

The Watermark

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From the Editor

This year has been a trying one for so many reasons. For some, writing was a way to cope with grief, with uncertainty, with social injustice. Some of this writing is here, within these pages, and I hope you are able to connect with a piece of prose or poetry, that you can find something of yourself in someone else's words. We also have some beautiful art in this issue. Thanks to everyone who submitted this go around-- it was not easy to solicit submissions remotely, and it was certainly not easy to work away from our beloved desktop that makes designing this journal simple. Hope to see you all in the fall.

Alexa Koch
Editor-in-Chief

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Praying

Ann Doyle

Mother marched me off to Mass
every Sunday morning
She was single-minded
in her pursuit
to make me holy
... it didn't take

I studied stain glass windows
checked out church ladies
hats, hair, and shirtwaist dresses
And then
I would pretend
I owned the church

And decide to put my chef's kitchen
in the front and
use the altar as a workstation
My room would be up
in the balcony
with a canopy bed
and my office space
in the sacristy

When Mother peeked at me
I'd put my fake praying face on
and study pastel saints
painted on the ceiling

I bowed my head
I folded my hands
I read about miracles
but I couldn't conjure up
this being called god

I pleaded for a sign
sent messages to saints

and angels
... but there was no reply

I knelt in church and
thought about Jesus and his parents and all
the saints
And martyrs
but the jelly donut waiting
in the pantry
was heavy on my mind

And to be perfectly honest,
the idea of
two men plus a ghost
in one body
scared the crap
out of me

When I learned
there were thousands
of gods
I tried a few others
I prayed to YHWH,
the god of Abraham, Issac, and Jacob
I prayed to Aengus, the god
of love, and poetic inspiration
I prayed to Apollo,
and Caerus
the god of opportunity, luck,
and favorable moments
Still ... no answers

That's not to say
I do not pray today
I pray to the
stark loneliness

of brown tree branches
reaching up
to touch
a white winter sky

I pray to birds,
chubby babies
and senile ladies
I pray to
the fierce love
of silver-haired
grandmothers and
golden dogs
with fat brown eyes

Sometimes I pray for
supermarket eggnog,
or for a long train trip
with a window seat and
a glass of good red wine

listening to lazy, bluesy jazz
is my favorite kind of prayer

Guidance

Autumn Nuttle

Original article: “My experience buying a new car” by Rose Murray

You are looking.

You are thinking,

A little overwhelmed.

What you choose to do will affect you.

I am going to talk about why I chose.

I chose trust.

If I went there, I would not die

Because it was not proper.

I know that will pass.

Silence

Catherine Flaherty

Silence is a word
which can't simply be defined.
Once spoken, broken.

Expiration Date

Catherine Flaherty

From the cozy nest of my faux-down
comforter,
I'm grateful for
the roof above my head
food in the fridge,
my old-fashioned pantry shelves
laden with bottles and boxes,
cartons and cans
some of which have hidden
obscure data on the bottom or the lid:
"Expired Feb. 2013"
or even worse,
"Best by March 10, 2008,"
not just month and date
but the actual day!

so specific on the time of expiration.
Surrendering back to sleep
I'm glad my soul
Is still in my body
which is, in these times, odd,
seeing how many writhing souls,
like a lurid Blake etching,
are clawing their way to their God.

How prescient those number writers,

Guerreo Mexico vota por

Elaine Croce Happnie



Election Day

Elaine Croce Happnie

In the land of the free and home of the brainwashed
We elect politicians from a stage of waving flags and distorted mirrors
reflecting lies in disguise
Elections made for TV every step staged, for delusional cheering crowds
Change, change coming soon, different singer, same old tune
Lies and promises float through the air like venom bubbles
What's your agenda, plain less pretender, you fiddle while Rome is burning
Money masters sit and stare, don't care, drunk with corporate poison
Your god is your wealth and worship of money
In the land of the free and home of plutocracy
The sheeple will follow over a cliff

The Watermark

Strong

Eve Bourjolly

They

as a Young Black Man

see me

as a threat to society

They see my melanin as a weapon

They hear my cries as a weakness

They feel my anger as it spews out my lips

They taste the blood that they have spilled

but They don't smell the uprising

She

as a Young Black Women sees

me

as her

Young Black King

She hears my cries as she wipes my tears

She feels my anger as I punch her with my emotions

She tastes the blood as she heals my wounds

And She too smells the uprising

Too Strong?

Eve Bourjolly

As my lips curve into blissful kisses
Caressing your every
Muscle
Scar
And Bruise
Your strong hands grip around my neck
Forcing movement to soothe
even the unspoken harm
And even the invisible hurt too
My lips now cracked and swollen
My neck stiff and tense
But his grip has not loosened
He still needs those blissful kisses
But will I get mine too

The Watermark

City Night

Kaien Zhu



姓名 朱凯恩

学号 14413139

班级 游戏动画A班

New Directions in Spacetime

Gregory Loftus

And what, exactly, prevents
even bigger particle events?
A place where ultrons coalesce;
the ultimate particle, unless...

My Name is Kathleen

Kathleen Almand

“I’ll take you home again Kathleen” was my father’s only attempt at song. I understand now that it was his affectionately Canadian way of telling me that he loved me, without really saying so. At the time, my pre-teen response was “Come on Dad, we aren’t Irish. Why are you singing this? Why did you name me this?” He mumbled something about our mixed British heritage but I knew (because I was a smart assed researcher, even at 11) that our family name Moore was squarely English and my middle name (my mother’s maiden name) Hartley was slightly on the Scottish side. I didn’t want to be Irish, I wanted to be strong and unsentimental and, well, me.

And most of the time at home, I was. Except for my dad’s occasional solos, to my mother and father I was Kath. Kath, the good child, the lonely child, hanging around the house with her old parents, reading and listening to music most of the time. My mother reverted to Kathleen only in the tough moments: “By the Gods of Warm Little Fishes, Kathleen Hartley Moore, you make that bed right now!!”

I thought about this at great length as I laid out my clothes on the bed in preparation for my first day at high school. It was a big school; I was allowed to attend outside my district only because it had an orchestra that I could play in. This was my big chance to become the person that I really wanted to be. Not the small-time nerdy kid who hung around the edges of the skating rink at recess and pretended that she hadn’t done her homework. I could recreate myself!

And I knew that names were very very important. An amazing number of the most popular girls in middle school had names that ended in a “y” sound: names like Sandy, Sally, Julie, Lizzie. All were friendly cute girls that everyone loved. If I could have a name like that, well, what was stopping me from living a happy life?

So, on that first morning at Nepean High School, when we were asked to sign our workbooks, I wrote Kathy Moore. I had practiced it the night before and liked the mix of friendliness and straightforwardness it conveyed. Someone to be noticed and taken seriously. Someone you could talk to. And a few people did; by the time I reached the thirteenth grade I had a few friends and a boyfriend. And I was Kathy. Even my parents evolved to the slightly longer name, perhaps because that’s what I answered to best.

