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Wounded Birds

By: Adela M. Brito

Like a mockingbird you nested nearby, and there you remained for three sweet seasons. Chirping, giggling, caring. Then as winter stripped colors

trauma hit you. Again.

Hurt & ire resurfaced.

But the source of your wounds was absent,

her mind elsewhere. Between one sundown

and the next, the pendulum swung and pointed at me. After all – Don't we hurt the ones we love? Aggressions & tantrums: your coping defenses.

And when the cockatoo tattled, you raged and raged.
Abuse & cruelty: your weapons.
So, after erecting a wall of steadfast fury,
your war against me was waged.

Then -silence.

Rungs Of Air

By: Richard Widerkehr

- after reading your email, *You Are My High School Memory*, I receive external beam radiation under a Calypso 4D Localization System

I can't tell you much about this table—a scanner shows the Calypso tech where to beam Xray slices.

You won't glow, said the nurse. Just don't go through airport security. The margins of sunlight,

of stories? Your surgical margins negative, that's a plus. My mother said you had cat eyes,

a Day-Glo green almost feral, skittish. Our bodies two refrigerators burning. Now I ask for daily magic,

a moth affixed to a screen door—your pixils on my screen, surnames of thirst, full-body scans.

When I sang "Puff, the Magic Dragon" for my mother, she said, *Keep singing*,

scanned windows for the black cat. The margins down, the markets up, then crashing.

You were fire fascinated with itself: *More air, more air,* you said. As for that sheen

of burning gasoline, your magic—stones and stories, margins starry

and omniscient—you ran down the stairs. Now a voice says, *Stay still*.

Calypso's rasp and buzz. I cannot climb these rungs of air. Linda's the air I breathe.

Gentle and sweet you said I was.

Flashback

By: Charise M. Hoge

I swim with dragonflies skittering the surface of this spring fed pond

at one with my immersion, reversing a situational gravity of immense abiding heat

and the claustrophobia suburbia imparts, a body in a body of water

in a bowl of earth in a country that has forsaken the my of body, for the body politic.

Another hot July without air conditioning I sit in front of the fan abandoning shirt for red bandeau

ready-made from a headband stretched across my nine-year-old chest, for a modicum of modesty.

Two daughters later, first winter after a stint in Bangkok, snowbanks cover streets and yards. Girls stream into our house, dropping hats, gloves, jackets, boots, socks, snow pants, sweaters, then shirts and underwear

as they absorb the stuffy heat and music left playing in the living room. They skip, jump, turn,

laugh with a giddy girlishness. Womanhood will startle them soon enough;

and I relish this reprieve of sanctions. To be feral in the sanctity of home. To be home in the *my* of body.

If Tears Could Talk

By: Cameron Atlas Chiovitti

When astronauts cry in the sky, Their tears turn to Jell-O. Stardust is only unwished powder.

My synthetic orange tongue anchors me in the sky. I don't know if anyone's wished me better. Only romantics tend to stargaze,

And it's been years since we camped out on the fire escape. When was the last time you promised someone the moon? I'm gelatinizing with every cosmic chasm in my chest.

Can you hear this from your lovers' arms? Or are you sleepily marveling At the sparkle spiraling to Earth?

If my body could slam into the ground, All limbs and organs bursting-A new sun in the kitchen sink-

I would already be gone.

About the Legs

By: Lina Buividavičiūtė Translated from Lithuanian to English by Irma Šlekytė.

I likely stepped into the world on the wrong foot. I still don't know which foot is the right one, I still don't know if there is a right one –

what do I know what do I know what do I know – one somehow becomes a woman with a downturned mouth, with a Shar Pei face, a woman with the sparkle no longer effervescent in her eyes, with faulty inner thermometers, a lukewarm woman, with loneliness dripping out of her bag –

one somehow becomes a sad-faced woman —
a she-spirit who's left her tribe, a sister who sold
Josephs, with nuphars of sorrow entangled
in her hair, a woman who writes about the dark
ages, the blackest of nights, and little daughters not being born ---

So what do I know what do I know – I do not know on which foot I'll step out of this world.

Seasons of Forgiveness/III

By: Dick Altman

Northern New Mexico

Four days into winter – and I languish/
yearn for spring – Rage/grieve
to start over – plead the fates not
to burn/drown/desiccate high country –
as they did last year – leaving behind
vast/storied ruins – Skies billow yet
with vacant promises – Winds leap
our ridge – never lingering long enough
to treasure us – however little –
their cargo of rain/snow – gifted –
or so it seems – always to the valley
blooming next to mine

Indian Country this is – for hundreds of years – How did they survive – Oppressed/bedeviled by the seasons – how long would I have lasted – Three or four years of vigor – followed by slow decline – an unyielding withering – a hopelessness – If I were a tree – and I've planted scores – likely I'd now be tinder – Spring arrives bearing dreams – nothing more to awaken buds – Other trees – by fortune – leaf out – My aspen – favorites I feed/water/love – remain – huddled in nakedness – winter-raped

Where go wrong – where fail – Drought invisible – You only see its scourge down road – too late to conjure miracles – as if I ever could – The "I" won't give in – Or perhaps it isn't "I" – but something deeper inside – something that sees a tree akin to itself – and I'm driven to hold on – I have – with luck – with verdant ardor and kindness – brought back to life pinions – even birds – my hot breath turning shock into flight – Hear me count days to spring – Hear me cry out to hawks orbiting above – Hear me pray – in whispers – to endure

wax on

By: Nancy Knowles

wax me, oh glorious Chapstick for your nectar foments uprising

your cherry scent like all the days

spent in sunlight

your name the balm primes every gasp every harsh no

wonder the maidens love you let us hurry oh wicked candle

let me smear your crushed jewels on my thirsty let me, darkened

by summer and just as lovely, swivel your tube so long i have tended

vineyards not my own let me, my love bathe myself in your carmine perfume

BABUSHKA TOLD MY MOM TO CALL THE PRIEST

By: Kira Stevens

and invite him over. She was ready to receive her last holy communion. Later it was 5 PM and she woke from her nap insisting she needed to get herself ready—and then after, she fell back asleep with her church clothes still on and make-up done. I think she wanted to make sure she looks her best when she dies. Today the priest came and she was so anxious. Through her barely opened mouth she kept murmuring I'm not presentable, I'm not presentable—so the priest would have to come back another time. Is it bad that I'm happy she sent him away because this means she believes she will still be alive tomorrow or the next day? I'm holding this little bite of hope under my tongue. I know it will cut my gums eventually when reality reaches it, but for now I'm savoring the liminal space like a binky in my unspoken words there is a horrid necessary truth I'm pretending not to feel.

