

*shuttle*



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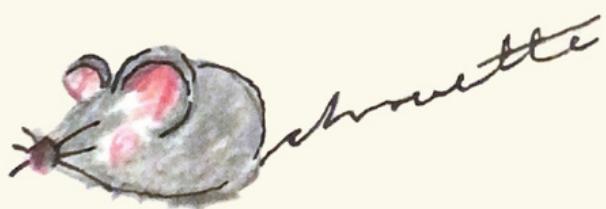
## A NOTE FROM THE EDITORS

Dear Reader,

Owls find their nests in tree hollows, pockets in cliffs, or small orifices hidden in old buildings—holes made into homes. Inside this issue, you will find the bits and pieces that made our nest, the formerly empty pages of our magazine, now filled with burrowed words and lines. We would like to thank our contributors, as well as you, our reader, without whom this magazine would not be possible.

So, take a walk through our forest, and don't forget to take cover. A *chouette* is a bird of prey, after all.

Love,



## Punk Drive

The snowy land speaks, the mist hangs where field meets woods  
backing a swirl of puffs like small epiphanies,  
ideas that disappear. Winter gods have painted the scene pallid,  
daubing from a palette of off-white and pale blue,  
as if they chose to deaden the realm's brightness,  
deny the primary colours. Field and forest, air and sky,  
the far hills: drained. Like us, the gods must have dozy days,  
so they brush this world in their own dullness. Then nap.

And yet the forest offers punk punctuation, a Basquiat assemblage.  
Birches lean like scoffing exclamations, the snow-topped erratics  
are massive periods in hats. Twisted branches and trunks:  
distorted commas. And at the ditch's edge, black rocks  
form a ragged ellipsis. The land punctuates the language  
of names, calling me to Embrun and Vars, Rockland and Hawkesbury...  
The vowels never shout, the words become voices  
hinting at codes, meanings I will never fathom.  
Exit-signs entrance, daring a turn. A change of plan. Betrayal. Freedom.

HAROLD HOEFLE

## doucement

all experience could be viscous

as a snail's pathway

after rain;

green lace

dissolving into skin,

stitches of the slow—i can imagine it

i can imagine much—

the wilderness beyond and within the limits of the human

who built time, sold labour, lacerated every internal organ

over a few short billion years,

who now needs melatonin supplements to promote sleep;

.

*i have so much*

*to do tomorrow*

you feel it too—everything is collapsing  
slowly,  
and the sluggishness is not a comfort;  
the heavy rain inhales the fire,  
then takes up the mantle of the flame,  
chokes our homes.

i collapse slowly too  
and feel the cool earth against my skin  
wishing i could melt into it,  
but i don't, so i get back to my feet,  
fluid and incensed.

CHRISTIAN FAVREAU

# Burger Fiancé



KARTHIKEYA GAUTAM

## Love Poem

They lied. Being in love must be  
the most ridiculous thing of all.

All we did today  
was lay in bed  
with the window open  
and our feet propped up against the wall.

There was a little breeze.  
And for hours and hours,  
we just stared and stared  
at each other's feet.

Remembering the time—  
It really was very sweet—  
When your dad said  
(Though he can be so rigid and cheap)

that the reason the two of us get along  
So well and for now so long  
Is because neither one of us  
Can ever manage to put two of the same sock on.