The name stayed with me through university (although it didn’t matter there because everyone else in the engineering class was named Mike, Joe or Pascal), and through my early working years. Until I met my husband to be – the exotic American fellow who loved everything about me and my Canadian-ness. Except for my name. “Now sweetheart,” he wheedled in his intoxicating southern drawl, “you are a person of great worth! I am giving you a last name that is worthy of you but your first name

should be too! I call you Kathleen and everyone else should too! You are coming to America, after all.”

We honeymooned in Montreal and while there I spent the interminable day at the U.S. Embassy in the “green card line” along with many very un-Canadian looking faces, doing all the paperwork to enable me to become the “Resident Alien” in the United States that would be my identity for the next ten years. And the words Kathleen Hartley Almand, imprinted at the top of the card, erased Kathy Moore from the universe. Or did they?

Masked Smiles

Louise Kuhlman

“What is taking so long?” Ann muttered from behind her homemade Covid mask, not expecting or even wanting an answer. She had been in line for twenty minutes at the farmer’s market, and her feet were hurting. The market was more crowded than past years. There was a steady line waiting for their squirt of hand sanitizer and coupons before entering the small park which housed the market.

“It’s another example of making things safer for us senior citizens,” came a man’s voice from behind her. “Put all the slowpokes together, like during senior shopping hours at the supermarket, thus ensuring even longer exposure to the dreaded outside world.”

She turned to see a well-dressed older man behind her, who had stepped closer to utter his comments. Hmm. It was true that the crowd of seniors bussed in from elderly housing was quite slow. She could see that many were using SNAP vouchers, and that most spoke little to no English. The market had translators for Chinese, Spanish and Russian customers.

Ann turned towards the gentleman behind her and smiled politely, but wondered if her smile extended to her eyes, since that was all he could see, and said,

“Well, I’m not sure who is slower, the customers or the vendors. There are four guys up there, but only two are serving customers,” she said.

“Last week I sent a message on the market’s Facebook page complaining about the long lines. Guess it didn’t make any difference,” he muttered, moving forward again.

“Hey! Excuse me!” the man called out to one of the market workers. A middle-aged man wearing a market T-shirt came over to where we stood.

“Can’t you do something? We’ve been waiting a half-hour!”

Oh, dear, thought Ann. Somehow, now that someone else was complaining, she was able to muster more patience, and was mortified at the man for including her in his complaint.

“Sorry, sorry, some of these people are so slow!”

The market worker hurried over to the elderly couple being waited on. He began to yell in Chinese and gestured for them to hurry up. The couple showed the man their discount coupon and said something. He grabbed the coupon out of their hands, and appeared to be trying to explain what they could and couldn’t use the coupon for. As Ann watched she began to realize how difficult this must be for non-native speakers to shop in another language and currency while trying to stay within their SNAP budget and use their discount coupon.

Ann looked around the market, watching a heavy-set woman with a walker make her way past the market tables, looking at all the vendor tables. She didn’t stop at

the Ethiopian coffee seller, or Drive-By Pies, or Samira's Homemade Hummus.

When Ann was two customers away from her turn, the walker woman suddenly pushed in front of her, calling out in Russian to her friend, who waited in another line. She made a show of looking at what was on offer. The vendor had laid out a sample of each vegetable and fruit on a paper plate with the price listed below. The samples of corn, heirloom tomatoes, and peaches looked enticing. On a table behind the samples were stacked boxes containing the rest of the vegetables. An elegant solution, Ann thought, mentally preparing her order so as not to keep others waiting too long. The walker woman had stopped. Is she cutting the line or just looking? Ann wondered. The man behind her spoke up.

"Are you going to let her cut you?"

She turned. The man was about a foot away.

"Could you move back, please? We need to stay six feet apart."

The man's eyes narrowed. "I was just trying to help," he huffed, stepping back, "but you shouldn't let her get away with cutting."

Ann turned away from the man and waited to see what the woman would do, and what she herself would do.

"Well?" hissed the man. "Are you going to say something?"

Ann could feel the frustration wafting off of him. She watched the woman who was looking around, her grip tight on the walker, while her shoulders slumped.

Ann caught the woman's eye. She smiled. The woman hesitated, then smiled back. Slowly, with the fatigue of a lifetime of lines, she shoved off, and continued her cruise around the market.

Ann thought about the universality of waiting in line. Those moments in supermarket lines when you realize you've chosen wrong, as customers on other lines flow through. Schoolchildren lining up, full of jostles and bumping backpacks. She wondered how many lines these fellow senior citizens had endured in their home countries. A short while later, her reverie was interrupted by shouting. The walker woman was at the table of another produce vendor. Those waiting in line were looking annoyed. The market manager was shouting and pointing to the end of the line. The woman was gesturing wildly, yelling back in Russian.

"Can I help you?" heard Ann, and she realized it was finally her turn. After all that waiting, she ordered more than she needed, thinking a little splurge was in order. The man waiting on her was remarkably cheerful, ignoring the shouting as he took his time filling her order. As she left, Ann noticed the woman, sitting on the seat of her walker, looking exhausted, at the end of the line.

The Watermark

Untitled

Mariam Apkhazava



Noble

James Whitacre

Great Blue Heron,
Stands strong and tall,
In Maine's outflowing tides,
Fish seek open oceans,
Mud flats reflect sky.

We're a football field away,
Any closer and he might fly,
Like wild horse,
Across sweet prairie.

To the eye: solitary,
To the heart: in soft harmony,
Heron beak strikes silver fish;
Ancient ecology.

Oh Heron! You inspire me with your nobility,
Oh Heron! I look beyond you towards dawn,
Inhale the salt air,
Connected with God.

The Watermark

Daydreamer

Menaka Ravikumar

I have stars in my eyes
A trail of flowers beneath my feet.
I'm a wild rabbit in a forest
I'm a cat napping in the sunlight
Beauty in every moment

Daydreamer

Add color to everything
Can't help it, I need it
Because I'm a daydreamer
It's just what I do.

Worlds I've created
I need to write them out
They fly out of me with no control
Pen to paper
Fingers on a keyboard
It's like sipping tea on a cold winter's day
The taste is light and sweet
The temperature is cold and dark
It's Paris at midnight
Twinkling like a cheeky wink
New York during the day
On the go like there's never enough time
There's too much to say
And then nothing at all.
I love it.
I need it.
Daydreamer.
Daydreamer.

Those songs in my ears
They make me feel things I crave
The joy and the warmth in the center of my
chest
The birth of something that is mine alone.