Uvalde

By: MCS Thompson

Small children Bleeding to death From no one coming.

To help them, To shield them From high-speed bullets

Savagely pulsing.

No one obeying The protocol That could save them

From desperately pulsing.

No one overriding The flawed assessment To spare them

From painfully pulsing.

Whispering children Pleading for help Trusting, waiting, For rescue.

No one taking the risks They had vowed to That could relieve

Their agonized pulsing.

Instead, preventing Their parents from trying to save them

From mortally pulsing.

Small children Bleeding to death From no one coming.

At Apogee.

By: M. Shayne Bell

Sparrows drop, tumble down the air as if some strength leaned on in flight fails them: they dive, roll catch themselves before the ground. In swirls of leaves, they rise up.

A Story of Creation

By: Ed Wade

A girl contemplates her breath as it fogs the school bus window on a winter morning. She makes cloud after cloud, and watches them evaporate. In one, she draws a circle. In another, she draws a square. Only to watch them slowly disappear.

She feels the shadowy blue bodies of her oceans as another cloud forms from her lips. She draws a rectangle, and feels the moon pull it back.

She creates the storm, then the calm. The silence. Then the thunder collapses back into calm. Inhale, then exhale. Then her triangle melts back into the cold, greasy glass.

What It's Like

By: Ryan M. W.

Mom had those Varicose veins. Rivers of life ran Her arms from Elbow to knuckle, Knee to toe, Crossing under, Weaving over each other. A perfect network, Life's corridors, Her essence. Whatever God She believed in Must have adored His handiwork, Because he took it back.

I asked
What it's like
To be cremated.
Mom didn't like surprises.
After they told me,
I felt shaken
Like a soda can,
Or at least
a lonely, oblong,
Imperfect bubble inside
Waiting for the crack of the tab.
I must have been pale.

They regretted telling me. I tried to stay strong. I had to. I didn't.

Auntie's face was wet.
Matted with hair.
Caked in sweat.
Head on a swivel,
She'd bolt any second.
Her nostrils flared,
Lava bubbling in
Anticipation of
Eruption.
She wailed
Louder and louder,
Then quieter. A heave,
And nothing. Agape,
No sound.
A top losing momentum.

Grandma was stoic.
She carried Auntie.
She had called me
Two days before,
'This is the hardest news
You'll ever get,'
No regard for her
Breaking it.
An ox, she carried the weight
— Our grief, our fatigue
Without second thought.
She'd known death, her parents
Not Jewish, but still
The wrong German.

They got lucky, I heard.

Dad, newly sober.

He wasn't fully there,

Out of the bottle.

He'd gone before I was 6,

They'd married that year. The Bahamas, no less.

He remembered most

The open bar, not

The warm, salty breeze — nor her.

He became a statue,

Eyes pinned to the floor

When they called

'Time for the viewing.'

He never kissed her,

Just the gin on her lips.

Mom was laid flat

In a cardboard casket.

The hospital gown Covered her squarely.

I stared for a while,

Waiting.

She still had

her varicose veins,

I hoped she would move.

They wouldn't let her

I know it.

Lips sewn shut

To prevent her Saying what's next,

Or even Goodbye.

So, God is like Leopold Sacher-Masoch

By: Holly Eva Allen

I knock over one of those saccharine, smiling cereal faces and the box tumbles down the aisle into the February air. So, then I say it and my aunt replies with "God doesn't appreciate his name being used in vain.", her George-Creel-tongue eager blubbering, her Rex-Stout-teeth critical-white. So, God is like Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, I think in my chapel-lobe of happy echoes where Leopold goes all red in the face over "masochism" even as his detestable darlings play master and slave on the page for any willing eye. I'm fairly certain this would've been a fine sight for any baleful old

god the testament shunned. Any god who made no proclamations about mixed fabrics, made no certain threats about golden calves nor sorry saps unwilling to commit felicitous filicide for their Father. So, it's just the "Venus" then, I think as my aunt and I near the check-out lane, and not her furs that earn his devilish scorn. Not the stygian wolves, the sacrificial ermines, who saw two summers if they were lucky or if fur coats just weren't in fashion that year.

Root, Theory

By: C. Henry Smith

The night is the least round thing

Moon faced Cancerians, Gomorrah lights fading

I consider a black hole, I consider a void still linearly

A place for the angels in all the tired *this*

Bathsheba in the bathtub, queen mother on the horizon

We start the black miracle out as an ovum

To stand, equation-balanced; to last in sin immemorial

Monuments grey as an ass' dreams, ashen as an ass dreams of turnips

The turn of celestial bodies is unlike any turn of my own

Lot-wife-pivot inevitable into something unforgiven

Or maybe what feels like a segment is only a long curve

Though I like the firelight in rays better than in waves

The hope of an arrowed end and the darkening present

Kingdoms, queendoms, jackdoms, tens

Really footing the footpath to weather the seasons

Advancing to and from darkness, we don't come back from this

I like the place dreaming makes in my lifetime

Could stand for an infinity of blank

WHEN WE WERE BREAD

By: Judith Mikesch-McKenzie

"A table without bread is not a table but bread is a table on its own." Scottish/Gaelic Proverb

Just down the street is a bar where we gleefully joined up with a wake for some guy's cat Around six or seven long tables pulled together, singing, drinking, telling stories about cats with men and women we didn't know at all. Not you-and-me "we" but the "we" that I built my life around before it dissolved like sugar in water.

