches
47	Sabrina Sainte	Untitled
57	Evie Hartenstein	Coexisting in Peace
58	Elaine Happnie	Sam in My Studio

59	Elaine Happnie	Sam Impressions
63	Evie Hartenstein	A Conscience on Fire
66	Dominick Ferreira	Bird House
69	Elaine Happnie	equestre
71	Ellen Foust	Dancers on the Carson Beach Pier
77	Archana Shinde	Trehouse
78	Ellen Foust	Sunset View from the Tenth Floor of the Healey Library
79	Ellen Foust	Healey Library, Sixth Floor
86	Kathryn Klinz	Mother Nature's Veins

He wasn't Lazarus and neither am I

Katherine Morrissey

First Place

sun's not done beating sky to pulp
arduous, endless, sweat turned to stars

I've gone busted kneecap
third rail manicure
laughing because it's dark,
so dark, but we're laughing

can't keep up with the kid

whole commute's train tracks
 holy roller
 glowing exit sign

my best tinder date yet

Lizzy Gagne

Second Place

i am wearing yesterday's eye bags, dark
purple and swollen. i let a stranger
sleep in my bed last night and we didn't
even fuck. our thighs touched briefly under
my blankets before they turned, quiet,
asleep. maybe i'm just desperate for
human connection. maybe i just need
to get laid. but i made frozen waffles
for breakfast, said goodbye without a kiss.

untitled

Tanairi Sorrentini
Third Place

tongues warm
like '09 Dominican barrios pressing calloused fingertips into shoulders
like first grade coat closet kiss surrounded by fleece
and warm

sun paths under my feet to rivers at camp, warm like inner thighs
inner thighs like warm mango bites

there's a sign at the train station advertising a suicide hotline, y'know, so people won't jump

Lizzy Gagne
Honorable Mention

the commuter rail's tracks are lined with garbage
and invasive shrubs. i couldn't tell you
what plant is supposed to be there and now
isn't, what plant was once there and now isn't.
two people run across the tracks to catch
the train as it approaches and you can
hear the horn from miles away as the
driver begs them to just run across faster.
i stand to the side. on my left is a no trespassing sign,
and to my right is a hole in the chain link fence.

Strong Roots

Gabrielle Grant
Honorable Mention

A tongue tied into the braids, knots and curls
Untamed, untouched forever perplexing
2016—Pretoria, South Africa
Cover it up, straighten it out, strong roots stray
Traditions of grain looped deep into the scalp
Stripped of heart and soul, no place to exist
Toxins, more chemicals the self-harm cream
Hush, Hush: the mainstream tells not many truths now.
Hold your head held high, break the comb each time
Speak truth into yourself for you are magic.

Write About Things You Care About

Matt L. Hall
Finalist

You know what I care about the most? Sleep,
Coffee—freshly brewed with milk and honey
The way Mabel, who is more your dog than
Mine, stares up at me when I have some cheese
The smell of your hair after a shower
Like Carmen Miranda as an old maid
Bananas, Patchouli—The smell of home
And the way you tell me everything you
Think, as though saying what's on your mind is
The only way to ever make it real

Xanax

Mikhail Schuster
Finalist

Here's how the story goes:
a cup of coffee, 12:37am, a digital clock and an open window.
Does this story sound familiar? Do you know who I am?
In the mornings you wake up, and there is
nothing, there is birdsong, there is sunshine, there is snow, there is winter.
Something is missing, you do not know

when she calls you, you cry.
Pills like candy, songs of misery, and in the morning
the sky still goes pink.

Imperfect

Beighly Weiss
Finalist

I Feel like an empty belly that food will not fill
A tired body that sleep will not heal
Seeking redemption, perfection
An imperfect being
Orders tacos at a burger restaurant
seeks perfection from imperfect beings
how can a rose tell a daisy where to bloom when we all sit
in a garden of thorns and bugs that eat our roots
eat my roots
like I am a useless weed

Tide

Yana van de Sande
Finalist

Waves of the ocean arriving at the shore
fading away all natural events
that have been spread out as if they were once part of a ship
restart life once more:
repeat.

Misspoken

Vuong Tran
Finalist

Oops, sorry, did I say that? Can you repeat that?
I didn't mean it, I swear.
It's just the words that come out of my mouth
But to you,
They tumble and turn through the air
Gathering these unforeseen, invisible
Specks of experience, emotions, evolved
Into an imagined image that speaks to you.
Have I misspoken?
Should I use this word instead of that?

Dreaming for Summer

Kyle Sleeper
Finalist

A winter is nothing without its wind,
timing the awakening of clear ice
and wanting for the silver to fall down.

Clean, light and without warning she comes down
twirling whimsically near the window.
While father cracks his tongue, his tone cold as ice.

With rapid fire his slurred words of Bourbon sliced
my innocence into a forgotten downward
spiral of twist and turns. My heart became winded.

Lost in the wind, slipping on ice, I. Go. Down.

Throne of Solomon

Ipek Tashkin
Finalist

Big brother, I'm so little,
Yet I want to go up the mountain.
I will carry my goat, sell it for sheep at the market
To walk the steps of Solomon.

I'm young but I got the might of a tiger,
And when I go up, I will pour my heart into the water,
I will be happy, oh so happy,
To have seen the Throne of Solomon.

Paradox of Lust

Alexander Burton
Finalist

Yes, you can touch that
Is that ok still
Yes, but, no
Still ok, life on fire
Smile is the only answer

Why would one say yes
Why would one put another in a paradox
Repercussions for the listener
Hate now grows in the heart
Lies have stopped but anger hasn't

Truth Is

Shelele Moreira
Finalist

I hurt my mother
By poking at her biggest insecurity
Me

See the frightening child
She's not made of stars and bigger things,

Half pixel girl
She's bones and flesh
mouth hanging
world unleashing

Siren Song

Annemarie DeMarco-Alfama

Finalist

Whisper them, the tiny shadows of thought, the specs
of darkness in your heart to me. Tell the
secrets you hid, the lies you poured from your
curved lips and shallow soul whisper them to the
pirates, they're cursed as you. Release the feelings
that you sunk with the ship the ones that held
your words prisoner in the brig. Show me your
deceitful grin. I'll sing of your tragedy.
Barnacles have stained your lovely cheeks, the sea
stole the life from your eyes. Your soul is mine.

Why Do I Bleed?

Hellora Silva

Finalist

Why do I bleed, if not for me?
Is what I own in my veins now not my right?
Has it become the new golden currency,
that I must forfeit in order to survive?
It has become sun lit gold,
oozing down ever so slowly from my lips.
Purely made honey, flowing through my body.
Giving me life. For if it is blood you want, go ahead,
cut me open and watch me bleed.
But be careful, you do not know what you have just freed.

Niente

Per Il Mio Coure

Alma Bocaletti

Finalist

*Non aspettare per me
Non ti prometto niente...*

Winter's frost dissipates and love returns,
Though uncertain whose name it'll bear; extinction lingers 'round
Life's garden, while romping children's fingers disrupt a shallow pond's stillness.

And ripples, ringing gradually return...
Slowly simmering in sundown's warmth, slipping down slopes into *nidi di amanti*...
Fools! –Gazing upon silhouettes embraced under twinkling incandescent bodies.

Mistaken you are, for promises are not mine to keep.
No esperes de mi...Niente.

Please Don't Forget

Rosalie Groleau

Finalist

Making connections is...
Difficult. Names faces and traits
Stick like the humid air of summer
To the flesh of your mind, but you slip away
Like snowflakes on flushed cheeks
Fading away into the subconscious
Never achieving anything of note
Because you're just so damned...
Forgettable.

My Dog's Heart

Harley Monteiro
Finalist

My dog's heart is nothing like the winter
For he is a warm & bright summer morning

My dog's heart is not ice water
Consumed to cool off from the sun
He is the sun himself
Orbiting his warmth around me

My dog's heart is not the tickle of cool snowflakes
Landing on your face from above
He is the warm mug of hot chocolate & marshmallows
To melt them all away

Who Is She

Alpha Bathol
Finalist

Others may look at me as just another girl of color. A mysterious girl always portraying a cryptic smile. Who is she they may ask? Well I'm the one and only. You see, my name was given to me for a confidential reason. What my name means to me is far beyond what my father intended for me. My name expresses the woman I continue seeking to be. A woman who is strong and radiant with such great leadership. A woman with an undeniable drive to achieve the things people dream. My name is Alpha. Just a girl continuing to seek that woman I'll soon be.