My friends are my characters
They're hybrids
They're lost boys
They're the girl in a very dangerous world
Daydreamer

Untitled

Mariam Apkhazava



Chicken Dinner

Tara Wilson

The darkness is blinding,
We are so crowded in here.
But nothing is worse than the Man
finding
Me. He could do one of two things
when he appears:

He could beat me silly,
Because I live without rights.
my life has no meaning, other than to
be in your bellies.
And when you're not beating me, my
brethren pull me into fights
Because what else is there to do.

The other option for the Man is to
bring me to the red water
Whether I'll feel the boiling or not is
the question,
But the shiny silver sliver will bring the
pain of slaughter.
And you all are probably thinking this
wasn't your intention.

"What's the big deal"
You say, they did it "humanely"
Do we even really feel?
But no killing is humane, and yes we
do feel pain.

Shit, here he comes.
He has me by the feet.
I'm struggling to be freed, pecking at
his thumb.
My death is upon me, but all you know
is my meat.

I'm binded upside down.
A sharp pain across my neck,
As my life drips it creates a crown
That will soon be boiled off of me, but I still
peck,

And the Man doesn't care.
Down he lowers me
The red water consumes me, this isn't fair.
Why is this something that nobody sees?

All you see is the nuggets on your plate
After minutes of screaming, I'm finally free.
I don't know why you think your life is a
clean slate,
My blood is smeared across it, because
"that's how it should be."

Walking with Old Friends

Zoya Gargova

Walking with old friends on Long Island Beach. Blue, all around. Salt, in my nostrils.

I can't stop picking small pebbles - each unique and irresistible.

Sleeping senses come to life
as the wind gently brings a taste of happiness on my tongue.

The sunset -
a peacock showing off its colors,
drowns quietly my loneliness

Acadia

Helen Batiste

On the coast of Maine
There exists a paradise called Acadia.
Home of fjords and seabirds,
First land kissed by the rising sun.

Cadillac Mountain, towering and windswept,
Stands vigilant sentry over all it beholds.
Pine and spruce embrace the road
That winds and turns along the ocean's ragged cliffs.

Cedar trees, gnarled and twisted like ancient arthritic fingers,
Reach out to the sky in a soundless plea.
Lobster boats putter among colorful bobbing traps
From which fishermen haul in their livelihoods.

Terns and gulls drop suddenly from the sky
To snare unsuspecting bluefish,
While Thunder Hole roars its outrage
As waves crash furiously against algae-laden ledges,
Then slip silently back to the ocean from which they came.

Overlapping

Autumn Nutile

I will never forget the smell of the sea,
or how cold my cat's paws were
as she lay dying.

I relish the moments of pure tranquility
where memories linger,
and never overlap.

Forgotten History

Lauren Jerome

Born and raised here in America

Fair skin and light eyes like a Caucasian girl.

I do not deal with racial issues or discrimination,

Until I say who I am.

To many, there is a stereotypical way of viewing “Indians”

Told I am a liar and that I don't look “Indian”

Questioned on how much “Indian” I am as if they know who I am

Or at least what they think I am.

Just to be told that I am wrong or faking something that is a part of me.

I am Native American from the Mi'kmaq Tribe, We are First Nations People.

I am not American Indian or Redskin, I am Native and Indigenous.

My knowledge of history was brainwashed for many years.

Growing up in a “White Man School” stopped me from learning the truth.

I rarely learned about Natives in my history classes,

besides knowing that they were involved with the pilgrims

and were here when Christopher Columbus came.

Christopher Columbus who “founded and colonized America,

the Founder of America.”

But now it kills me to even think of this man.

The man who brought so much pain to my ancestors.

It kills me that I was happy not having school on a holiday.

A holiday for a man that killed and tortured so many innocent people

People who were here first and were victims of attempted genocide.

They were beaten, raped, killed, and separated.

By the people they welcomed with kindness to these new people and guests.

Generations after still have to deal with discrimination

Centuries of forced assimilation.

Federal laws preventing us from practicing our culture.

Natives from all tribes have been forced to do things

Because our way of believing was considered wrong.

To indigenous people our hair is everything,

The braids with three strands stand for mind, body, and spirit.

The long hair and braids give pride in tribes.

Yet Natives are forced to cut their hair.

Not to speak their tribal language.

Learn only one side of a story and it is wrong.

My last name is not my real last name either.
Our original last name has been forgotten.
We were forced to have it changed because the whites could not pronounce it.
Knowing that even my name is not real and is tampered with,
Makes me question who I really am.
That even my last name was taken away from us.
It hurts to not know what my name would have been.
What it would have been if the whites stayed where they were.
Why are we mistreated because we were here first?
Why are our reservations always attacked by whites,
Who know nothing about the treaties and agreements?
Even right now, in my reservation we have three fishing boats
yet they are being destroyed by outsiders who have 30 ships.
Fishing is our natural right to Natives,
yet even in our own reservations we are treated like nothing
and all we get is people who know what they want to know.
And then attack us or even tell us to go back to where we came from
like they know everything.
I am Native American, and I am not ashamed of it.
Because I should not have to be ashamed of it.
No matter how many times someone looks at me like I am a liar.
I know who I am, and I know the truth about myself and my ancestors.

The Watermark

Untitled

Elaine Happnie



Everything Needs Nothing

Catherine Flaherty

Earthworms, most magnificent makers of Nothing

eat Everything

in front of them, fertilize soil as they wiggle through
and aerate too.

Seeds need some Nothing—

a hole in which to nest.

Roots make more holes

to cling to Earth's breast.

Green shoots make holes in the air

pushing through emptiness

to make Earth's green hair.

Nothing gives way to tomatoes,

flowers, eggplant, corn,

all the Everything waiting to be born.

Self Love; to Walk a Mile

Tayla Bennett

While the light flickers on the ceiling above,
luke warm water surrounds my body.
I am golden.
My body has never made me more angry.
Looking down just beneath my navel,
The palest mountains protrude the water.
The biggest parts of my body that carry me to the most beautiful ends of the earth
make me hate them more and more with each step.
Between two porcelain walls,
They've never seemed more massive.

My mom reminds me each day that I've inherited these from her,
And every day I resent her for it.
They do not show love,
They're covered in dark reds and purples and yellows,
and represent the very opposite.
They chafe and rub and burn,
But they tell my story.

A survivor of the feast,
ready to eat every ounce of insecurity.
After all, the man thrives on it.
Predator not prey,
be cautious.
Move with purpose,
across the room,
across the ocean,
across the world with these legs.

They are to be seen,
they are to be heard,
and most of all,
they are to be worshipped.

The hatred I give is no match for the power I have.
They have the audacity to be bold, and I do not blame them.