Blocks away (or was that another town - sometimes it's hard to be sure of such things) was that 50's-ish-wanna-be soda-fountain and drugstore/market, on the corner of 4th & Main in the town that we both couldn't wait to leave behind, where you and I met up when I was home from college and you were packed to leave, without telling anyone but me, sitting across from me, singeing the tall bony waitress with glances that burnt up and down her body until she left, looking even more gray, thin, and weary. I have always felt I owed her for that.

But I also owed you for the ways you pushed and pulled me into life, out my window, walking thru dark far out the highway to sit at tables in the truck stop to the wee hours, drinking coffee while you enjoyed the looks of the grizzled truckers at the counter, eyeing them and grinning at me as I shrugged them off, their muttered comments vaporizing in our disdain.

Today I looked up from my table to shout *hey hon do you* remember when we got drunk with my high school bff in my hometown? I wanted to work through my memories with someone who'd been there, but I stopped myself before actually shouting into the empty rooms, because had I, I would have dissolved too.

There was the time at Moose's Saloon late one summer when we left our table for a girl-trip to the bathroom to splash water, and stall-to-stall, your voice broke when you wondered why you didn't have someone who treated you well, like I had, and I sat silent in my stall, because what do you say? At the sinks I touched your arm and you jerked back, turning to head out the door and back to the table and the glasses awaiting us there.

We have always been silent on the story of one table, where we sat across from her, she just 16, not quite a year beyond us, and teased her for coloring in color books while her baby slept, not knowing what she would do to herself just minutes after we left her, not knowing how her shadow would be around every table we sat from that time on including

the table at the diner halfway between Helena and Butte where we met up years later and the woman at the table across wanted to know how long it'd been since such good friends had seen each other, and we told her, both grinning, and then told stories around our table while your love looked on, and he did not know how we were making ourselves and our years into warm bread.

A Bird With Her Brain

By: Jonathan Davies

Oily, drenched, this is how to fall as birds do – a mess of old feathers and avian noises, creaking and groaning like classical birdsong.

They learn as we did, by recitation and reading aloud. It's the fall that makes noise. Air swoosh-ing perpendicular to crook'd wings

the way piano strings are bent out of shape by the hammer. Left hand and right hand in motion – contrapuntal, music crossed at the wrist.

This is the kind of movement that makes heat by touching flesh to ivory – friction is a non-conservative force. Thermodynamics, alchemy, did Newton really not know

why copper is more useful than gold? We read to each other and grow old. Old fruit is chewier, with inadvisable string-bits.

Reflections in wet concrete – the chemical composition of faces, seen through dirt and rain, scars carved into the pavement.

Recall how Rachmaninoff saw the Isle of the Dead in black and white,

writing anyway his symphonie téchnicolor, a wizard dreaming up shades of yellow only found in cinemas and heaven. I would be buried in your DVD library near the old films,

if I had to die one day — I'll finish falling first, and when the sun splits the clouds my wings will dry,

and I'll take to the sky, again, as the albatross.
One more flight across the sea forever

January

By: Lane Dever

I am using a polaroid of us standing in front of a hotcake house in Northern Michigan as a bookmark. I am pinning it to my wall when I have nothing

new to read. There is a leak in this house. It flows in a single straight line, ceiling to floor. I am doing everything I can

to fix it, but the night I'm out on the first date with her—
the girl who tells me about these queer kids
on rollerblades who play pickup hockey

in the downtown mall parking garage, and how we should join them: make a documentary about their lives, or otherwise join a commune in the desert

somewhere in Arizona.

That's the same night that the leak bursts.

Water covering everything.

That's the night I realize, the little note you left on the back in blue pen, along with the date, has been completely washed away.

locality

By: Josh Anthony

down the rubble path of Peaceful Valley's locked bridge we scramble and land to exchange ink like altar candles. it's not

the naming of things left dead but the name left to die. i watch the Spokane hide what heavy metals drudged up this life.

you lay on your back and undo your jacket. see the dust accumulate like carpet on the concrete underway.

we hear voices above it all thinking they're alone to the world's ear.

Farewell To Fender

By: Benjamin Rose

Your rotten fretboard withering away
In little craters cries, "all wood must fail";
Strrings smeared with grime and blackened in decay
May howl no more, nor below out a tale
Of lust and woe, resounding to the beat
That plastic clipped against the cutting steel
Which carved deep rows of calluses in feet
The heathen heroes numbered for a deal.
Yet I, who never offered up a soul
At Witching Hours to Powers of the Air
In days unmetered, pay away the toll
Demanded Faust, and burn my books for fare.
Farewell, old flame, whose notes no longer fall:
I'll pawn you to the girl across the hall.

cloying colors

By: Michael Karpati

thrashing yourself for clashing ideas; conflict stunts your growth, you see. dunce, you call yourself in pain; please, release me, you beg yourself in vain. your body is foreign to the space it inhabits, as are we all when it comes down to it; you lose your love, you live your death; cloying colors make it all worth it in the end.

THE COLOR OF MY EYES

By: Julie Benesh

Freezing today, and I'm a little numb looking out the window at billows of steam that keep my body warm, but not so much the rest.

I have a to-do list but it's not written down and I'm not the type to write things down just for the satisfaction of crossing them off. I'd rather make a not-do list, but hoo-boy, that'd take a while.

Some say winter is not, contrary to popular belief the season of repose; that under the snow is a gathering, even an orgy.

I see portents everywhere these days: that CLOSE TOMORROW sign on the bank promising a more intimate future or at least a gesture toward solvency.

My dreams combine times and places, even people, of my past like a film poorly adapted from a dog-eared novel, leading me to believe what I thought was a window might be a painting, or, more likely, a foggy mirror.

I mean to say I'm a part of nature, so nothing if not eternally hopeful.