Burned Out

Eliza Anise
Finalist

spitting fire casting grey ashes in silence ... no more acting
pretending to care ...

She runs she leaps out a window Inflating her wings with grace
Soaring up in air
Coasting down with open talons Landing on the highway With ease

her wings deflate a cold cloud settles ..
wanting to slide into the warmth of a heated car...

In the Room of a Sub-Sub Librarian

Dave Capone
Finalist

A man paces as he looks unnerved at line after line he's transcribed
On his wall there, various phrases from minds far greater than his, his
That tells him to copy more from the books that he has there, of
Courts, and fire, and Scottish kings, and desire, and cell doors closing, and
Paris in spring, and fear, and loathing, and Karenins, and Karenina, and
Deadly sin, and waiting, and war, and women, and glasses half empty, and
Heroin, and masses, and DMT, and walking home, and
Infidelity, and brilliance, and soma, and serenity, and
Corpses of civilians, and simpler times, and a warmer place, and
He thinks that his wall might be lacking the space.

How to write a poem?

Zoya Gargova

How to write a poem?
How to write the first poem?
How to write the last poem?
The white page waits for words.
Naked branches with no leaves.

The Apprentice

Sonia Valentine

the power to breathe life into images
overwhelms the apprentice of the word.
darkness comes midday when the word disappears.
the power to breathe life into memories
is absent, destroyed destinies
lying like an unused sword.
the power to breathe life into images and memories
overwhelms the apprentice of the word.

Where do flowers go?

Zoya Gargova

Where do flowers go?
The same place the days go.
Just a lot slower.

Eternal Spring

Ashley Lemus



Sunflower
Savitha Rajamani



Dried Up
Savitha Rajamani



The End of Summer

Zoya Gargova

The aroma of coffee spiced
with presence of old age
fills this tiny place
where I have stopped
to rest my feet.

The rain makes it all wet and clean.
Still no leaves on the ground.
Heavy raindrops
drumming gently in my head:
Time is running out—
fall will chase the summer.

Ladybug

Savitha Rajamani



Spire

Savitha Rajamani



An Accidental Death

Hugh Stringer

Sean is obsessed with thinking he should have saved his brother James. Though he hasn't seen Father O'Malley since the evening of the day James drowned, Sean thinks if he were to speak with him, Father O'Malley would help him move on. He's looking for him in the Bowery because he remembers Father O'Malley saying ex-priests sometimes go to the Bowery to escape their shame. When Sean asks a police officer in the Bowery if he knows of a homeless priest living there, the officer smirks. "We see homeless priests all the time! Who you looking for?"

"Father Brian O'Malley, a Jesuit."

"First, look in the telephone directory. You might call the cardinal's office at St. Patrick's Cathedral, but I suspect ex-priests don't wanna be found."

The Bowery isn't the first place Sean looked. He already inquired at a police station near the old Jesuit novitiate in Stockbridge. The officer on duty said there was a record of a Brian O'Malley, but the case was pending.

Sean knows about "pending." James's drowning is pending in his mind, seemingly all day every day ever since that weekend in October 1971 when Father O'Malley took him and James camping in Stockbridge. The morning they were to return to Boston, they went to the town park and James drowned in the Housatonic River.

At that time, Sean was trying to decide if he had a vocation, and the weekend was to be a chance for him to talk with Father O'Malley about the possibility of joining the Jesuits. They camped near the Jesuit retreat house on Lake Mahkeenac.

Sean remembers the night before James drowned. Father O'Malley spoke about his life as a Jesuit. He said his life was very much like going on a camping trip: "You leave your mom and dad, and go off into the unknown." Sean remembers asking if liking girls would mean he didn't have a vocation. Father O'Malley said Jesuits took vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. "The loneliness we feel makes us love Jesus all the more." Then with a knowing smile, he said, "In the seminary, before we'd get into bed, we would pray that if we were to have a wet dream, it would happen while we were asleep, or so near asleep that it wouldn't count as sinful."

In the morning, Father O'Malley said Mass, using a picnic table as an altar. As if speaking to himself, he paraphrased the 23rd Psalm, saying that when it was his time to walk in the shadow of death he wanted to be outdoors, "in green pastures," unencumbered by white collar and black suit.

Sunday morning after they'd finished a pancake breakfast, Father O'Malley took the boys to Stockbridge Town Park to go fishing in the Housatonic River. He said he wanted to meditate and stayed in the car. James drowned a half hour after they got to the park.

At the inquest, Sean spoke of what happened: "I didn't see James fall, but heard him call out. I thought the current had swept him downstream...thinking he was under the murky river water, I dove in still dressed...the water was ice cold, I couldn't see.

"The current swept me a hundred yards downstream. I thought I'd drown. I had seen him standing on a tree that had fallen across the river, but never thought he was on the upstream side of the tree...shivering, my teeth chattering, I stumbled along the riverbank and back to the parking lot.

"I shouted to Father O'Malley, 'James was taken by the river! I can't find him!'"

After Sean's testimony, the chief of the Stockbridge Fire Department spoke as a witness: "We got the call at 12:08 and were on the scene in three minutes. Two of our boys dressed in full-body wet suits and strapped on air tanks. From Sean's account we assumed James was caught, ensnared underwater, pinned against the branches of a tree that had fallen across the river, and sure enough, we found him there. Not even an experienced lifeguard could have pulled James to safety. The current had him so tight against the tree's branches that it took both of our boys to bring him up."

The inquest record noted that Brian O'Malley had not responded to a summons requesting that he testify, but the Dean of Students at Boston College spoke on behalf of the Jesuit community: "After leaving Sean at his parents' home, Father O'Malley went to the Jesuit community home at BC, left the community car in the parking lot, left his collar and breviary on his bed, took a few dollars from the community's petty cash box, and took the Green Line train to Park Street and the Red Line to South Station. Security cameras show he then took the Fung Wah bus to Chinatown. To this day, your honor, that's all we know about Father O'Malley's whereabouts."

Three years after James drowned, Sean finds a Brian O'Malley listed in the Manhattan phone book. He calls and Father O'Malley answers the phone and agrees to meet Sean in a coffee shop on Broadway at noon.

Last October

Ellen Foust



Walking Poem

Alexandra Ranucci

The mess I can control

The ocean to my right,
A sidewalk to my left
Rocks under my feet as I move,

Left right, left right.

In-between the rocks a gallon of milk,
Disappointment spreads through my body,
A squat, a crotch, a reach to grasp the mess,

Left right, left right.

The water crashes over the rocks,
Tin foil remains upon a rock, my heart drops further inside
How much more of a mess can I take?

Left right, left right.

Water bottles, juice cans, plastic bags, trash bags. It's everywhere.
A bottle of tequila hidden under a bench. Maybe this will fix my mess
This one, I drink.

Left right, left right.

Boston Skyline from Harbor Walk near JFK Library

Ellen Foust



Delta

Matthew Urdan

The first week of high school physics, I learned that a delta had another meaning besides the place where a river fanned out, formed an alluvial plain, and entered the ocean. In fact, river deltas were named after the Greek letter delta (Δ), which shape they resemble. It's kind of funny really, the arbitrary way we invent words. If a corn broom had existed when the ancient Greeks first discovered river deltas, they might have thought to name a delta after a broom. Instead of cruising up and down the Mississippi in high style aboard the *Delta Queen*, we might have found ourselves steaming up and down America's greatest river aboard the *Broom Queen*, or, God forbid, the *Witch Hunt*. But I suppose not. As a nation our poetic sensibilities are a little more refined. Heading into the Mississippi's Broom, I'm sure our noble paddle-wheel steamer would have been named the *Mississippi Sweeper*.