Love

Esther Pierre Isaac

Time and time again

They fall in love with each other

Day by day

They feel close to one another

A connection like no other

A love that is more than a fairytale

Their hands touch and the world is theirs to claim

The sound of them breathing is the warmest feeling of all

Holding each other brings them comfort and joy

Minute by minute

Looking into each other's eyes is music to their ears

Just the presence of one another brings them happiness

Second by second

Each memory makes them not want to let go

Each moment brings them peace

Being with each other is a blessing

God brings two beautiful creations together and it is wonderful

Stanley the Spider

Ann Doyle

He clings to terra cotta tiles on my shower wall. A tiny warrior, he holds his ground with his eight very velvety feet. He is a brave and stalwart brown spider.

I have no quarrel with him, other than the fact that he is interfering with the sanctity of my shower time.

A hot, soapy journey down the drain doesn't seem to faze him. He stares at me with his six splendid eyes.

I can spare his life, or I can watch him die. I confess to murdering mosquitos and crushing common house flies. I feel no joy ... I absorb the guilt.

Spiders are a different matter. They are quiet, thoughtful creatures, and so, I usually slide a sheaf of paper under their spindly legs and escort them to a window. I speak softly while gently placing them outdoors and wishing them well. Or, sometimes I ignore them as long as they promise they'll never touch me. So far, they've respected my boundaries.

As if reading my mind, the little guy begins to share his thoughts. First of all, he makes it perfectly clear that he's in no mood to die.

I know that spiders can't be tricked, but I pretend to strike a deal. "Tell me a story and I'll spare your life."

He pretends to think it over while stretching his hairy legs, one at a time.

He introduces himself as Stanley Shipley and casually mentions that his genetic make-up is nothing short of extraordinary. He shares identical genes with some of the most magnificent spiders who ever weaved a web. Spiders who shaped the earth, as well as other planets.

His family arrived in Boston on a cargo ship a long while back ... hence the surname.

He spent his early years in the library and so, he knows a lot about history (which is always, *history* and should be taken with a grain of sugar). But that is not the fault of this handsome young spider.

He tells me that one of his ancestors lived a lavish life on the heavy black drapes in Mr. Winston Churchill's parlor. The spider's name was William. William and Mr. Churchill shared many great ideas as well as some very silly thoughts over glasses of port.

He goes on to say that, more recently, his cousin, a dainty lady spider named Delphinia, lived in South Africa and kept Nelson Mandela company in his jail cell; often entertaining him with hilarious stories.

An uncle, by marriage, who hailed from the daddy longleg branch of the family tree, inspired the creation of, and even contributed several verses, to the song,

“Hallelujah” while living in Leonard Cohen’s bathroom.

“Of course, every family has their screw-ups and mine is no exception. My great-great-great aunt Alice took a tiny bite out of Jane Austen’s left elbow. It was a dreadful mistake. Alice was getting a bit dodgy and confused. Poor Jane developed a deadly fear of spiders after the unfortunate event.”

Stanley’s grandfather, who was called Edward, was a direct descendant of the famous redback spiders who live in Australia. Edward worked, tirelessly to rearrange the landscape thus preventing erosion, and saving countless human lives. He did this without expectations of reward or applause, but only because it had to be done.

Stanley has no defense for black widows. He thinks they may be suffering from post traumatic stress disorder.

It occurs to me that a spider’s life is short and I worry about monopolizing his time, so I say:

“Well, you’ve made your point and I’ve enjoyed your stories, but I can’t stay in the shower all day long.”

And so, I open the window. Stanley winks, weaves a silky silver rope to hang from, and swings down the side of my building, bouncing off red bricks and landing safely in the garden. I blow him a kiss. He bows and whispers, “Namaste.”

Marigolds

Eileen Riley

She moved slowly from the bus stop that dropped her off on the corner of Washington and Williams Street. Even though she was only five she walked with a burden that was evident in the way her head tilted toward the ground. Her eyes were downcast as she stared at her mittened hand holding her school papers. It swung to and fro and she watched it in a detached manner. The movement was hypnotic, and she fixes her stare, not blinking. She wonders if the papers will slip from her grasp. It's difficult to hold on to them. The wool of her white mittens doesn't allow for a firm grip. She watches her arm swing as one who watches the arms of a clock move knowing each passing minute brings her closer to the moment that she will encounter her mother.

She doesn't notice the biting cold, nor does it strike her as strange that she is walking alone at such a tender age. But she has aged a great deal in her short life, and she has grown used to being alone.

Rather than walking through the back door and into the kitchen, she passes by the little brown and red colonial house and walks up her street to the Carter house. They welcome her into the doorway of the glassed-in porch that sits atop their garage. It's bright and warm, like a greenhouse. They have become accustomed to the little girl's visits. The porch has a lot of forest green furniture that you would see at a lake house. Several rocking chairs with rushed seats and worn cotton cushions, and a day bed, but they never sit on the daybed. There is linoleum on the floor, which is always shiny and new looking, despite its age. They sit in the rocking chairs. And there, the three of them sit and talk about God knows what. Trivial matters. The little girl is polite and deferential. She is thrilled to be in a place that feels like springtime.

Mr. and Mrs. Carter are quite old. But they don't scare her, and they don't smell bad. Mrs. Carter is a small woman. She wears her gray hair in a low twist. She dresses mostly in simple house dresses, a hand knitted cardigan with pearly buttons topped with a matronly apron - the kind that covers her torso as well as her lower body. She wears thick nude stockings and sensible black shoes with a modest one-inch heel. She hums when there is a gap in conversation. It's not a recognizable tune, but it's happy and serves as an ellipsis before the next topic of discussion is broached.

Mr. Carter is very tall and soft spoken. When the air is cold and the wind ferocious, he stops by the local bar on Main Street every afternoon for one shot of whiskey. Just one. He returns home neatly parking his little gleaming white Ford just in front of the garage door underneath the porch. When the days are longer and the sun is higher, he tends to his garden. The rows of the beds are a perfect grid and well ordered. Each row is surrounded by marigolds, which act as sentries to keep the things

that might damage the fruits of his labor away. He tells her that the peppery smell that permeates the air around the marigolds is the trick to keeping prey at bay. She thinks they smell wonderful.

Sometimes, Mrs. Carter invites her into the kitchen just off the porch. The old stove doesn't look at all like the one in her kitchen. It's a behemoth and needs a place of its own, isolated from the sink and the refrigerator, and is supported by a brick wall. It is coated in white enamel, which makes it shine like snow when the sun hits it at noontime. The modest table is just behind them, the sink and counter are just ahead. On days that the little girl was invited into the kitchen there were Rice Krispie treats waiting. To have a special surgary treat in a quiet and peaceful surrounding was thrilling. She savored each sticky bite, knowing she wouldn't have to share it with anyone.