Holding

By: Jasmine Marshall Armstrong

A Father Holding his Dead Daughter's Hand Crushed Beneath Their Home After the Turkish Quake

The way he slipped his hand in hers, you knew He'd done it a thousand nights—no more— Countless times after she woke among the boulders of blue dark nightmares. So many times, her thin fingers unfurled In his own, shy ferns that find peace in the night air, when every living being grows or regenerates, cells dividing, carrying the familial map, the way every child's body carries the parents, and multitudes of ancestors, enough to number the stars, perhaps but that night, he held her hand knowing the cleaving of the earth, a fault-filled world had stopped the journey of all those cells, carrying the Jacob's Ladders of DNA, the foibles and fierce beauty of all who were in her and made her had stopped the journey's cord severed, its rope slack as the daughter's pulseless wrist her father could not leave there beneath the rubble.

Sandy Cameron's Magic Violin

By: John Dos Passos Coggin

Rigid as Notre-Dame. Queening. Cruel. Stradivarius, you pilloried the joy of my youth. You and my instructor who climbed out of your crypts to judge my music with gargoyle smiles.

Stradivarius, I wanted to hack you to your last toothpick. Hang you by your quivering strings before a medieval mob. Throw you into the crackling hearth at Christmas and invite the neighbors to admire the musical yule log.

Until I saw Sandy restring the violin's anachronisms into a smoke-eyed mélange of ballet and punk rock.

She charges past all obstacles to popular classical performance like a parkour champ. She stops. Her eyes flash with sorcery.

Sometimes her bow is a calligraphy pen, inking elegant serifs in the air. Sometimes she raises her bow high like Napoleon raising his saber before battle.

Is this the same instrument that pacified the palace air of Europe's absolute monarchs, soothing their rare snatches of guilt?

She haunts the stage with her ghostly locomotion.

Before And After, Or At The Same Time

By: David Zaza

The car flies through time as much as it does the sky toward the house

The house remembers it burned only after the car came crashing in

The landscape disappears as so many landscapes do to smears of coal

Though not possible there are no people in the car nor in the house

From here the light is light and the shadows harsh in stark contrast

From now on time is still even though the car flies and house burns

Sun burns too up in its sky as earth burns too here on earth

Deities and the human brain

forgotten burgers/ lost theatre tickets our least fortunes last laugh to dis to leap a human genus/ genius wittingly advancing life too devoted to semper *fie*

population never never grant it had Diana ocean or pursuit in a hydroponic closet exactly heaven broke free halcyon still like some kind of broccoli party

pushing scientists to garden wildness Consciousness doesn't take the desire between give-in-and-take-out the dialectical intoxicating survival of plants Plants

can alter consciousness resting our brain in a sense like us leaning our head against the doorway of our love Every plucked petal cast for the plants' we might

reinvent drives Whatever word-world desire has dance/revolutionary actors/all us bees pollinating equality

leaning like us between our brain and deities

Gift of a Day

By: David W. Berner

It is on a walk that I encounter her "What a gift of a day," she says

Her smile is true her stride is deliberate allowing for wonder

"It is," I say and return a smile.

Winter had forgotten herself confused, she was.
Certainly, it cannot always be this way glorious sun in a season of gray.

On the walk home I discover a field mouse, gray and stiff, upon the concrete sidewalk With tenderness, I slide the body to the nearby grass and dirt, a more fitting burial, it seems.

Everything ends, they say Everything changes, they say

Steps from my door, I wonder if the mouse had known what a gift the day had been.

Humming and Birds

By: Alicia Swain

The weeds beneath my feet, vibrant as the basil and greens stirred gently into the savory sauce we stirred for supper to serve for friends we never knew we had. My lips vibrate, and yet, not a soul could see what such small sounds do for me and my sanity. As the birds chirp, I feel their hearts beat and move my toes to the beat — forcing a rustle like a deer closing in upon me, the sweet sound of robins communicating to companions with every tweet as a I sit, humming songs of sympathy and comfort to myself, stuck between worlds: oceans burnt with fire, trees bright against cerulean skies.

A Prayer for the Early Morning

By: Amy Claire Massingale

He was very nearly gone from this world, And still the nurse Called for an enema.

I put a stop to that shit.

Just as I put a stop to forced feedings And the drinking of juice, When he shook his head furiously, No.

His digestive system was Shrinking slowly, A dry leaf in autumn, Curling in on itself.

To abstain was either choice, Or a forgotten skill. It was also His right.

We feasted on love.

I sat at his bedside and his eyes, So luminous in his gaunt face. That I could not look away. I took his frail hand, With the humble wedding band. His teaching me to ride a bike, Shotgun in the old Buick, My childhood, seen from both of us, Flashing like a dream.

We were getting close now, I could feel it, Could feel the tender shimmering membrane Separating us from the other side, It pulsed with purity, and it felt Like birth.

As morning broke the horizon Of the nighttime vigil The membrane became thin.

The thinner it became, The more full his eyes. Locked with mine, An embrace.

He had not spoken in months But his eyes, oh his eyes. The velvet brown of them, Their holy light.

His eyes said I love you, And thank you Together, and at once.

Tears streamed from my own and I Could only nod. And smile with the joy of having known him. This was no place for speaking words.

We floated there it seemed, Not quite in the other realm, Where the light awaited him. But no longer in this one either.

The air in the room shifted, felt saturated
And everything outside it felt faded.

His body, which had suffered so, The brain which had turned. Prisons breached, Ready for rest.

He took a deep breath, a lunge forward Then gently and filled with grace, Exhaled.

the next yard over

By: Alex Wells Shapiro

In the next yard over, honeybees swarm and their sound is huge.

I mistook the drone for road work until they organized in the shape of a face.

Its kind eyes coax a smile from me as dawn reflects off the Public Storage

sign and catches its vibrous brow just right. Buzzing wafts

thru my apt; one attracted to the Splenda clumped at the bottom

of a mug or candy melting in my bag. They sting

only under threat, but how can I signal passivity? At our statures I'd need distance to be seen wholly

and my apt is small.