In physics, the delta (Δ) also denotes an increment, or change in a variable. The passage of time for instance, is expressed as a simple mathematical equation. If t_1 equals the initial time, and t_2 equals the final time, then the amount of time that has gone by, or change in time, is expressed as $\Delta t = t_2 - t_1$. In other words, if t_1 equals two o'clock, and t_2 equals three o'clock, Δt —the change in time—equals one hour. The delta is used in physics anywhere it's necessary to express a change. A change in distance, a change in place, a change in time. You would think the delta could also be used to express changes in ourselves. Our age could be expressed as: $\Delta y = \text{current year} - \text{our birth year}$. Our change in financial status could be expressed as $\Delta \$$. Our change in mood could be expressed as $\Delta \$$ divided by Δy . Or not. Maybe physics and the economy and human emotions and moods just don't mix. It was a thought.

Really though, it's hard to imagine a river delta being called a broom, or anything else *but* a delta. It is so aptly named as it is. As time went on and the fourth letter of the Greek alphabet acquired the meaning of change, one looks more closely at the river delta and appreciates how well the Greeks and physicists chose. A river delta is a place of great change. It's where fresh rainwater mingles with the ocean and becomes saline. It's where sediment is deposited and new land is built up. It's where wildlife teems and political boundaries end. And it's where water completes a cycle of evaporating over the ocean, raining or snowing down on distant mountains, torrential runoffs across continents and slow meanderings through river beds until it reaches the delta, enters the ocean, and begins the cycle all over again as water molecules in an ocean just waiting to evaporate.

A few weeks ago, I knew how those water molecules felt. I just wanted to evaporate. But as I've undergone my own Δ distance, and Δ place, and Δ moods, and I've seen the deltas, or changes, in Kip, I'm learning that life is a constant series of deltas. We are always changing. And while at some times life doesn't seem bearable, that feeling will change. I miss Linda so much and when I think of her I still can't stop the tears. But when I'm with Kip and Jonathan and having a great time or when I think about being at work and doing what I love there just aren't enough hours in the day. The riverboat that is my heart will go on, with or without me. So I'd better get back on board.

The Bike Rack Outside the Integrated Science Center in the Rain

Ellen Foust



phalanges

Madison DeBaker

i caught you kissing my broken fingers
the wrinkles of your lips
met the lines of my scars
hands bleeding, lips soaked in blood
needle and thread with nimble thumbs
~ he stitched me up with golden thread and silver spoon fingers ~

A Kiss

Elaine Happnie



Choice

Annie Jang

Love is not a choice,
 But an emotion; raw, wild.
 Love *makes* you emotional.
 When eyes meet, you feel
 That spark. The shiver, the heat
 Offered of you.
 Of him. Of her. Of them.
 Follow your heart, follow your feelings.
 That first spark lights thirsting kindling,
 Spreads furious wildfire.
 We fight fire with fire,
 Turn love-blind eyes to its devastation,
 Unfurl frozen fingers to feel the repercussions of the flames.
 "I can't help who I love."
 Love is an emotion, a feeling...
 Or is it?

Is love attraction; affection? Distraction
 From loneliness and monotony of the ordinary?
 A gravitation to one another while
 Gazing at each other through a view tinted rose?
 Souls dancing entrancingly,
 Eyes glancing enchantingly,
 Lips in quiet, close whisper as
 Butterflies flutter by in the pit of our gut,
 Holding tight the pounding heart,
 In trembling, nervous passion?
 Can that equate to love?

Love is a choice.

A choice to stay; despite the appeal of new affections
 Because with him exists a history and a future.
 A choice to care; despite how real her imperfections
 Because with her exists a home and a welcome;
 For you are half as much of her, as she is of you.
 A choice to embrace, despite the uncertainty of endless options,
 Something new that wasn't there before.
 Love chooses the lover and lovers choose to love.

A choice to leave behind everything I knew;
 Despite the loneliness, despite the agony,
 A choice to desperately escape his inhumanity.
 A choice to find kindness and happiness with myself.
 A choice to look back in quiet reflection.
 A choice to look ahead after long introspection.
 A choice to move forward into a better future.
 A choice to fight for what is right,
 A fight for freedom, a fight for voice!

And to listen.

Because love is your choice.

Cloud II

Kate Flaherty

verb “to overspread or cover with a cloud; to overshadow; obscure; darken; to make gloomy”

Can you hear me now? Cloudy with a chance of gloom.

I don't know why the old woman swallowed that fly, or the bear went over the mountain. Maybe she went over the mountain and gasped at the ugliness and the fly flew right in, made itself at home in her gullet. What's in your wallet?

What if the cloud ate that mountain? A whole mountain range vanished in one mighty gulp. Clouds like doing that. What makes them then relent? There's probably a deep meteorological explanation by the bald guy with the suit on the Weather Channel. How come the females don't wear suits? Are they just another cloud—young, chic, blond, short skirts, cleavage—we are blitzed by young girls and old men. Keep the old men, people trust them. Hire the young chicks for scenery—just another cloud—#Me Three!

And if you're looking for a rebirth of wonder, you won't find it on TV. Cloudy with a chance of spaghetti. Can you hear me now?

Foss Chocolates

Elaine Happnie



A Few Elements of Loss

Zoya Gargova

Drizzle in the air
Sticky handful of earth in my hand.
Smell of decay.
Flowers laid to rest.

A single set of plates.
A piece of bread, some salad,
A glass of wine, no dessert.
Still life with your empty chair.

My days are different
Woven in with threads of different colors.
Back is always there
Constant background of them all.

Rivers run dry—no tears left.
The night is sleeping in my bed,
waiting for the morning light.
You are never coming back.

Arches

Savitha Rajamani



Bare Feet

Victoria DiPrizio

I could wait until the morning but I know no one else will have the energy to do it. I mean it is right down the hall, but the thought of actually getting up is appalling to these people. Look at them; mesmerized by the screen in front of them. It's no use.

Exhaling, I stand as I have done time and time again, tying the top of the trash bag, forcing the garbage to suffocate. I replace the barrel with a fresh bag, clench the garbage, and head out for my quick adventure. The door creaks open as I give them one last look; not even a passing glance.

With the door slamming behind me, the journey to the trash room begins.

Turn right.

My bare feet chill with each step on the stiff, frigid carpet throughout the hallway.

Continue straight.

My mom always told me to wear something on my feet.

Continue straight.

Socks were a necessity in my house.

Turn left.

Besides, I am not in my house anymore so my mom will never know.

Continue straight.

As usual the hallway is quiet.

Continue straight.

No drunken college students.

Continue straight.

Or blaring music breaking the silence.

Stop.

Just my luck. The trash bag is leaking. I can feel the puddle of the chunky liquid on my bare right foot. I shut my eyes and tilt my head back. Are you serious? I try not to guess what it could be, but my mind wanders anyways.

Milk? Too mushy to be milk.

Tea? Too thick to be tea.

Sauce? Too smooth to be sauce.

I hold the bag up to my face to see if I guessed it but to my surprise it is nothing. No leakage; perfectly intact.

Confused, I slowly lift my foot to look at the bottom. While the carpet is swallowing in a deep brown substance, it is deceiving the true color of the liquid. But my pale foot screams the truth: red. It does not take long for me to realize this is no juice or sauce, this is blood.

Panicked, I scan the hallway to see if there is a trail. But the carpet is clean, except for the puddle at my feet. I didn't cut myself, I would have felt a stinging sensation. Whose blood is this? There's no one around. What should I do?

Continue straight.

I walk cautiously, balancing on my right heel to ensure the blood stays on my toes.

Continue straight.

I hold my breath as I traverse the hall, praying no one will see my foot.

Continue straight.

I shift my eyes down the hall to the elevators. Nothing. Thank goodness.

Turn right.

I face the door to the trash room. Splotches of red liquid drip from the door.

Stop.

The same color red as the blood on my foot. Before opening the door, I take a breath. Nervously holding the knob, I push the door open and find darkness. Shit. I forgot that the light is motion-sensored. Slowly, I move my right heel into the room. Click.

The darkness vanishes. I am frozen. I want to scream but nothing will come out. My eyes are glued to it. Who did this? I drop the bag and run.

Continue straight.

I limp, trying not to let my bloody toes touch the carpet.

Continue straight.

My heartbeat pounds in my ears as I stagger back to my room.

Continue straight.

My vision becomes blurry as tears fill my eyes.

Continue straight.

My mom always told me to wear something on my feet.

Continue straight.

I should have listened.

Cloud Nine

Kate Flaherty

The job I want at ten a.m.
vanishes at noon,
left in the lurch at lunch.
Cotton cumulus
morphs to vapor,
wets my feet,
I fall through—
There's no cloud eight.