When she licked her fingers for the last time, she stood at the sink next to Mrs. Carter, almost close enough to touch her, and watched as she washed the dishes. It was different from the way her mother washed dishes at home. Her mother turned on the faucet, which roared, as it released a powerful angry gush of water. She slammed and banged and cursed each dish as if it were an enemy. Spraying hot water on each dirty item as if they posed a mortal threat. Slamming each into the dish drainer. Anyone who watched her wash dishes knew how much she hated being in that kitchen tethered to that sink and those dishes.

The little girl was mesmerized and comforted as she watched Mrs. Carter fill her enamel bowl with warm water. She gently picked up each dish and bathed them in the warm sudsy water with the same tenderness that she would use if she were bathing an infant. She didn't leave the faucet running so it was quiet and peaceful, except for the tiny splashes created by her veined and bony hands. Her simple gold wedding band was the only ornament on her body, and it was thin and worn but still shiny. Only when she had finished washing each dish did she turn the faucet on. The lukewarm water sounded like a tiny brook lapping baby stones as it made its way through the bends toward its destiny. It was time to go home.

She opened the door of the porch and walked down the three concrete steps to begin her journey home. Although her destination was only three houses away, it felt to her that it was many miles. A sense of dread was shrouding her as if she were wrapped in a gray cloud. Her papers held tightly in her bare hand, which was turning red from the cold. She had left her mittens behind with the Carters, but she knew that when she walked out of the porch door. It would be a good reason to return, she thought. She walked to the kitchen door and as she prepared to turn the doorknob, she imagined that she was surrounded by marigolds.

Telephone

Erica Perry

Ten years, three thousand six hundred and fifty days,
This is the time I spent with my grandmother.
She watched me grow and showed me the joys of life.
But as I grew older,
She grew old too.

Then one day, the phone rang,
And my heart broke forever.
Eight and a half years later,
I still feel her absence everywhere I go.
Sometimes I feel she is with me,
but I can't see her.
There are things I want to tell her,
but I know that is not possible.

The daily lives of my family members seem happy,
but there is always a feeling
that nobody is quite as happy as we think.
The sun does not shine as bright,
And the flowers do not look as beautiful.

Once in a while,
I sit by the phone and hope that my grandmother calls me,
But the phone never rings.

Mourning

Bill Valentine

“Dead is dead,” he said.

“Yes, but all the white balloons released over the hearse into heaven:
lovely.”

“He’s dead. He can’t see balloons, or sky, or heaven.”

“I know, but the flowers cascading from the casket: a comforting blanket.”

“He’s dead. Flowers hide the reek of death.”

“And ‘Morning Has Broken,’ a perfect hymn.”

“No more mornings for him. And he can’t taste the Filipino snacks his friends eat at the back of the English funeral parlor, and he can’t gossip in Tagalog with his friends while eating. He’s the body, far from his homeland, lying in the sleek pine box, dead. There’s no glass bottom boat where he sits looking down at us from on high a la Billy Collins. There’s no mystical Titanic ferrying the thousands and millions of dead across the river

to the Elysian Fields. There’s no TWA flight soaring to the pearly gates above the ozone layer with him and the other dead awestruck. There’s no plexiglass rainbow bridge he’s marching across to Valhalla.

Be buried, a la Pete Seeger, in a compost heap and maybe return as a garlic clove, a flower petal, or a cucumber seed. No, there’s only an empty container, an empty box, once his body, soon to be his ashes.

We’ll be, too. Let’s live until then just as he did. Live our lives as if they were bloody bright red balloons attached by a string to this fleeting party called life. The sun will rise and set, and then one day it will rise or set without us.”

“I grieve. I want his spirit to find his home.”

“Our memories.”

Saint Nicholas Flies to Christmas

Joe Potts

Of all the saints beatified by all of the churches and history, the most beloved has to be Saint Nickolas, sometimes known as Santa Claus. We know that there was a Saint Nickola. He is the Lil Saint Nick, patron saint of the Beach Boys. Santa Claus is an integral part of the Christmas season in America. Holiday parades, school pageants, the office Christmas party all center about Saint Nick. To include Saint Nick in your seasonal affairs, he must have a way for his arrival. The tradition had been for Santa's arrival in his tiny sleigh drawn by eight tiny flying reindeer. Tiny flying reindeer are hard to find these days. So the alternative included a helicopter and parachutes. A Great Photo Opp! Santa would parachute into Quincy. Now you know where all the 101st AB Vets end up - parachuting Santas.

The South Shore city of Quincy has had a Santa Claus arrival parade, sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce, for many years. Being a Chamber of Commerce event, the parade kickoff the children's, parents', grandparents' and merchants' celebration of Christmas revelry and shopping. Believe it or not, this celebration is capped off by a Christmas parade that almost buried the Santa story a few years ago. In and around Boston, there were a couple of enterprising Christmas entrepreneurs with too much time on their hands. Using helicopters and Santa impersonators with elfin helpers, Santa parachutes to ground zero, mounts the largest of Quincy's fire trucks and the fun begins. Most years this is a show stopper.

A few years back, the old routine was – Santa would arrive by helicopter on a field near Wollaston Beach. Santa would mount Engine No. 1, of the Quincy Fire Department, proceed up to Hancock Street – main artery to downtown Quincy-and be the center of the parade and other festivities. The weather usually cooperated and children of all ages got their Christmas wish! The year in question had been an unusual weather year. An early snow and prevailing off-shore winds had hit the seaside of Boston and Quincy. And, as sure as you can be, as the Ole Elf, Santa's sleigh and the helicopter were about to touchdown, the Nor'easter winds began to whirl. Santa was in a red jump suit, when a sudden northeasterly gust catches the para-elf's chute and takes him towards Quincy Bay. The crew of Engine No. 1, after an initial moment of astonished laughter, realized that there was about to be a disaster. The crew raised the Coast Guard rescue station at Hull by short wave. The Coast Guard launched a first response rescue team and pulled Santa out of the low-tide flats at Merrymount Beach. The only casualty was the Santa-chutist's dignity. A muddy, not so jolly, Santa led the parade sitting up there on the pride of the Quincy Fire Department's prized Engine Number One. Mindful of Santa being the very symbol of what Christmas is, the firefighter crew of Engine No. 1 showed great respect and

chauffeured the Christmas elf over the parade route. Needless to say, cheers and applause did greet the Ole Elf. As the story made the rounds through the Christmas cheering crowd, the Coast Guard band was greeted warmly. The loudest cheer was for the unit of firefighters as they march by. Some of these responders were still smiling!

See You on the Other Side

Stirling Newberry

“See you on the other side.” He said, with a trace of tired. A tired hand reached out from a white button shirt to shake mine. No young man would wear a shirt like that, far too proper and prim. Far too many holes to had been darned. I worked with him on the cinema too long, too many anniversaries between us, putting signs up and down as flunkies on a roadshow.