The rat nest in the sewage drain

must be hungry or have nibbled poison or it wouldn't

screech so loud I wake up on time for work.

The guy upstairs yells back cause he works

weird hours. One slipped up from the grate, knelt

by my feet & passed as our eyes met, neighbors

looping between apts & U-Hauls around us.

Sausages frying in side, I sow radish

seeds, back stairwell protection from a flash storm, & balance

the glass cup on the tallest rail I can reach where rain & spills

drip thru like a hose covered by a thumb.

The rest of my bagged soil, forgotten, overflows

down the gutter, connecting the dots of pitter patter.

I harvest so infrequently I watch spiderwebs thicken

with bolting seed pods from my window as my coffee pot grumbles

hot & buffers the atmosphere.

American King Lear

By: Henry Dean

with no radar held breath Behaving like a man death final time submarine Exiting I am walking the park outside my house The verdant sheen and sunset parking meter free calzone The sweatshop instrument stand Reflecting angel sun from the high heaven of cloud That cannot stain this white and perfect land Of the future time sown into the hills leading life by the horns Breeding With two hands towards me uncorking my bottle yards Of Shiraz Near children yawping Lining the older side Bottles broken glass the street Rainbow the oil inevitable the city street And no-one is falling from out of the sky Thin weak In afternoon Arms tanned by the sound of the city in summer Kicking holy hell out of every tin can around swirling remorseless cold ice Not yearning Kicked through gutters into a sidestreet cold And Nothing melts Water hardens in the pipes Sweet ruby robes of shimmer stars tonight The horn, the prayer that's green and covered in stripes Roses and hawthorn bushes And tulips The kind of sight that makes you cry forever Never Awakening offices that thought It a good idea to buy the park the fruit can afford But only the moles (The pepper mill millionaire the mayor) the one musical brother Outside rat-town where my garden is earth To live here

And I sing a song that smells like sand Blown Into the eyes New petals Royal cars Swerving to avoid spit the wavering song of the light dust Then like Hell the murdering turn toward me Though it looks from just here like men running My mind also locked on turning the key in the lock The tap of the bath the knob of my expensive sunshine lamp Cloud cover and the blackout moment unexpected eclipse I can only assume this is The hills are gone blue Shorn like sheep marked for death cattle paint To distinguish the living and dead Sing in my ear One flash **CRUNK** rip of the sheath Of my walleted holster hanging tattered Empty like young sound in the basin of morning Muffled running My hands drawn like language up to my heart where the red start Muffles the orange and violet now damping the sun The quickest fever known to man proof that any fruit would sing rather than just spurting juice If it could **I SCREAM** Suddenly covered in indigo rags the whole rainbow attic coming up for air fireworks erupt out of the dark Eyes The sun hangs without moving and the earth has stopped Why did I ever be born in New Orleans The greenish mid-district Alert to the colour of falling How How can I How can I begin to start learning to move less Conserve energy For the hieroglyph note that she sings in Pathetic sound Of the siren song that seems to me like a clock Too desperate to toll on the dot Thinking with just one more day I could have healed all this Found time to feel guilt for the Erupted with dignified longing for love Trouble I've caused And discovered and married milkmaid of the Bronx Artist, Carolina Cinema owner From the home of the Falcons Every thought

Paid for in blood unable to sing or stand straight or get up The hills relocate to one corner my eye Where they stop dead fade into the end of the pupil I never felt more like a loser Curly hair Straight Perhaps laying on snow In the middle of summer lights out waiting for sleep The daydream that takes over both wrists God hands Forcing themselves near the feinting throat We know what we were born for Barely even finished falling Noise still safely compacted in the ear To my knees Already confronting the Nothing the clinking Of roots coming out of the earth for a swallow Flowers and the permanence of stone I am not the thing itself My name unable to find its letters on a wall of heroes or villains We found at the end of the war Sing in my ear Taking all my clothes off for no reason Just offside the highway on the street Feeling for the wound that the feeling comes out of Small Earth Orange and violet spinning like a child Seen as if in a mirror At a beauty pageant further away A planet nearer formed of colour Covered they hoist me from orbit new animals New sound new fury I saw An event but can't see it Remember without thinking about it Outside the park and the dream Passed out absolutely on the pavement Sing in my ear Red angel of parklight That settles like mud on the roadside everything the smell of gasoline And clings Sing in my ear and come into my arms The American Dream I am the brightest thing that ever came from New Orleans Spread on the earth on the shoulders of the football team

now the colour of knife

Meeting my exit sign with a tongue

And a leer like a King who wakes up on his throne Smells burning But dies before the flames reach him

The Way A Stranger Would

By: Mayrim Vega

Don't spare me a glance.

Let my face and shape blur in the crowd.

Allow the memories to fade like the tattoos on your skin.

My name to be a figment of imagination.

Bury me in a casket with sunflowers that lay on my colorless body.

Don't visit my grave.

Walk past me, the way a stranger would.

Mount Daredevil

By: Ally Campanozzi

The snow flurries and ice chunks pelt against the lodge windows. Blinds half-slit, some frightened faces still yearn to see more of Weather doing its best to sound off frantic alarms and stark choruses of hysterical, relentless sirens.

The low clouds and mist look like birthday streamers when you're celebrating the mark defining climbs, treks, chair lifts heading toward tops of ancient hills.

It's far too quiet for car engine hums.

Too stone cold for joggers brisk walking with pets on their leashes. The pavement, still too slick for skateboards or anything else driven by a not yet-reinvented wheel.

Some of them are out there, wearing the badge, braving all the elements.

They're too high-strung to stay put in one place for very long. There's no concerns about the threats of blue-black icy scars from frostbite's invisible row of hammerhead shark teeth.

Heavy, saturated, and thick.

It's the kind of snowfall adrenaline seekers crave when they're up there on Mount Daredevil, taking artic plunges, then taking breaks to sip hot cocoa.