Wall Street Beat

Elaine Happnie

Buy, buy, sell to the tune of the silver bell.
Wall Street runs on greed, you need money to succeed.
Never be downbeat you'll be obsolete.
Massive outsized Wall Street pay, bet on mortgage all the way.
Real estate, speculate.
Rising rents live in tents.
To the tune of the silver bell
Bear Sterns on the run, Bernie Madoff had such fun.
Oh the dollar falling fast, then G.M. took all our cash.
Banksters ripping at our lives.
Lies disguised by corporate ties.
Avarice and greed and evil seed.
Buy, buy sell to the tune of the silver bell.

Insomnia

Zoya Gargova

Silence sleeps in my bed,
bringing memories alive.
Humming birds in my head
in search of life not found.
The morning light—still
slow to come.

Untitled

Sabrina Sainte



Happy

Menaka Ravikumar

I am a happy person.
I have friends.
I have mentors.
I love who I am.
I am a happy person.
But sometimes I want to run away
It feels like every time I speak up,
I get burned.
I don't like to be negative.
I don't like to start fights.

I am a happy person.

Wake up to a new day.
Excited to be alive.
Put on my makeup.
Do what I'm supposed to do.
I don't like complaining,
because what right do I have?
I don't slam doors.
I am gentle and mindful.
But when push comes to shove,
everyone forgets that I am human.
Happy is what you see.
Don't you want to know what's underneath?

To be honest,
I don't care.
Yeah, you never have.
Took me so long to understand.
You've hurt me,
but I won't tell you that.

I'm a happy person.

I'm a happy person,
and that's all you see.
I don't have any problems.
I can be yelled at when you are angry
It doesn't matter that I'm just a mistreated bystander.
I'm just a sponge.
I clean up every mess.
Dump your feelings on me—
I'll be a good friend,
Shoulder to cry on,
Life of the party.

I'm a happy person,
and that's all you need to see.

Scared as hell.
Don't know how I'm going to do it.
Keep my head down.
Helpful, but not that much.
Easy target.
Mock me, judge me, assume things about me.
I'm just a happy person,
and that's all you need to see.

Sarcasm and negativity,
It's all around me.
I motivate myself
It's better that way.
No need to ask for help.
It's better that way.
Bitter taste in my mouth,
A sub-conscious guilt.
Sometimes I wonder,
What would happen if I just disappeared?
Would I be less of a nuisance?

But then I remember,
That that is just not me.
I have too much to look forward to,
too many tasks left unfinished.

I am a happy person.

Am I a happy person?

Do you remember 1968?

Julie Van

Dad and I are both Libras
and that is only half a lie.
Juan Romero
 softly cradled
the head of Robert F. Kennedy
stuffing his hands with the hope
of rosaries.
 You don't think
of bowling alleys until you're at
one. Bodies lie massacre-stiff
as a war-torn country
 congeals
in the throat of its granddaughters.
Inhale a little deeper.
Dr. King still sees the mountaintop
from the Lorraine Motel,
 hold on
to the promise we will get there too.
Christmas Eve from lunar orbit,
twilight zone grasps at the horizon.
There's a tangent line to my existence.
Choices on a driver's license
point towards unrest.
 Leap year
 started on a Monday
and chose my dad. Uneasy but in
 the choice to live.

Downtown Crossing

Ann Doyle

The subway air is thick.
It smells like worry,
stale popcorn, and
pigeon's breath.

Like pickles in a jar,
limp humans slump,
and wait for ancient
rumbling trains.

Losing lottery tickets
and globs of gum
blackened with subway soot
lounges like dead dreams
on the sticky subway floor.

Herds of well-heeled
young professionals
cling to propaganda dreams
and type hopeful messages
on tiny devices.

Two teenage hearts
drunk on love and lust
hold hands and dream
of happily ever after.
Shining a light
in Downtown Crossing.

Someone almost smiled.

The Red Line

Elaine Happnie

I rode on the red line today, with the zombies.
You know them.
They bask in the glow of the light on the screen.
Technology buried people, caught by the genie in the lamp.
Seducing them into its flickering glow.
You know them.
They no longer use their lips to speak to kiss, they only use their fingertips.
Will they ever awaken—will they ever learn to think
Or is life just a cold plastic eye
And the blue light of the screen

unapologetic

Julie Van

pull the plugs out of their sockets
before turning off the appliances

press your moon face against
lavender winds and fields of clouds

the underlining of spellcheck does not
have a suggested correction

add items to an amazon shopping cart
save for later, an undetermined date

distortion preferred made by
the reflective metallic towel dispenser

scrub away the tongue
dirty sponge imprints on childhood

sleep until you no longer find
happiness with an asterisk

Pete's Gone

Ann Doyle

Nana called.

“I'd like you to come over here right away...Grandpa's gone.”

My first thought was that Grandpa had wandered off again. Last month he managed to escape while Nana was trying on shoes at Thom McCann's. The police found him several hours later wandering around the Dudley Street train station. Nobody knows how he got there.

“Gone? Gone where?”

“Gone to Heaven.”

“Shit...I'll be right over.”

I got into my car, dreading the scene that was about to unfold. I found Nana attached to her new, white princess wall phone in the kitchen. Her well-worn leather telephone book sat on the red formica table, opened to the “D” page. She waved me away and pointed towards their bedroom. As I walked away, I could hear her say, “Hello, this is Alice, Alice Doherty...Pete's gone. Pete Doherty, we lived next door to you on Magnolia Street.”

Grandpa was lying on his back, hands resting on his chest, eyes closed and all dolled up in his freshly ironed, blue and white striped pajamas. It didn't surprise me that Nana must have spent some time arranging him; she was always redecorating. His pills, water glass and Donegal green rosary beads were lined up on his bedside table. A suit, tie, white shirt and pants were hung on the back of his closet door. A going-away outfit for his magical trip to heaven.

I touched his shoulder and asked for a sign. I wanted to know if his spirit lived on. I waited...nothing. I'd miss his sweet face, his gentle voice and his pale blue eyes. I sat on the hard wooden chair next to the bed and opened up a box of memories. Years ago, on Friday nights, he'd sit at the edge of his chair in front of the television, watching Friday Night Fights and enjoying his once-a-week bottle of Pickwick Ale. When I asked Nana what Pickwick Ale was, she said it was Grandpa's medicine. On Saturday mornings, he'd walk down to the Waldorf Cafeteria in Upham's Corner to meet his bookie and place his nickel a day on a number. We'd look up the number in the Record American newspaper and when it came out, he'd treat Nana and me to a Chinese dinner at the Asia Pacific Restaurant (known to locals as the Asia Pathetic). His number was 127 and for a nickel, he'd win thirty dollars, which was a nice amount in those days.

Although we never spoke of it, Grandpa and I were soldiers in an unnamed, unofficial army. We rallied against the wrath of Nana. She kept weapons of mass destruction hidden in her mouth. Grandpa said she had a tongue sharpener under the sink. He hid behind his newspapers, but newspapers can't shield you from angry words and lethal looks. We learned to communicate telepathically, using our eyes when she was within hearing range. She had ears like a German Shepherd. At the slightest murmur, she'd come galloping into the room and demand to know exactly what we were discussing.

I got up, went over to his bureau and opened the dark mahogany box that sat on his dresser, right next to the statue of Baby Jesus, who had curly brown hair and was dressed in a fancy gold outfit. His La-Z-Boy recliner and this plain wooden box were Grandpa's exclusive property. Each day when he'd come home from work, he'd empty his pockets and drop his loose change, watch, wallet and keys into the wooden box. I lifted the lid and found an ancient cloth scapular, a skeleton key, a Saint Christopher

medal, a subway token, a silver dollar, cuff links and an onyx ring he never wore. On the bottom, tied together with faded red ribbon, was a bunch of old greeting cards, ancient photographs and handwritten letters. Each of these items told a story and I wished I had taken the time to learn more about his stories. I suffered pangs of regret for so many words left unsaid and so many questions unanswered.