Looking out over the oaks and maple to the other side of the garrulous river at the electric city. A river that could never reach the sea. The leaves were not back either in the wood or on the street, so the knotted boughs would scrape each other in the wind. Concrete rising up out of the forest. A race vivid cold to the skin.

Of course, in a movie, there would be subtle hints of a world through the looking glass - from the old and roughened noir main, to the aged movie sign that clung to the wall. Nowhere would do it that way now - from the bent lines that clung akimbo to the rough slathers on the wall, to the bars on the white sign that we placed the letters on. Everything was ancient but in the same sepia way. An image of a picture on the small Main St. USA, lost in some world not named New York City or Chicago. A poor Main Street. Once upon a time, it was blaring, now - silent.

I turned to look at his brown face, a visage more ancient than mine. It had chased away any loving crafted sign of beauty except on the edges. Only his wife, a long way from here, could see their hints. But she had seen them almost every day. Even longer than I had.

“Suppose we will at that.”

“It is a big world, it crowds little towns out of the way.” While he said this, he was also climbing down the ladder, looking up at the sign which said “Closing Down.” “Will we see it again, do you think?”

“Not unless the historical society slaps an historic vista on it.” I quipped.

He shuffles down his ladder, then looked out over the main avenue with its empty stores gleaming. Even the Chinese restaurant across the way could see it. It is now “the only” because it was the only retail establishment, especially with aroma. It could no longer huddle for warmth and scent in the late winter with anyone else.

“Maybe they should - there is a lot of memories within and without seen from up there.”

“Only little ones.”

Slowly, up the sidewalk slowly, slowly. slowly came a pasty woman. She was once the primary school reading teacher. The woman who got the hard cases and made them sing with their eyes.

“I heard you back there. Do you know that across the river at the plant men

who lived here, work there? They made wondrous engines.”

The old man turned around, from the back, I could see that he became wider. It being happiness to every corner of the ticket stands and beyond. “Mrs. Van Corlaer, it is so nice to see you to-day.”

Then he bowed and took off his cap. Cap - not hat and certainly not chapeaux.

She shifted her red purse from left hand to right hand, though no curtsey because she was portly. “There were enough times here as if under a snapshot.”

The old man laughed. “Enough memories and movies.”

The elder woman touched her wide brim glasses. “I remember when this movie had *Gone With the Wind* on one of the revival tours. They were in the ‘70s.”

At this, I piped up: “You could not have seen the original.”

“Good heavens no, it came out before I was born. My mother saw the original. And in New York. At the midtown movie theater show in the film. In fact, she traveled by the El.”

“El?” A quizzical look on my face.

“Overground part of the subway.” Looking straight-up at me with her wide hips.

“Which theater was it?” It was more than a question, it was elocution from the old man.

“Don’t rightly know. My mother did, but it is so long ago.”

I cocked my foot over the ladder, looking down the boulevard, just seeing the bridge, with warping denuded trees wrapped around it. It was the thoroughfare into the main burgh. The one where all of the men used to go. “The new century is consuming the old.”

“You two boys must excuse me, I have to get going.”

“Why don’t you let me walk you down to your place?”

“That would be kind of you.”

“Could you hold the fort while I walk Mrs. Van Corlaer home?”

“Certainly.”

I watch the two of them walk away up the main drag, chattering of older times. It was the last I saw of him. The next day his wife showed up. Her story was he had fallen down after he had dropped Mrs. Van Corlaer at her brick building. An ambulance came and got him. While at the emergency room, they gave him a test for the coronavirus. He tested positive.

Two weeks later there was a death in the city paper. Two short lines. I did not know he was a Lieutenant in the Marines.

See you on the other side.

The Watermark

David Statue

Kaijen Zhu



Untitled

Mariam Apkhazava



The Watermark

Colder and Colder

Victoria DiPrizio

The yellow leaves shrivel into ashes.
The bright trees fade to twigs.
The sun sets quicker each night.
And the nights get colder.

The holiday songs play on the radio.
The thanks people give on Thursday vanish.
The puffy jackets cling to small bodies.
And the nights get colder.

The rom coms repeat on all the channels.
The store sales blossom all around.
The warm drinks spread through frigid
hands.
And the nights get colder.

The hands of couples embrace in the winter
wind.
The lips of couples touch to share a
moment.
The feet of couples walk in the same
rhythm.
But still without you the nights get colder
and colder.

Leaves

Victoria DiPrizio

Like a teardrop falling from a cheek,

Everyone is silent as the soft wind begins
to speak.

Autumn calls out to everyone around,

Various colors fall on the ground.

Each calm color is represented in the air,

Surely with the growing piles people don't
seem to care.

Leaves, leaves, leaves, floating and falling,

Leaves, leaves, leaves, mother nature is
calling.

Butterfly

Elaine Happnie



Scratch

Aldo Gaton

“My day was okay because I had to
do
thi—”

I scratch the imprinted letters on the
pen with my fingernail,

“Then my boss was trying to tell me
to d—”
scratch.

“Do you remember that one time
when w—”

scratch, scratch,

“Yeah,
I remember when you almost had t—
scratch,
SCRATCH.

“What do you think ?
am I fucking wrong for what I
DID ? Or, is she wr--”
scratch.

Scratch is all they
get.

In an Alternate Universe

Tayla Bennett

In an alternate universe,
I am lost.
I am fending off wild animals,
I am slitting their throats with the nail on
my pointer finger.
I am powerful.
I
To be honest,
I never knew what it was like to be lost,
lonely.
In this alternate universe,
I whisper words to a strange place that
doesn't whisper back.

I've split the area down the center,
to the right is every wish I ever made -
and to the left is every dream I've ever
forgotten along the way;
Both sides frighten me equally.
And in the center, is me,
here, now, lost.
The path on the right is rocky,
But with every wish is a candle I blew out
way too soon,
an 11:11 I prayed through to a God I didn't
even believe in,
or a shooting star across the night sky on
its way to burn my feet to get me going
again.
There lies the gifts, the treasurers, the sweet
kisses from past loves, everything I once
craved.
It is overwhelmingly terrifying.

The left path is an uphill battle,
the dreams there are more than that.

They are my worst nightmares fueled by
melatonin and wine.
They are my most blessed thoughts in the
far right lane of the highway,
and most importantly they are the most
petrifying part of my life.
My dreams have made up a large part of
this area,
here, we find a house with the man I love,
a book with my name on the cover, the
acceptance of myself.

In an alternate universe-
my eyes pierce the skin of anyone who
cares enough to find me.
I will find them in the center path
understanding the left and the right,
and I will find them willing to cross paths
for me.

Hands.