## Old-Timey Affair with Emily Brontë

by Jacob Sponga

She never said much, but she always wanted my cigarettes. I wanted an old-timey affair, I told her; none of that modern hoke. I had a gimcrack job back home, and more than enough of my own epoch. Emily was reticent. What was hoke, after all? We would maunder on the moors and frolic in the hillocks; I told her about supermarkets, and she murmured about the soul. She was bewildered by tales of six-dollar rotisserie chickens and ibuprofen; I did not believe in bloodletting. But we both knew empty space and frozen knolls. Did she prefer Coke, or Pepsi? She wasn't sure. Did she like Brian Eno? Sometimes I forgot she was from another age. This was in June, when the nights were huge and endless. We'd meet atop a certain rock behind the parsonage. Emily knew all the constellations. She taught me how to spot Orion, and I taught her how to wash her hands. I never did tell her that she would die at thirty. She did ask me about my past, in the future. Was I at war with France? Did I know I was very handsome? I swooned, she wooed. I bought her peonies from a roadside stall, and she introduced me to her sisters. They were short and brittle; Emily was svelte and darting, much like a flame. I called her brooding, piquant, and painfully precocious. Had she heard of photography yet? Her answer was inconclusive. I was smitten by her, and tried to explain computers. But what did I know about computers? Politely, she claimed they piqued her interest. In the evenings we'd sit around a fire and listen to the harpsichord; she could really play. I explained drive thrus, dollar stores, and the two World Wars. She couldn't grasp those numbers; I mean, all that stuff for a buck? We both tried to do things in a certain type of way. We attacked things from the edges, we came in from the periphery.

Very little did we talk about her writing, for I did not want to interfere. One time I told her she looked sort of like Mick Jagger. She didn't take to that well, but then again, she'd never heard *Exile on Main Street*. By the arrival of spring I was spending more time with Emily than I was with anybody else, and the best part was nobody seemed to care. We laughed beneath the willow copse and kissed amid the hollyhocks. By the time I hit the road, I knew I really loved her. Regardless, I had to leave; I was starting to miss the present. She vaguely understood. I had a family, I said, and I feared every fever might kill me. We had a tearful goodbye, and before too long she was just another forlorn paramour. To this day I have not read *Wuthering Heights*. She completed it shortly thereafter. If you ask me, I don't think any of that is for me to know.

JACOB SPONGA

Jean-Talon, February



KAYA DAVIES



CATHERINE CHEN

# Gatherings

by Lauren Halsted

Mom hated when we were in her kitchen. She needed to be alone while she cooked or she would become hysterical, although she would never admit it. That's why we were scared to come down before dinner—especially on Christmas day. She would almost break down making a Tuesday night dinner, so you could imagine the chaos that would ensue during the holidays. Ronny, being the oldest, would always host us in his room before every holiday dinner to prepare ourselves for the storm. He would explain that our family is not bad, just different and that just because we fought sometimes didn't mean our parents loved us any less. Ollie never really understood what Ron meant, but to be fair he was the youngest. Cody and I would just nod our heads knowing that if we disagreed with him, it would cause more harm than good. We would always agree to be on our best behavior for mom. It's not that our mom would start drama on purpose, in fact she actively avoided it. She had this attitude that was so positive that it was almost scary at times—she lived in her own make-believe world, and that in itself was destructive. Ever since Cody passed, she chooses not to believe it. Her delusional state of mind affected all of us, because she never allowed anyone to talk about it. In her mind we're still a happy family, the sky is purple, and Cody didn't kill himself because of her.

This Christmas would surely be different for that exact reason. Only the three of us were in Ronny's room this time—and Ollie was practically non-verbal. So it was just Ronny and I. Cody was the glue that held us together; he was old enough to relate to me and Ron, but was young enough to make Ollie feel included.

“So what’s the plan?” I asked curiously.

“Just sit and eat. Like usual.” Ronny answered.

“But we can’t. We have to talk about it. It’s only been a week and nobody has said anything.”

“Kat, you know mom, she’s like a ticking time bomb. If you even so much as hover over her she will explode. Promise me you won’t say anything.”

“I can’t.”

“I’m hungry!” Ollie exclaimed.

“I know Ollie, we’re gonna eat soon.” I replied.

Cody would always wear an ugly Christmas sweater at every Christmas dinner. It was something we all looked forward to. Last year he wore a green sweater with red stitching that read “I’m just here for the turkey” in white block letters with jingle bells surrounding the text. He liked to enjoy the small things, he was always such a happy kid. We didn’t know. Nobody did.

One morning before school Cody wasn’t getting out of bed. It was 7:45 and we had to leave by 8:00. Mom kept knocking on his door but he wasn’t answering. I opened the door to find him still sleeping. I pulled the blanket off of his body and told him to get ready because I wasn’t going to wait for him any longer.