I sat back down and held his cold hand while my mind wandered over memories of years gone by. I had to smile when I recalled Grandpa's Easter Uprising. I was eight years old, it was Good Friday and Grandpa was over an hour late coming home from work. I assumed he was dead and if he wasn't, I knew he was going to catch hell because his supper was cold and I saw smoke coming out of Nana's ears. I raced outside and sat on the red brick stairs that led up to the front porch. I waited, watched and I worried for Grandpa. Finally, I spotted him trudging up the hill holding a brown cardboard box in front of him. He sat down beside me and placed the mysterious box between us. An Easter surprise! We played the guessing game. Was it a hat with flowers on it? A cake? A new doll or a dress? He told me to close my eyes and reach into the box. Something soft and warm met my hand. It was a tiny, white, baby rabbit! I held him next to my heart and named him Albert.

The loud slamming of her angry feet on the hallway stairs alerted us. We froze. Nana was not an animal lover; both fur and feathers always made her scream. Dogs gave her a wide berth, but cats just never learn. She'd kick them and curse. Albert hid his face. Grandpa suffered her glare and I, in my usual way, escaped to the pretty purple room in my head. She accused him of stopping for a drink and hanging out with drunken bums in the filthy, rotten barroom. For many years, I thought the barroom was named “The Den of Iniquity” because that's what Nana called it. Years later, I learned it was actually called “The Corner Pub.”

“God knows what kind of disease you could drag home after drinking out of those crusty glasses.”

Grandpa always met her accusations with silence, which would further infuriate her. I must have been so taken up with Albert that I can't recall the rest of the evenings fireworks. Perhaps Nana was shocked into silence at the unexpected act of boldness. Grandpa and I built a little hut for Albert on the back porch. Nana said Albert would be the death of us because he'd probably infect us with some strange rabbit plague. I can't recall Albert's fate, but I'll always treasure the memory of Grandpa's Easter Uprising.

Many other scenes flashed before my eyes as I recalled the sweetness of this man who never raised his voice, who taught me patience and kindness. One day in my early teens during my eye-rolling stage, Nana asked me to dust the dining room chairs. When she walked away, I turned towards Grandpa and rolled my eyes. Grandpa's forehead narrowed, his lips folded and he shook his head.

“You know your grandmother loves you very much and I know you love her, even though she drives us crazy sometimes.”

I never rolled my eyes again.

Her voice droned on and on in the kitchen.

“Hello, Pete's gone. Yes, we're waiting for the undertaker, PJ Murray, from West Roxbury, who's also a good friend of the family.”

Nana loved attending wakes and funerals. As long as I can remember, she'd study the obituaries each morning over a cup of steaming black coffee. If a name sounded familiar, she'd make a few phone calls to either confirm or deny whether she might have known the deceased. After the initial investigation, more often than not, she'd dash off to the wake that same afternoon. The mourning family would be cross-examined and the corpse, casket, and flower arrangements would be carefully scrutinized. Sometimes

she'd decide that she may have been distantly related to the family, depending on their social status. And now, with Grandpa chilling in the bedroom, Nana would be granted the role she was born to play, the grieving widow.

Meanwhile, back in the kitchen, call after call after call was made, alerting all living relatives, the parish priest, Ladies Sodality, neighbors new and old, Grandpa's barber, his old boss at Raytheon...she even called Stan, the guy who worked at the dry cleaners. Blah blah blah. She must have been on to the "M" page by now.

I held Grandpa's hand and told him how much I loved him. And then...I noticed a slight movement under his eyelids! His eyes opened slowly and he gazed around the room.

"Hang up! We need to call an ambulance. Grandpa's not dead!"

"You must be mistaken, the undertaker is on his way. He wasn't breathing."

She paced back and forth wringing her hands and muttering to herself. The undertaker and the ambulance arrived at the same time. The EMTs checked his vital signs and asked him how he felt. He said he was hungry.

As soon as the commotion died down, Nana put her black dress and Grandpa's suit back in the closet and made some lunch. I think, on some scary level, she might have been a bit pissed at me; as if I'd brought him back to life, throwing a wrench into her funeral arrangements. It's not that she didn't love him, but at this time, his dementia was an exhausting full-time job for her. She had to sleep with a little string around her wrist, which was attached to a string around Grandpa's wrist, because he was in the habit of wandering off, knocking on doors and ringing bells in the middle of the night. The man she married was gone, replaced by a stranger who made awful messes and didn't even know her name. She wouldn't hear of asking for, or hiring help; she was stubborn and overly concerned with what people might think. I never doubted that Nana loved Grandpa, but love is complicated.

Coexisting in Peace

Evie Hartenstein



Sam in My Studio

Elaine Happnie



Sam Impressions

Elaine Happnie



rainstorm

Sonia Valentine

ominous gray clouds come closer
a faucet from above is turned on
deluge makes the corvette sway
towards the white line
windshield wiper goes triple time
trying desperately to sweep away
the raging rain
faint red taillights
guide me forward
hoping the mayflower moving van
behind me does not go beyond 40
neon flashes of lightning
metallic claps of thunder
cymbals of a marching band
hands grip the wheel
one daughter says a prayer
another begs me to stop
i say no and follow
the double yellow line

then the faucet is turned off
drips for a while then stops
the roughest sandpaper
scrapes my stomach.

Tempted

Sonia Valentine

I am cold.
My lungs, heart, and kidneys
fill with fluid.
I gasp for air
as I drown on dry land.
Dinner of pork chops
braised in fresh tomatoes
lies on the ambulance floor.
I am frozen
to my marrow.

A no-glare, white light
with an indigo edge
emanates heat.

Bodies all around me
Lips move but
the mute button is on.

The white light
seduces me.
I want to wrap myself
in that incandescent
down comforter.
The white light
beckons me.

Stay with us.
Stay with us.
I hear my husband's voice
as he squeezes my hand.

The sound is on.
The mute button is off.
I stare at a fluorescent
white light.

Ruined Thoughts

Julie Van

My mind is the ruins of my own creation.
 I have become these copper-hued,
 honeycomb cracked walls
 and once-grand, once-towering columns.
 I've built this wall of precariously laid bricks,
 only to have watched it collapse.
 Fingers that outline the sunken cracks and grooves,
 held together by the glue that is as real as
 my cheap, melting drugstore lipstick and lasting anxiety.
 I am muddied and dirty,
 suffocating dust lies everywhere.

I breathe in cool crisp air, hoping to breathe out the dust.
 I fight against myself for the relief I crave,
 intuitive like the trigger of an innate reflex
 of an outstretched arm across the chest
 in a rapidly accelerating vehicle
 to provide the protection that didn't happen.
 I am all that should have been but wouldn't.
 But I know I can and I will.

Ease these foggy thoughts,
 and take me to the ambrosia-brimmed fountains.
 Underneath the crystalline sky,
 contrasted against my once overcast eyes
 Let me lose myself in this lush breathing labyrinth garden,
 rather than lost in my own head.

Bright, blooming buds bursting to light the way.
 The push of the pomegranate flowers consumes me,
 with an intensity deeper than any pull of gravity
 Let me walk these shielded paths with no end,
 hoping to never return to the abandoned dusk.
 I'll listen to the hypnotic, rhythmic splashes
 to take me to where I'm supposed to be.
 For everywhere I go, the echo of water follows me.

A Conscience on Fire

Evie Hartenstein



The Bully

Anonymous

One day I woke up, and we were holding hands
I wasn't ready to leave
Neither was she.
But things change, and so do people
I found myself reaching out
No reply, no reply, no reply.

A shadowy presence.
A disregarding tone.
A bond so close, ropes held together
With a Palomar knot
Is now falling apart, frayed and slipping out of my grip.
Not expected, constantly rejected.
You are the reason I am like this
You are the cause of all my pain.
Deep down inside I am drowning
I fake a smile, pretend I'm fine.
Don't blame me for this. Don't blame me for this.

Hands on my throat, soulless eyes.
Cut wrists and wide eyes.
Hospital beds and the Rorschach test.
Stop blaming me for this. Stop. Blaming. Me. For. This.

Turn your face, look outside.
Can't you see the light?
No, no, no, no.
I want to die. I want to die.
It's said so often it becomes a mantra.
The opposite of calming
Much like a threat.
The opposite of gentle
Much like a threat.

Mental illness is not curable
No injections can make you immune
It's not the common cold
No ranitidine to cure it.

"Go to church," one says.
"What are you doing to help?"
"You're not supportive enough," says the other.
"You'll never understand this."