Autumn Nutile

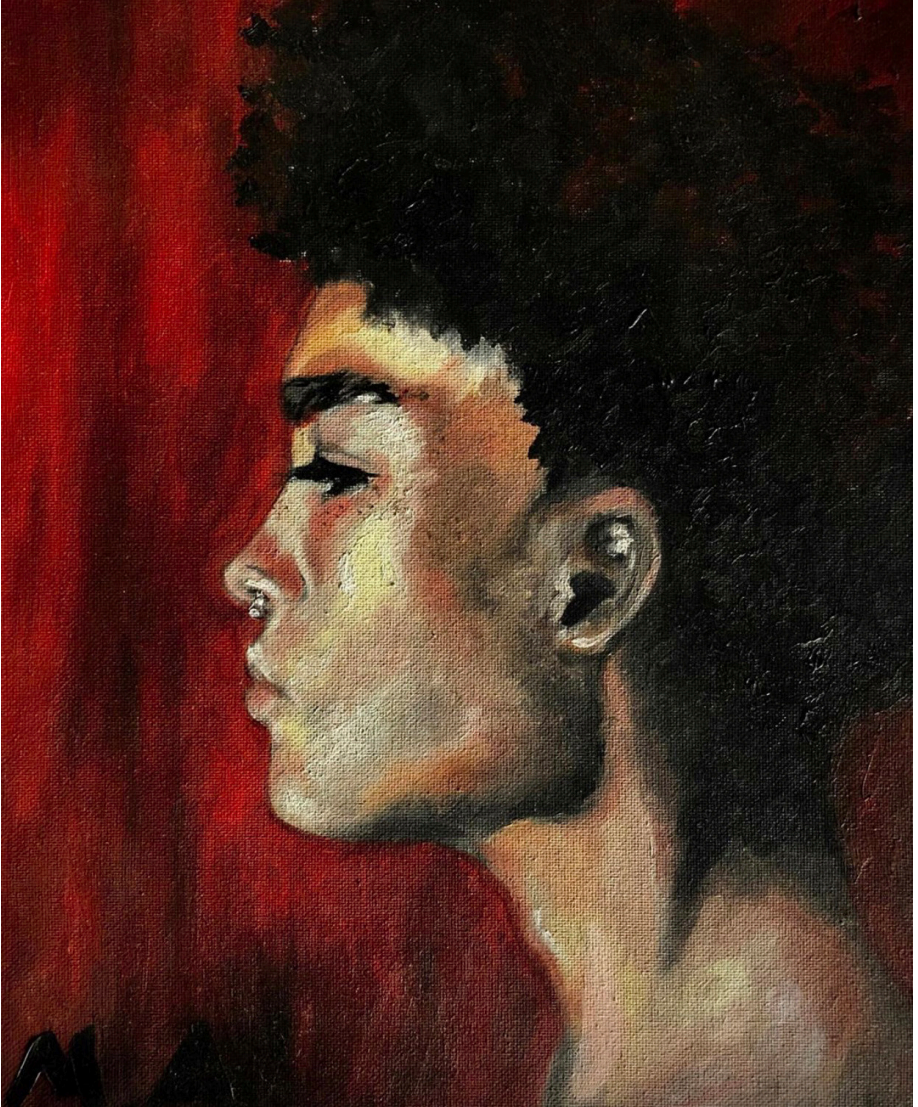
I have the hands of a gentle soul,
One who should be weaving and
Dyeing wool shades of blue.
Instead, I am kept busy with
Dyeing wool with the lamb's own
Shades of red.

I look like many people who I have never met
And who I will never meet.
Women of the past come together in me
To crown me what I am; a survivor of their
hardships.

I have the hands of a weaver,
A creator who makes to stay alive.
I use my weaving hands to write,
In hopes I am connected to
Generations past.

Untitled

Mariam Apkhazava



Pandemic 2020

Bill Valentine

1

Donna and Dean went for an afternoon walk along Dorchester Bay towards the JFK Library. They stopped twice for Donna to rest, but walked home without stopping.

2

Dean bought three bouquets at Shaw's this morning. He shops at 8:00 AM Sunday.

Donna says, "You've developed a florist's eye and touch."

3

Donna painted Dean a watercolor of orchids for his birthday.

She wrote, "...you have...one okay wife and contentment. . ."

4

Dean made Julia's beef bourguignon. After her morning coffee, Donna didn't feel right.

She slept for three-and-a-half hours as the stew cooked, but awoke hungry.

5

Dean read the *Sunday Times* and *Globe*. Nothing stuck. His memory

a porous, saturated sponge.

Donna prefers her i-Pad.

6

Dean did four loads of laundry. The linen closet

door is jammed shut. Today, he washed pot holders. Donna said they needed it.

She slept through the racket.

7

Dean read the cartoons in the latest

New Yorker, which arrived ten days late, while Donna finished her electronic jigsaw and scanned Facebook.

8

Dean gave Donna her meds, Tums, and Flonase at 8:00 AM.

She slept until 11:56 AM and just made the morning.

9

Dean made Thai lemon-shrimp soup. He and Donna ate it with left-over salad.

Dean will cook more shrimp, and they'll have another meal out of it tomorrow.

10

Donna drifts to the left when they walk. They hold hands, look like old lovers.

Is it neurological?

11

Dean gave Donna her pills, her coffee, some blackberries and strawberries. They listened to their Master Class with Billy

Collins. Margaret Atwood next.

12

Dean's back started aching last night.

Arthritis or, like his last back ache, cancer?

Donna and Dean, Dean and Donna, 50 years married, isolated, old, alone, together.

The plata

Aldo Gaton

“Such a shame
that he died
Penniless,
such a shame
that he croaked with credit card debt,
such a shame
that he left his wife, two sons,
two daughters
with files
full of poems and short stories.
full of typewritten poems
labeled with
DO NOT EDIT,
BUT DO
SUBMIT.”
said La Bruja.

I ended the prophecy by blowing my brains out
In front of her,

As she licked the blood on her
Mesa and I never
saw Melanie
that
night.

Deliverance

Kathleen Almand

“**T**he very best thing you can do to help your community in this pandemic is stay inside with your door shut.” This prevailing advice just didn’t sit right with me. Yes, I was in the at-risk age group, but I was healthy. Yes, staying inside would prevent me spreading the disease to others, but I didn’t have it. Yes, this is a terrible disease, but so is loneliness and depression.

As I sat and tried to come to terms with a summer with the door shut, a small public service announcement at the bottom of an e-page of related bad news caught my eye. “South Shore Elder Services seeks volunteers for Meals on Wheels delivery.” I clicked “Apply Here.” In fifteen minutes, I had a response from Mary, the local coordinator, an orientation booklet, and a time and date for an interview at the nearest distribution site. A reason to leave the house! Hurray!