They twirl fluffy marshmallow chunks around with plastic spoons before taking final gulps and small sips from hand-spun clay mugs.

Breeze

By: Kelly Easton

I don't really care how intimate the breeze over this slanted lake that carries seed and song and breath of summer; summer's short, in the north and southward, pearls lay thick in the depths, embedded fathoms you can't escape for a summer's lapse of fate

Autumn waits, its ginkgos ready to burst into winter's crackling fires, late. Icy fjorded schisms melt into spring's forgotten lakes, winged tidings of late, late, late

Summer sighs, over bent horizons cricketing aubades in easterly directions, no breezes here just hot heavy, banded days lithe in glens listing inward, to circadian Acadian rhythms of sense

King of the Mountain

By: Kristin Marie

The winter light fights through dirty windows

A mattress propped against the wall becomes a steep slide

My siblings and I whoop and scream,

slide and climb, pausing to wipe tears—

a knee too close to the nose, a twisted ankle

The other side of the mattress

has a hole the size of a large pizza

Mom fell asleep while smoking a cigarette

What if she hadn't woken up?

We slide and climb, climb and slide

The sky outside darkens

Mom's not home right now

We stop and sit on the floor, legs like jelly

All we hear is our ragged breath

In Tibet

By: Joanne Grumet

sculpted Ice Buddha

melts in the Kyichu River

water to water

November 28, 1963

By: Harry Bauld

Yesterday is not ours to recover.

-LBJ, Thanksgiving Address, 1963

No *turkey*, this or any year. An Italian house, for god's sake, an Italian neighborhood, as-yet-unhyphenated Americans. First as always two platters of antipasto big as manhole covers with *provolone* sharp enough to make you bark. A lake of escarole soup.

Then the deep casserole like the blue catholic bathtub

in the postage stamp of a front yard, the Virgin of Lasagna.

In the *ricotta* she (the Neapolitan *nonna*, not Jesus' mother)

puts the secret pinch of cinnamon from a southeast Asian land

none of us can find on a map, where on my 8th birthday

a monk lights himself on fire for reasons none of us can grasp.

Then the steaming Alp of sausage and *steak pizzaola*braised for five hours, and vinegary Valpolicella in jelly glasses, the white tablecloth bloodied with their sour rings. At the end, as if commanded by *The Bible*,
exactly seven desserts, all revelations,

like the ricotta cheesecake light and sweet as false hope.

All that week in third grade, to understand gratitude and what Miss Conlon, when she takes her finger out of her nose, calls *our roots*, we have studied the first Thanksgiving, and after a couple of sips (and then a secret few more)

of the water-and-wine allowed kids on holidays I could swear
I see Squanto not at some distant badly drawn textbook pilgrim table but right here at ours—a local exiled in his own home, after all, he understands dislocations and longings.

My Little League team, fielding at every position but mine

boys with names like Bucci, Semenza, and Macarelli, is called the Braves. Nonna always cooks as if she expects the bus with the high school football team on their way back from losing the Thanksgiving game to break down on Summer Street and stomp in, huge and hopeless and famished in America,

the American houses closed up behind their white American shingles,
Americans picking sadly at their white puritan food—
though I don't know where she gets this idea since everyone else
in South Medford comes from the same five towns in Italy
via East Boston. Perhaps from television,

the black-and-white wink of its sleepless assimilating dream.

So having Squanto here, toasting America, it's no surprise, she's ready, and in her house he's more than welcome, he can *pass*: the nose, the dark shoe of his skin, the vowel at the end of the name–probably Sicilian,

maybe "from over to Revere," his English at least as good
as Uncle Pat's—maybe a grace note of accent, the odd broken syllable—
though somehow tonier than ours, something more shapely and formal
in the consonants. Maybe from the old country, a family
with a white-washed stone house on the Mediterranean shore

of our ancestral past, and thinking of these similarities and synchronicities allows us not to acknowledge his true old country lies under the curb outside, runway for our Ford Fairlanes and Chuck Taylors.

All language is gratuitous when Nonna brings out the baked eggplant sliced thin as maple leaves, so tender we cut it with a spoon,

and Squanto, like the rest of us, tucks into each course
with gratitude. Afterward, coffee and sambuca for Squanto
in the parlor as we sink down into the stuffed and televised daze of football
from New York--no Patriots yet, in those days--padded faceless men
crashing dutifully together, and a speech by the new white leader

(sworn-in Friday on an airplane) about moving on from grief and hatred to civil rights, saying *our factories flourish, we live in peace, our system*has passed a great test, in a slow heavy accent unfamiliar to Squanto's ear and ours, from somewhere south of the feast of lost futures whose courses

I am now thankful no one's nonna will have to prepare.

In Order of Appearance

Adela M. Brito has published stories in The Acentos Review, Hieroglyph, Litbreak Magazine, Moko Magazine, and The Sandy River Review, and her poetry, nonfiction, and arts reviews have appeared in Adelaide Literary Magazine, The Closed Eye Open, All About Jazz, Counterculture UK, EdgeNetwork, Storyboard Memphis, and Underwood. She holds an MFA in Fiction and teaches college English and creative writing.

Richard Widerkehr's fourth book of poems is Night Journey (Shanti Arts Press, 2022). At The Grace Cafe (Main Street Rag) came out in 2021. His work has appeared in Cathexis Northwest Review, Writer's Almanac, Atlanta Review, and over 50 others He won two Hopwood first prizes for poetry at the University of Michigan and first prize for a short story at the Pacific Northwest Writers Conference. He has poems in the award-winning Take A Stand: Art Against Hate (Raven Chronicles); he reads poems for Shark Reef Review.

Charise M. Hoge is a dance/movement therapist, writer, and performing artist. She is the author of Striking Light from Ashes and Muse in a Suitease. Her poetry is also featured in Next Line, Please: Prompts to Inspire Poets and Writers (edited by David Lehman, Cornell University Press), as well as notable journals and magazines. Charise is poet-in-residence for the annual Art on Cullers Run (Mathias, West Virginia) and Art All Night H Street (Washington, DC).