It's a silent bully.
It's a silent bully, and it won't let go.

Bird House

Dominick Ferreira



This piece is about home. I took a picture of a bird house hanging outside my garage on a windy day, and it took a long time for the wind to die down enough for it to be framed up correctly. I saw this bird house every day when I looked out my window, and after getting the shot it struck me odd that the birds didn't seem to mind the shaking and swaying of their house at all, they just rode it out and ate their seed. I like to think if it got too much, they would step (or, fly) away for a moment to recollect themselves and then get back to accomplishing their bird goals. Maybe I'm being a bit unrealistic, but I found a lot of comfort in this idea. The bird house in the wind can be an analogy for a lot of us incoming Freshmen who are leaving home for the first time and are due for a big gust of wind to shake things up. There are things that will be confusing and stressful and scary and might very well make us homesick, but the important thing to realize is that we're not alone. There are a thousand other birds in the same house experiencing a similar feeling, so it's imperative that we find support in each other during the stressful times, and relief in each other during times of rest. The beauty that can be found when we stick out the hardships is often much more rewarding than if we let go and get blown away with the wind.

Brenda

Ann Doyle

Brenda had a hobby. She spent endless hours and countless days collecting imagined insults, misunderstandings, slights, ominous signs, and dread-filled dreams. Her list grew more gruesome, more elaborate and more detailed with each recital. I swallowed my words, nodded politely and suggested she place her list in alphabetical, or numerical order. My sarcasm was wasted.

I said, "Let's put that awful list in a burlap bag, bury it in the garden and be done with it." She clutched her imaginary horrors to her chest and held on to them, like a newborn baby. She knitted the terrors that make her tremble with tiny stitches and thick red thread. She wore them on her shoulders and never took them off.

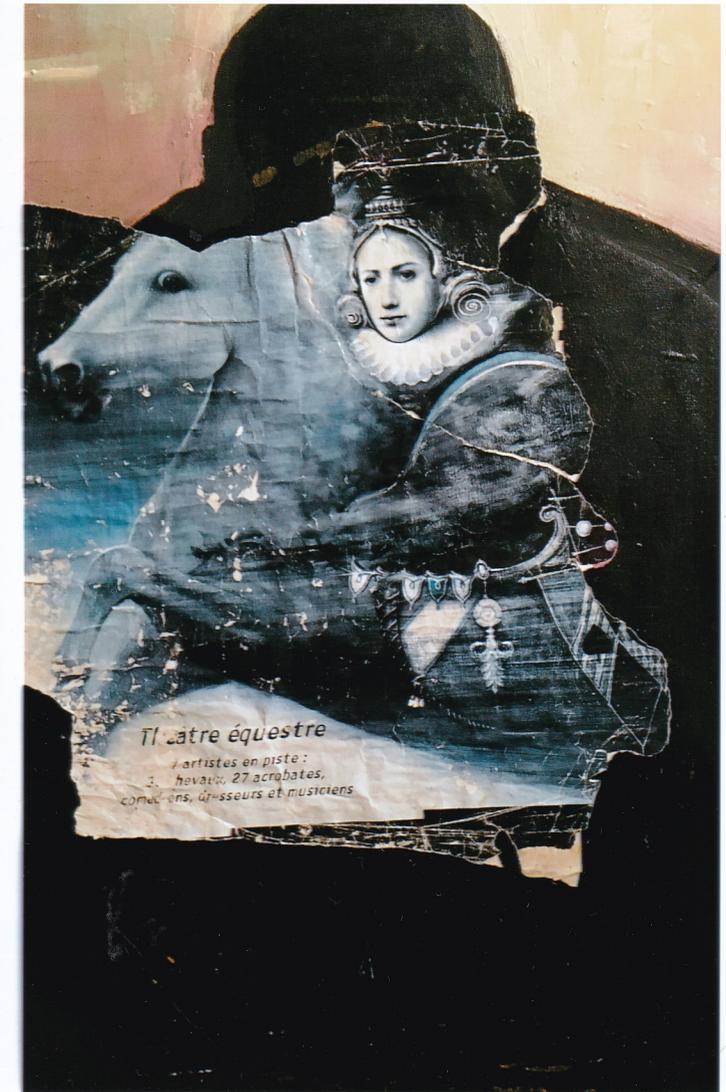
I thought a day at the beach might cheer her up. I packed a lunch and she brought a basket full of sighs and long pain-filled pauses. The sun and I were sadly disappointed. The tide shrunk back as if it were listening. That Sunday afternoon seemed to last a week.

I reminded her of our teenage days when we laughed until our stomachs ached. I asked her to count the sunny days, the stolen kisses, the people who loved her, the smiles, the hugs, the schoolgirl crushes and the days we marveled at the wonders of living and made plans for happily ever after.

The agony finally ate her up. The doctors said it was a mystery and no test could diagnose her malady. She faded for a few years and died before her hair turned grey. She looked so peaceful in her copper-colored casket. The worry finally washed from her face.

equestre

Elaine Happnie



Temporarily There

Julie Van

The linoleum floors
are remarkable where faces
do not crack with the fall.
It won't stop raining in July.
I am told of a slower
pace of life.
You're welcome baby
a server's saccharine smile
like Cheerwine blood.
Humid flesh belongs
while I choke on white bread.
More than seventy-five percent
of all medicinal plants
in God's America
are found in Appalachia.
I cry for the mountains
but this is not home.
The lonely no longer drowns
atop Waterrock Knob.
The sun is a daisy chain
connection to yesterday
reminding us
dance is a form of prayer.

Dancers on the Carson Beach Pier

Ellen Foust



My Mother Smelled Like Sunshine

Ann Doyle

My Mother smelled like sunshine
Her green eyes saw right through your words
Her hands had magic powers
They made pancakes out of air
Her kisses taste like hot chocolate on a snowy day

One day we looked and she was gone
My brother said she evaporated
She was full of surprises
Sometimes I can almost see her in the corner of my eye
But then she disappears
Leaving a marshmallowy taste in my mouth
...I told you she was magic.

She taught me how to dream
tie my shoes and cross the street
She read detective magazines
and wore white bobby sox
Ivory soap was her perfume

She took us to the beach
even though she was afraid of the ocean
When I asked her why
she said, because it was so big
she thought that it might swallow us
We laughed at her stories
and loved her silly side

They said she went to heaven
And was watching over us.
We wanted her to stay
and watch us here on earth
She loved the smell of babies

Yesterday I heard her laugh
but when I turned to look
My Mother's laugh
sailed out of my daughter's mouth

Today my Mother sits beside me
as I write this poem for her

She lives in the wind
In my children
In my brothers
And sisters
In rainbows
And sunsets
And in my grandson's eyes

Her story will never end

Automatic Setting

Julie Van

I grew up with a mother
who turned the setting
for everything to broil

since Vietnamese foods rarely
require the use of
an oven. She would place

grocery store baguettes
on the top rack, and always
they came out burnt.

Too dark is no good
I would listen to the repetitive
scraping of a dull knife

grinding away at hardness,
the taking and leaving of
unwanted impurities

flakes shedding to reveal
raw flesh, unsavory.
More and more, I grate

at night until I spit
out the moon like a dirty
nickel clinking

in the scratched
kitchen sink, ashes
fall from the hungry mouth

with teeth stained
poison, the dark gone.
We didn't know any better.

Stillness

Julie Van

If this song is 1:29
and this indoor track is one-tenth of a mile,
then how many laps around the universe
until I am allowed the stars?

I catch thunderstorms
to tuck into tiny jars
as if summer rain is supposed to be collected
but no one is meant to grow in a cage.

How many more sunrises
until the moon forgives me?

How many times can I rub white petals
between shaking fingers
waiting for sprouts to arrive?

But then—

Sometimes, my chest fills with salt water.
I would dissolve raw honey into a pond
and be gifted with the ocean.

Evenings sweet like champagne mangoes,
with the ease of how my mother would cut them
A gentle dance, a crooked smile—
I can smell the lavender through the darkness.

As we laid on a mattress on the living room floor,
patio door propped open to invite the morning sun

Head bent slight right and I saw—
a crescent opening to a new beginning.