And so I began my service, slipping into a morning delivery routine - a driving route throughout northeastern Quincy. Most times, the delivery was like pizza – drop off on the porch, sometimes with a wave through the curtained window. Other stops were apartment buildings where I had to learn the entry routine, each building different. I found myself enjoying these deliveries more because I actually met the clients! George, who had been a senior civil servant in Quincy and now was confined to his third floor unit, called me by my first name as he buzzed me into his building and chatted with me about the weather, his wheelchair telling me that his knowledge was virtual only. And Jeffrey and I enjoyed a daily race to his apartment door: he from his bedroom and me down the long dark building hallway after being buzzed in. He always had a compliment, carefully constructed so as not to be inappropriate, the anxiety and wish for approval shining through those red-rimmed eyes. There were real lives on the other side of these doors, and it was so good to have a chance to enter them occasionally, even with my mask and glove uniform.

As the pandemic crept into its sixth month, I began to realize that the emergency stopgap assistance I was providing wasn’t really that anymore. Things were more or less back to the new normal and I was now the equivalent of a permanent pizza delivery boy. I decided that I wanted something more from my retirement volunteer service. So I gave my notice and began my last week of deliveries. I felt myself approaching each unit with the “almost the last time” view; savoring the good bits of the visits and feeling relieved that the bad bits would be over at the end of the week.

Until Jeffrey’s delivery. He had commented the previous week that one of the meals wasn’t very good – the first time I had heard a complaint (or compliment) of any kind in the six months I had been delivering. In response I told him that I would pass

the comment on, anonymously of course. His eyes had filled with that anxiety that I had come to recognize, normally below the surface. “Please, please don’t complain,” he begged. “I can’t stand that sort of person!” When I knocked on Jeffrey’s door for this penultimate time, he greeted me with a big smile and what seemed like a rehearsed line: “Yesterday’s meal was the best I have ever had!” I thought back to yesterday’s styrofoam tray contents and tried to equate them with the word “best.” And then I realized that more than anything Jeffrey wanted to be a good client, a good person, a person that people liked. And that this one interaction per day with the outside world, through me, was his measure of himself in this respect.

On my last delivery day I came prepared with a canned farewell speech, designed to explain to my clients that I was moving on to another type of volunteer work more suited to my capabilities, and reassuring them that a very reliable deliveryman would be taking my place. I began the route at Jeffrey’s. As usual, he buzzed me in and we raced to his door; this time I won. He opened with his usual carefully worded compliment.

I looked at that sweet anxious face, handed him his styrofoam tray, and said “See you next week!”

The Watermark

April in January

Zoya Gargova

Like pure magic

the sun is warm.

A pleasant breeze

is messing with my hair.

The deep blue color of the ocean

gently sweeps all worries away.

There comes a stranger, willing to

exchange some words,

some history about the place.

Unplanned encounter

making everything around

so different and so nice.

All by chance.

Unexpected gift offered by

the nice weather.

Surrender

Victoria DiPrizio

Your legs shake from still wearing shorts,
And your hot pink toes are displayed from your flip-flops.

Your hands furiously rub up and down your exposed arms,
But you still wear a t-shirt and shiver.

Your hair dances in the wind as your scalp gets cold,
So you constantly fix and readjust your hair.

Your nostrils fill with the smell of hot dogs and burgers,
And you keep the grill fired and ready.

And after weeks and weeks of refusing to believe,
Your body finally gives in.

Shorts are finally replaced with jeans.
Flip-flops are finally slipped off for boots.
Short sleeves finally grow extra fabric on the arms.
Your hair is finally suffocated from yarn hats.
The smell of hot dogs and burgers fades away.

And after weeks and weeks of accepting,
You finally enjoy the presence of the new season.

Dean and David's Wednesday Night Phone Conversation

Bill Valentine

"David, I just read in *The New Yorker* that JUG means 'justice under God.'"

"It doesn't, Dean. I should know. I had eight years of Jesuit education."

"That's what it says. *The New Yorker* checks its facts."

"It's short for *jugum* (Latin), 'a yoke to bear.'"

"Talking about yokes. How about this virus?"

"Dean, I've been through a few. This one is worrisome."

"A few? We all had measles, chicken pox, mumps. My cousin had polio."

"You're forgetting the big one, Dean. AIDS in NYC."

"News just in about Brady. A big loss for Boston," interrupted Dean.

"Brady? Who? Did he die?"

"The Patriots' quarterback. He's leaving the team."

"Oh, the guy with the deflated balls."

Dean smiled as he answered, "Him."

"You know another funny Jesuit custom besides JUG: Regency?"

"Never heard of that."

David explained, "During their training, young Jesuits taught high school for three years. They dressed like priests, but weren't, and we called them Mister."

"Probably not many of them left," Dean mused.

"To be sure. I never walked JUG. I was a good boy. So good a Mister picked me to break his vow of chastity."

"That's a yoke to bear," Dean, shocked, responded.

"His yoke, not mine," David shot back. "I learned early to accept the me I am."

The Rage of Achilles

Autumn Nutile

Original text: "Being angry is a good thing" by Julia Macnair

I have always been angered.

When I become mad, I become myself.

I figured being happy and positive were only emotions.

Notice how much good can come from getting angry.

I have grown up, I have seen the anger.

It compiles me.

I see anger as something sacred.

There's nothing better than the power to get angry.

You're not getting mad.

Direct your anger towards shame.

Feel something.

I have accepted that I am art and damage.

Remember to get mad if you feel every act,

Word, or emotion.

Getting angry is control.

Anger can take from you.

So be mad, be angry

And be.

Sorrow

Catherine Flaherty

They tell the story
of a little Dutch boy
who hears a trickle,
puts his finger in the dyke,
holds the enormous North Sea
from flooding his homeland.
Little Pieter was hailed as a hero.

Where is our little boy
or big girl
or cast of thousands
who can hold back
the ocean that surrounds us?

Fear (a response to “Sorrow”)

Ann Doyle

The Dutch boy
heard a trickle.

We hear ambulances
and horns beeping
to cheer us up?
(this puzzles me)

The dead pile up
around us
while we ache
to hug our loved ones.

Our enemy is silent,
and invisible
floating in the air
determined to worm
its way inside of us.

I've always been afraid of bats
getting tangled in my hair.
who knew that such

a tiny creature
could land us on our knees.

Yesterday I sat on a bench.
My grey hair
Poking through my hat,
mask firmly in place.

A tiny boy untangled
his mother's grip on his hand.
He ran towards me,
and stopped short
in front of me
he said,

“Is that you, Nana?”

All Nanas look alike
with masks hiding
their fears.

The clock ticks
the refrigerator hums
we sleep we eat
we sterilize surfaces
and stare at the telly

We are stuck
in a sci-fi movie
waiting for the
little Dutch boy.

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