Cameron Atlas Chiovitti, 24-year-old creative writing student at OCAD University, uses poetry to explore what it truly means to be human through the context of their experiences. Each poem is a safe space for their inner darkness to live, which they hope to extend to any reader looking to feel seen.

Lina Buividavičiūtė is a poet, literary critic an scholar. This poem is translated from Lithuanian to English by Irma Šlekytė.

Dick Altman writes in the high, thin, magical air of Santa Fe, NM, where, at 7,000 feet, reality and imagination often blur. He is published in Santa Fe Literary Review, American Journal of Poetry, Fredericksburg Literary Review, Foliate Oak, Blue Line, Landing Zone, Cathexis, The Offbeat, Haunted Waters Press, Split Rock Review, The RavensPerch, Beyond Words, New Verse News, Wingless Dreamer, Sky Island Journal and others here and abroad. A Pushcart Prize nominee and a poetry winner of Santa Fe New Mexican's annual literary competition, he has in progress two collections of some 150 published poems. His work has been selected for the forthcoming first volume of The New Mexico

Anthology of Poetry, to be published by the New Mexico Museum Press.

Nancy Knowles teaches English and Writing at Eastern Oregon University in La Grande, OR. She has published poetry in Toyon, Eastern Oregon Anthology: A Sense of Place, Torches n' Pitchforks, War, Literature, & the Arts, Oregon East, Willawaw Journal, Grand Little Things, Amethyst Review, Wild Roof Journal, and Cirque. She earned first place for her Shakespearean sonnet "Diamond Craters" in 2022 from the Oregon Poetry Association.

Kira Stevens is a poet and visual artist from Delaware. She has an MFA in creative writing from The New School and a BS in psychology from the University of Maryland. Her chapbook, "Highly Noted and Other Poems" was published by Lillet Press in January 2022. Her work has appeared in Open Minds Quarterly, Fauxmoir, Glassworks Magazine, Delaware Bards Poetry Review, Fleas On The Dog, Prometheus Dreaming, and others. She is on Instagram @words4food and Twitter @kirawritespoems.

All of MCS Thompson's grandchildren live in Texas. The school shooting in Uvalde resonated with her deeply, as she has been a teacher and elementary school principal. She writes poetry, fiction, essays and editorials. She was born in Oregon, and now lives on an island in Washington state.

M. SHAYNE BELL received a Creative Writing Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts (1991).

Bell's haiku have been published in Blithe Spirit: Journal of the British Haiku Society, Frogpond: Journal of the Haiku Society of America, Haikuniverse, The Heron's Nest, Mainichi Japan (where haiku of his were selected as among the best English-language haiku: 2015, 2017), Modern Haiku, Open Journal of Arts and Letters (O:JA&L), Shot Glass Journal, star 82 review, Sunstone, Tinywords, and The Wales Haiku Journal.

Bell's poetry has also been published in Amazing Stories, Asimov's, Cathexis Northwest Press, Dialogue, The Fibonacci Review, The Ghazal Page, High Shelf, Inscape, Kind Writers Literary Journal (where he received Notable Recognition, 2019-2020 Kind Writers Contest, for his poem: "The Kitten, One Year On"), Once Upon a Midnight (an anthology commemorating the 150th anniversary of the publication of Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven"), Star*line, The Pillar, and Typishly, among others.

In 1993, Bell backpacked through Haleakala Volcano on Maui, from the summit to the sea, retracing an expedition Jack London went on in 1911. In 1996, Bell joined an eight-day expedition to the summit of Kilimanjaro. Bell grew up on a ranch outside of Rexburg, Idaho; he and his four cats live in Rexburg.

Ed Wade is an American expatriate who has lived in Hanoi, Vietnam since 2012. There, he lectures and edits for RMIT University and enjoys the quaint chaos of the city. Currently Ed is earning his MFA through the University of Texas at El Paso. Ed's poetry can be found in Rattle, The Evening Street Review, The Rat's Ass Review, and several other journals. His work was recently anthologized in Puro Chicanx Writers of the 21st Century as well. His first collection of poems, The Mise en Abyme Jokebook, was published in 2019 by UnCollected Press.

Ryan M. W. is a new poet living in the Appalachian mountains where he studies East Asian history and takes his coffee black. His work is forthcoming in Yearling and his favorite butterfly is Jamie.

Holly Eva Allen is a writer currently living in California. Her work has been previously published in magazines and sites such as Funicular, Peculiar, Sand Hills, and Farside Review. She is the co-EIC for Foothill Journal and EIC for Horned Things. She is currently working on an English degree at Claremont Graduate University. You can find her work at hollyevaallen.wordpress.com or follow her on Twitter @ hollyevaallen.

C. Henry Smith is from West Texas but now makes poems in Brooklyn. He is the author of the chapbook Warren (Ghost City Press), and his work has appeared or is forthcoming in Colorado Review, Jabberwock Review, DMQ Review, Peach Velvet Mag, Dappled Things, River River, and others. He received his MFA at Oregon State University and is grateful for past residencies through Spring Creek Project and Chicago Art Department. @chenrysmith

Judith Mikesch McKenzie has traveled much of the world, but is always drawn to the Rocky Mountains as one place that feeds her soul. She loves change - new places, new people, new challenges, but writing is her home. Her poems have been published in Wild Roof Journal, Halcyone Literary Review, Plainsongs Magazine, Elevation Review, Scribblerus, Cathexis Northwest Press, Meat for Tea Valley Review, and several others. She is a wee bit of an Irish curmudgeon, but her friends seem to like that about her.

Jonathan is a writer from the Midlands, UK. He lives just out of sight and uses public libraries.

Lane Devers regrets to inform you he is from Carbondale, Colorado. He is a sophomore at Reed College. His work can be found in The Adroit Journal, DREGINALD, Juked, and elsewhere.