Mission Control to Suitcase

Andy Robles

“I have a *very* good reason why your suitcase is broken, dad,” I explained. “*Science.*”

There is an experiment that, if you haven’t taken part of yourself, you’ve at least heard of. The Egg Drop Experiment. The details vary, certainly. Some people only use straws, some pencils, some whatever recyclable materials your science teacher could be bothered to bring into class that day. Regardless, the goal remains the same: build an apparatus that will keep your egg from being scrambled when the teacher drops it from whatever height they see fit.

The day I took part in this scientific rite of passage was an equally sacred half-day. Show up, learn how in 1492 Columbus sailed the ocean blue, drop an egg from a roof to find (through no small miracle) it survived in a Pringles tube stuffed with cotton, and go home. Academic appetites whetted, but by no means satiated.

Empowered and enticed with my fledgling knowledge of crash dynamics, I sought to extrapolate a bit.

What if we switched the variables?

What if instead of one straight-down impact I introduced several small impacts? We have stairs for a reason.

What if instead of a can of Pringles I went bigger? We have large suitcases for a reason.

What if instead of an egg I upped the stakes a bit? We have younger siblings for a reason.

The prep work was easy. Collect a suitably sized suitcase from a closet. Stuff said case with pillows and sheets. Gain permission from my teenage supervising sister. Convince my older brother to act as my fellow ground control, collaborate and create a juvenile Houston. Coax my younger brother to act as my brave Buzz Aldrin, or, more accurately, as my Ham.

All the pieces were in place. We *would* have touch down.

With a heave and a ho, my chubby cherub-faced six-year-old brother (six-and-a-half if you asked him), swaddled in sheets and surrounded by pillows, encased in a thick plastic shuttle, took flight.

For all of two seconds, he was defying gravity, weightless, suspended in bold rebellion against everything that weighs us down.

The flight was perfect in how finite it was. It was the zenith of a plastic and metal sun descending over a horizon of carpet and wood. A Samsonite bubble, elegant and ignorant of its fragility. A flower blooming, then immediately crashing down a flight of stairs.

There are a few moments in a young boy’s life that serve to lift the lenses of naivety—learning moments, if you will. Sometimes one must learn that experiments fail. Sometimes the egg breaks.

This, however, was not one of those times. The egg, the pilot, my baby brother was unscathed. Though he was not unperturbed. Understandably shaken, he kicked through the hard shell of the briefcase, lamenting and cursing in a way that only a child could come up with.

Despite my accolades for him, the prizes I promised, the harm I threatened, and the pleading I entreated him with, my youngest brother insisted that the report of my research be given to my parents. With plausible deniability being on the side of my brother and sister, I would be presenting alone.

So I resolved to give them the truth as best I knew it.

“I have a *very* good reason why your suitcase is broken, dad.”

Treehouse

Archana Shinde



Sunset View from the Tenth Floor of the Healey Library

Ellen Foust



Healey Library, Sixth Floor

Ellen Foust



Heading Inland

Bobby Aarons

On the day Reggie came home there was great excitement throughout town. He'd been away for three years. How simply he arrived, climbing over the horizon, a frayed canvas bag slung over one shoulder, still baffles me. There ought to have been trumpets, or storm clouds. I did not see it—I had been at the beach all day with some fine company and the warm weather—but like the wind in the grass the rumour reached me on my way up, still in swim trunks and sandals, and with a towel draped around my neck; so I hurried home to meet him, down the long, sun-soaked road, lined with poplars.

It seemed the whole town had gotten there before me. They were all gathered outside the house, in a flagrant mob. I tried to get through, but their arms were firm, as if tied together in knots, and any attempt I made to get through them was met with a flurry of elbows. When I yelled at a group of them, out of frustration, that I lived there, they only turned to me and said, "Shame on you!" and then they were mobbing around me instead.

"He's got no right to be here!"

"You ought to be ashamed!"

"We're a peaceable village! Now look what he's done to us! What he's turned us into!"

They were all around me, shouting in my ear. It seemed they very much wanted me to hear, like it would legitimize their anger. But what with my being limited to the mere space my body took up, there was no way of going about it in an orderly fashion. So instead, they took to passing me around, like a beach ball in a crowd, so that everyone could have their share.

"He's ruined this poor town!"

"I always said it! I always said he had a strange look about him!"

I thought I'd have fainted if it kept on any longer, or have been ripped to shreds, but luckily, my getting there must have stirred up enough of an uproar to draw Reggie out onto the porch.

"Put him down!" he cried. "What's he got to do with me?"

They all froze.

My head was clasped under the rubbery arm of the corner-store clerk, a large man who just that morning had wished me a good day, and with a wry smile on his face, had said, "Careful there be sharks in them waters." And we had laughed. Now he seemed a stranger.

After a bumbling few instants, one among them, a man with glasses and fiery red hair emerged, speaking for the whole.

"He's your brother isn't he!"

"Yes," Reggie said.

"Well, what better relationship could we find? We need to vent our frustrations somehow. You have no friends here. Sure, your parents created you, and so they bear the lion's share of the fault; but they are old, and feeble, and besides, it is punishment enough on their souls for having birthed you! They have repented plenty! Where are they now? Cowering in their bedroom? Good. As they should be. But this man, who does not even join us in picketing your presence, who looks so much like you and bears the same name, he might as well be you! It is the closest we can get to you! Especially when you hide from us! Shame on you, sir! And shame on you too! For looking so much like him!"

At that, the crowd began jostling me again. I was picked up and tossed from one party to the next.

As I went, a blonde woman, very fat and red-faced, who stumbled along in flip-flops, managed to keep up by clasping onto my ear. The pain was unbearable. I wished I could fight them off, but I could not move my arms and there was nothing to do but submit.

"You're wrong!" Reggie yelled, again bringing the jostling to a stop. "My brother's looking like me means nothing! He is no more my brother than any of you! We are all created in the image of god!"

A vicious groaning went through the crowd; people covered their ears and fell over. I saw the gas station clerk hammering his head against a tree.

"You see!" the red-haired man yelled. "You see what you have done to them! You have driven them practically mad with convulsions! They were the kindest folk before you came. I'd never seen so much as a drunken quarrel break out among them! And now look! In a matter of hours you have driven them to the brink of murder: they'd have ripped your brother to shreds if you had not come out. Your own brother! And yet you tempt them, when he is still in their midst, you'd continue tempting outrage on account of some stubborn vendetta, some self-indulgent righteousness, even if it meant the destruction of your own kind! Have you no shame, sir!"

All the people in the crowd nodded along, swayed by the sentiment and the tremble in the man's throat. He seemed to be on the verge of tears. Still, Reggie was unmoved. He stood against the rail, gazing over this spiteful congregation with blank, determined eyes.

"I cannot compromise with the truth," he said.

The hands inched nearer my neck: heavy, grease-slathered hands.

"I can't take it!" screamed the gas-station clerk. He charged over, like a bull through the crowd, grabbing ahold of me and lifting me high over his head.

"Calm down Paul, please!" yelled the red-haired man. "There is no use in it. He only looks like his brother!" Then he turned to Reggie. "Let me come in with him. It is too dangerous out here, and perhaps if we are alone we can figure something out, we can find some way of going forward."

"Of course," said Reggie. "I am not here to be difficult."

I was allowed down and ran after the red-haired man, not without much grumbling on the mob's part.

"He's our only leverage!" yelled the woman in the hoodie.

"Leverage!" the man yelled back. "Hear yourself! He is no leverage! There must be nothing organized about this! You are all furious and I understand. I love you still. But if you organize and begin speaking of leverage, then what have we become?"

They quieted down after that, allowed me to slip through, up the stairs and inside the house. Inside, it all looked and smelled as it had when I left that morning: warm wooden and soft with carpeting and dusty fake flowers. Sunlight fell through the windows. But the air it fell through was different, more solemn. From upstairs, I could hear our parents weeping. Reggie sat at the dining-room table, haunched over a bunch of papers, a manuscript.

The red-haired man held his stature a moment, up-chested, and then he collapsed onto the couch, letting his head fall in his hands as he wept.

"Reginald!" he cried. "What has happened! Do you even remember me? It seems your eyes no longer remember me. They are so preoccupied. Are you even there?"

"I remember," Reggie said, not looking up from his papers.