“I’m not going.” he mumbled.

“Yes you are, dufus. We have a quiz today, don’t you remember?”

“Kat, I’m not going.” He sighed.

I rolled my eyes and was turning around to leave until I caught a glimpse of something on his sheets. A red spot. I looked closely. It was blood, and it was everywhere. “What the fuck is this? What happened Cody?”

He quickly pulled his blanket back over his body and turned his head into his pillow. “It’s nothing. Uh...a nose bleed. Just please get out.”

“Okay well, let me get some Kleenex or something.”

“Kat will you please just get the fuck out!” He shouted.

He never talked to me like that. I was shocked. Taken aback.

“Okay.” I mumbled.

I silently left the room. That same night his friends’ cat had conveniently scratched up his arms into perfectly symmetrical lines. I should’ve known better. But I didn’t know anything, and I still don’t. Three weeks later we would find him in the bathtub. More blood than I’d ever seen. And we’d never be the same again.

I went downstairs to see how long it would be until dinner. Mom had a towel draped over her shoulder and was whisking away at her gravy base. To her left was her cranberry sauce concoction, and to her right was her attempt at homemade stuffing. It looked like the innards of a cow had been dried up and put inside a blue and white Kate Spade serving bowl. “How much longer do you think?” I asked.

“I don’t know, Kat. Maybe if someone were to help me it wouldn’t take this long.” She replied with a fake smile. She tried to play everything off as a joke.

“You literally told everyone this morning to stay out of the kitchen.”

“Well, there are other ways you guys could help.”

“Like what?”

“You know what Kat, why don’t you just go back upstairs? The maid will finish your meal.”

She said laughing. She would always make snarky remarks with a smile on her face to make it seem like she wasn’t miserable and hated everyone. She complained that nobody helped her, but if we did, she would complain even more. There was no winning, there never was. As soon as I went back upstairs she called us down for dinner. Classic.

The three of us went downstairs. Mom had set up the table to the nines. A red, green and white checkered tablecloth was placed overtop our maroon-stained antique wooden table.

An arrangement of poinsettias in a cylinder glass vase was placed in the middle with a vase of pinecones on each side. Around the three vases were dried cranberries and pine needles. This woman's been busy.

There were green chargers underneath each red plate with a white napkin folded into a rose shape and of course, customized cutlery. M for Morgan. Our last name. Dad began his descent down the stairs, a rare occurrence. He plopped himself at the end of the table at his usual spot. Our mother placed each individual dish on the table. The meal had begun.

We started with the turkey. It was served on a silver platter with embroidered designs of flowers around its perimeter. It was divided into two sides, one with white meat and one with dark meat. We started passing the platter around.

"Why are there two different kinds, mom?" Ollie asked.

"One is dark meat and one is white meat, sweetie." Mom replied.

"What makes them different?"

"The white one tastes better." She said.

"I think he's asking why they're different." I replied.

"I'm actually not quite sure, I think the white meat is found in the legs and thighs and the dark meat is found in the breasts." She answered.

I think it's actually the other way around." My dad replied.

"Cody would've known." I said. A silence deafened the room. All that was heard were the knives clanking on the plates. Every few seconds someone would look up and would meet eyes across the table, wondering who would dare speak next. Who would talk about it?

The dried cow stuffing began its rounds, then the cranberry sauce, then the gravy. The carrots were left abandoned in the middle of the table. Nobody ever liked them. "Isn't someone gonna eat those carrots? I worked so hard on them." Mom asked. "Carrots are yucky." Ollie said.

"I'm sure they're great, mom. I'll have some." Ronny said. He picked up the bowl and plopped some on his plate. What a suckup.

"Kat, why don't you have some? They're really good for you." Mom insisted.

"I'm fine, thanks."

"C'mon sweetie you need those nutrients. I want you to be healthy."

"What do you care?" I mumbled.

"I'm sorry?" She asked.