Josh Anthony holds (precariously) an MFA from Eastern Washington University. Josh has appeared in a fingerful of magazines such as Crab Fat Magazine, Gone Lawn, and Slipstream, among others.

Benjamin Rose is a poet from Washington, D.C. His poetry has appeared in Beyond Words Literary Magazine, Vermilion, and Cathexis Northwest Press.

Michael is an aspiring author graduated from the creative writing program at York University. His work centers on anxiety, depression, and various mental illnesses; he hopes to project a feeling of belonging for people who lack it. He has been published in several print and online magazines.

Julie Benesh is author of About Time, a chapbook published by Cathexis Northwest Press. She is a graduate of the MFA Program for Writers at Warren Wilson College and was awarded an Illinois Arts Council Grant. Her work has appeared in Tin House, Crab Orchard Review, Florida Review, Another Chicago Magazine, and elsewhere. She lives in Chicago and teaches at the Newberry Library. Read more at juliebenesh.com.

Jasmine Marshall Armstrong's poetry is dedicated to capturing the difficult times in which we live and has been influenced by the grit and glamor of growing up working class in California. A journalist, teacher, and humanities scholar in addition to being a poet, she has published poetry in Typishly, American Magazine, Poets Reading the News, In Parenthesis, Sojourners Magazine, Askew, "We Are Beat," the National Beat Poets Anthology and numerous other anthologies. She holds an MFA in Poetry and an MA in Humanities.

John Dos Passos Coggin is a writer based in Alexandria, Virginia. His poetry has appeared in Pangyrus, Cathexis Northwest Press, and The Blue Mountain Review. He wrote a biography of Florida statesman Lawton Chiles, Walkin' Lawton. He also co-manages the John Dos Passos literary estate and serves on the advisory board of the John Dos Passos Society.

David Zaza lives in New York, where he runs a design studio specializing in arts publications. His poetry has been published in print and digital magazines, including Medusa's Laugh, The Perch, and Novus, among others. Recent multidisciplinary projects include GoldbergPoems.com, an audio project which presents his recited poetry with piano accompaniment; and [unreliable], a poetry/drawing collaboration with visual artist Mark Fox.

Valyntina is a multi-genre eco artist living with her wife in Tucson, AZ. She works with paint, ink, Neon, encaustic medium, recycled or repurposed materials and words. She is the author of three poetry chapbooks, the tête-bêche, Fever Dream/ Take Heart (Cathexis Northwest Press 2020) and In Our Now (Finishing Line Press 2022). You'll find her work in, Beyond Queer Words, Genre: Urban Arts, Impermanent Earth, The Journal, Lana Turner, The Night Heron Barks, Querencia, Ran Off with the Star Bassoon, Sunspot, and The Wardrobe. Find her at valyntinagrenier.com or Insta @ valyntinagrenier.

David W. Berner is the author of several books of personal narrative and fiction. His work has been honored by the Society of Midland Authors and the Eric Hoffer Book Award. He writes outside Chicago.

Alicia Swain is a former English teacher and current researcher based in Richmond, VA. She has an English BA from Penn State University and is currently pursuing an English MA from Eastern Illinois University. She can be found on Instagram and Twitter, @aliciamswain, and on her website at https://aliciaswain.com/.

Amy Claire Massingale is a poet and author whose work has been published in The New York Times and in several literary journals. A passionate advocate for seniors and people living with dementia, Amy volunteers as an educator for the Alzheimer's Association and has launched several creative initiatives to combat the isolation of seniors in long term care. She is currently working on a book about aging and innovation. She lives in Portland, Oregon with her husband, two children, two cats and one dog.

Alex Wells Shapiro (he/him) is a poet, artist, and organizer from the Hudson Valley, living in Chicago. He serves as Poetry Editor for Another Chicago Magazine, and co-curates Exhibit B: A Reading Series presented by The Guild Literary Complex. He is the author of a full length collection of poems, Insect Architecture (Unbound Edition 2022), and a chapbook, Gridiron Fables (Bottlecap Features 2022). More of his work can be found at www.alexwellsshapiro.com.

Dean is a poet, because James Dickey was a poet. Based in London, he writes elsewhere whenever possible.

Mayrim Vega is a latina woman, who currently studies at Portland Community College. She writes poetry in English and Spanish. She also enjoys writing short stories.

Ally Campanozzi started writing at a young age and has been expanding her passion since. Her background includes a BA in Psychology and MA in Creative Writing from SNHU. Much of her writing comes from a passion for destigmatizing mental health through awareness and empathy. Some of her work has appeared in collections by Wingless Dreamer, The Black Mountain Press, The Bangalore Review, and Quillkeepers Press. She lives in Colorado with her husband and their cats.

Kelly Easton holds a Master of Arts in French Translation and Conference Interpretation. She spent fifteen years interpreting in the halls of diplomacy, working with the words of others. She now tends to her own writing. She recently founded Compass Rose Literary Journal: compassroseliterary.com

Kristin is a writer from New England. Her work has appeared in South Florida Poetry Journal, Lunch Ticket, and The Seventh Wave.

Joanne Grumet's chapbook Garden of Eve was published in 2020 by Finishing Line Press. Her work also appears online and in print in journals and anthologies and in the archives of the Brooklyn Museum. In addition, her poetry and songs have been featured on the cable to show "The Song" out of South Deerfield, Massachusetts.

Harry Bauld graduated from Medford High School in Massachusetts and studied art history at Columbia University where he was twice All-Ivy shortstop and broke Lou Gehrig's records. Unfortunately they were his academic records. He was selected by Matthew Dickman for inclusion in Best New Poets 2012 (University of Virginia Press) and his poems have won the New Millennium Writings Award, the Milton Kessler Poetry Prize and appeared in Nimrod, Southern Poetry Review, The Southeast Review, Verse Daily, Ruminate, The Baltimore Review, Whiskey Island, Spoon River Poetry Review, Deliberately Thirsty (UK) and many others in the U. S. and U.K.