"I was your teacher! And you were my favorite pupil! I saw so much potential in you. When you left for University that September morning, I thought it would mean great beginnings for you, and I

thought you'd bring those great beginnings back to us, and we'd all share in them, we'd prosper and we'd make great advancements. Instead, you bring an end to us. You bring such consternating words and unequivocal statements. You say there is no truth but yours! Was it my fault? Did I fail you? I was your teacher! I was meant to prepare you for the fanaticism of the world, to instil in you a passion for the elements, for learning, a higher vision, and an appetite for understanding! Was it my fault? Did I fail you?"

Reggie put his pen down, sighing. "No," he said, "it is nobody's fault. It is just how the world is. I came to god because god is everywhere."

"Oh!" the teacher cried. "Your words are so vague! It spurns me to hear them!"

Reggie turned in frustration. He was about to say more, but instead, his eyes went to the window. Outside, the crowd had split in two, making an alley in the middle, down which walked a humble, elegant form. All the eyes in the crowd followed her, they clapped their hands and begged her for salvation. "Our last hope!" an old woman gasped, fainting. At the steps she mounted and entered the house like a spirit, and before Reggie, she let down her hood. Her eyes smoldered: bravely, her lips became a smile.

"Oh, Reggie," she sighed. "How I have longed to see you."

"You ought not to have come, Anya," he said, unable to look at her.

"Ought not—But Reggie, aren't you glad to see me? Look at me. Why can't you look at me?"

His body contorted; his hands clenched the table while the rest of his limbs seemed drawn to her, like magnets, craving her, struggling against the stubborn anchor in his head that abstained them, nullifying the truth of the limbs that is love, for the sake of something abstract, something absent and cankerous. His limbs fought but his mind held out. Eventually they gave in, pathetically, like the tragic failure of a well-meant insurrection.

"Why do you fight it, Reggie?" Anya said, softly. "Why do you fight love? You could just as easily give in to love, to something that is so simple and clean, and feel right in the logic of it being so simple and clean, of love being built into your limbs. Why do you fight? Why do you make something so simple so complicated and tarnished?"

"Because what would come after?" he cried, exhausted from the struggle with his limbs.

"More love!"

"No! There'd be an end to love! There'd be death! We'd live and love and then we'd die, and what would come after that? What would it all have been for? You are all too shortsighted. You cannot see the judgement over the horizon. But that is why I am here, I am here to save you from your own shortsightedness."

Her hand went to her chest: it was like a bullet had struck her.

"Reggie," she said, "don't you remember the things we did? the times we had? Oh! That night under the moonlight! On the beach! When you said the lapping of the waves was as good as a single heartbeat shared between us...But if what you say is true, then all of it was sin! How! How could any of what we shared be sin? It felt so pure! And now you say it was all sin, you make all these absolute judgements and refuse to hear otherwise; it is as if the man I loved is no longer there, as if he had been stolen away, replaced by whatever you are! Some mockery! Some foul caricature of a man, wearing a hideous mask of presumption and prejudice! Oh! I can't bear it! I can't bear to look at you!"

She collapsed against the piano, her arms embracing it, her eyes closed and appalled. A chaos of notes sounded. It lingered on the air. Meanwhile, Reggie braced himself against the table, fighting off the few spasms that trembled in his limbs, his face buried in his papers, as if smelling them, smelling the

purpose and permanency of the ink for justification.

Slowly, like a battered man, he got up.

"I'm sorry," he said. "But you'll understand someday."

There was a clamour of doors bursting open upstairs, then a heavy footfall that raged down the stairwell. Our father emerged, red in the face, his mustache bushy and thick and a stubble slathered over his cheeks. He was still in his nightgown. Our mother was behind him, clinging to his shirt, pleading with him to go back with her.

"No!" he roared. "I'll not stand this mockery any longer! He's my son. I've a word for him, and the word is, No! No more of this, Reginald! You've dragged our name through the mud, you've turned our house into a pyre of controversy and you've shamed your mother to tears! And now this! Look what you've done to Anya, the sweetest thing! I was ready to welcome her into our family, to love her like a daughter, to see you walk her down the aisle and to sob for joy! Now I sob with rage! I loved her like a daughter and you insulted her! You treated her like a cheap thing, cheap and unworthy of your stupid presumptions! Well, that's it, boy! Up with your hands!"

Reginald merely stood with phlegmatic eyes before the drawn fists of his father, barely recognizing him. His eyes gazed past him, at his mother, who cowered with fright, afraid of the specter that wore her son's flesh and gazed out through his eyes.

"I'm sorry," Reggie said, turning his palms upward. "But I've done nothing wrong. You say I've wronged my family, but I've done no such thing. My family is all the children of god. And you are not my father."

A fleshy thud gnarled the room. Reggie went down.

"Ah!" cried the father, holding his fist. "What have I done! Look what he made me do! Oh!"

He hid his face in his wife's bosom. She draped an arm around him, shielding him from the sight of the beaten son, and together, they fled, forfeiting their home, vanishing in the mob that welcomed them, that forgave them, that loved them and understood.

Reggie lifted himself up, blood leaking from his mouth. He'd lost a tooth. Anya ran to him.

"I embrace you!" she cried. "No matter what you say I will embrace you! I will follow you wherever you go."

He allowed this, touching his jaw tenderly.

"Reggie," said the teacher. "You must leave. You see now? Blood has been shed. Only more will follow. Look outside! They are ready to massacre each other!"

Indeed, behind the mob another crowd had gathered, a smaller one, made up of younger members: Reggie's friends from youth. They were his admirers and when our father had struck him their love for him reignited into a romantic, all-consuming passion. No matter what the substance of what he said was, they would follow him. They would follow him not for what he said, but how they perceived him, for the romance they knew had inspired him.

Meanwhile, the first mob, the ones so set against Reggie, had begun mocking the admirers, calling them ingenuous and naive, throwing things, and with vitriol flooding their chests, they brandished weapons, pitchforks and clubs, and torchlight stained the night, stained their hellish, vile faces.

Reggie looked out upon what he had caused.

"You've laid your seed here," the teacher said, sadly. "You've done what you came for. Now leave and be proud of yourself. Take your followers and go, and do what you will with them, there is nothing I can say to dissuade any of you. All I can do is wish you luck. On your deathbed, which is all you seem to

care for now, I hope lucidity does not find you, I hope you can pass on as in-earnest as you are now, into oblivion, without realizing the home you have forfeited.”

It was decided then. Reggie and his followers would leave town, would venture into the wastes over the hills that cradled the little bay, to search for a new place to settle, for soil where their seeds could prosper.

Anya was adamant that she go with them, though she did not believe what Reggie said. The teacher warned her against it. But she said no, stubbornness was in her heart now and she would stay with the man she loved even if he was not there, the remnants of him, the cold husk he was, was enough for her.

“You are brave,” said the teacher, with tears in his eyes. “You are brave.”

Lastly, it was decided that I must go with them. I begged to be allowed to stay, but the teacher said no. I must go. I looked too much like Reggie. The mob would only see him in my face and that must not be. I must go.

So the following day came and we set off into the cold alpine, and as we crossed over the hills above the village, I looked back and saw the glimmer of the ocean for the last time, the glimmer of the ocean like warm diamonds to lay in, and my heart yearned for it—my heart yearned for it as it has ever since, in these cold, cold wastes.

And yet, we struggle on.

Prelude to Winter

Kate Flaherty

Round, brown cheerleaders
flourish outstretched arms like
red and gold shakers
while green triangles wait for
white tutus to
fall from the sky
marking their debut
on winter’s stage
as prima ballerinas

Mother Nature's Veins

Kathryn Klinz



Snow

Kate Flaherty

A hushed blue crust
covers the yard
like meringue,
striped with tall shadows,
a one-sided whiteness,
plastered to trees,
and porches and lamps.
It hides stone walls
like huddled dwarves
marching motionless
through the woods.
Tangy with cold
on the tongue,
a titanium taste,
a sudden waterfall,
burning like ice;
scented with pine
as it drips in the sun
from green starry needles.

Get Involved!

The *Watermark* is always looking for more contributors! Have a poem you'd like to share? A story that you can't wait to see in print? Want to show off your creativity with a canvas or a camera?

Email us at

TheWatermarkJournal@gmail.com

or visit

TheWatermarkJournal.com
for more information.

We'll be waiting.