"I said, what do you care? Why do you care if I'm healthy or not?" She put her hand on mine.

“What? Kat, I care because I love you.” I shrugged her hand to the side.

“I just don’t know if we show love in the same way I guess.”

“What does that mean?”

“Kat, please don’t start.” Ronny pleaded.

“I mean I just don’t know if you show love the same way normal people do. Or if you show love at all. That’s all I’m saying.” I tried to play it off, but I knew it was coming. I was finally going to address it.

“Is this about fucking carrots?” She never swore. “Suzie.” Dad gestured to Ollie. We were never allowed to swear in the house. “His brother died, dad I’m sure he can hear his mother swear.” I replied.

“Kat, please, stop.” Ron said.

“Don’t try to be a hero. You’re upset too. We’re all fucking upset and nobody is talking about it! Why can’t we talk about it?!”

“What do you wanna talk about Kat, huh? What do you want to say in front of your little brother?” Mom began to crack. I could sense we were getting closer to the edge. “How about the fact that Cody died because you weren’t there for him? Because you pushed him to the side and hoped things would get better on their own?”

Dad chimed in, “Kat, stop it. Don’t be ridiculous.”

I kept going, staring at my mom as I spoke. I needed her to hear this. I needed someone to say it.

“What are you talking about?” She asked. Her eyebrows furrowed, questioning my every word.

“You told him he just wasn’t trying hard enough at school, that maybe he just ‘wasn’t the type to make friends.’” I choked on my words but kept going. “He pleaded with you so many times to get him the help he needed, but you insisted that therapy wouldn’t do anything. That mental health was a hoax.” Tears began rolling down my face. “You let him die, mom.”

I finally let it out. The weight that had been pending on my heart and lungs, that had dug me into a hole so deep I was practically living in the same grave as Cody. The weight that would wake me up at night, breathless. The weight that had left me wondering that maybe if I’d addressed it sooner, he might still be here. The weight of Cody, the weight of his lifeless corpse on my chest at all times. His impending mark on my forever broken heart. Nobody spoke. Mom gathered her thoughts while resting her face in her hands. Ronny looked at me with complete disappointment. He wouldn’t have said anything even if his life depended on it. That’s just the kind of person he was. A chronic people pleasing mediator. The worst kind, it’s incurable. Ollie was just sitting there, looking around the room hoping to grasp what was going on. Dad began to slip into the background, hoping not to be seen. He didn’t know how to handle conflict. All he ever did was agree with mom at all costs—happy wife, happy life—but this seemed like one of those instances where he just couldn’t. He knew better, but couldn’t say anything.

After what felt like an eternity, she finally spoke: “Do you even know what it’s like to live my life?” Here she goes, I thought. I rolled my eyes so far in the back of my head I could see my brain. “To take care of each and every one of you every single day? Without even a thank you? My mom used to make me sleep outside if I didn’t pay rent on time. And all I do is give you guys everything I have. Everything! For free! And this is how you repay me?” She took a breath, fighting the urge to utter her next words. “And now my son is dead, and I’m to blame? I’m the fucking villain?!”

She started to bawl. Every next word would be almost incomprehensible. This was it. The facade had finally shattered. The barbaric tendencies that always slipped up, and the look of despair she had always had behind her eyes; she was finally going to show us who she was. What she was. Not a mother, but truly, the villain.

Then she said it, what I feared to be true.

“If Cody didn’t die, it would’ve been one of you. You have all been so ungrateful of my love. And that’s something I can’t change. I can’t fix you. I can only be your mother, and it seems like I can’t even do that right.”

She sat there for a few minutes, registering what she’d just said. And then the finale, “I don’t think I can do this anymore. I give up.”

She got up and left the table. She put on her red fur coat and grabbed her bejeweled bag, got in her car and drove away.

When she comes back we'll all act like nothing happened. She'll continue to make extravagant dinners and we'll continue to eat them in silence. I will continue to swallow my words and she, her pride. And we will all never talk about our dead brother again.

End.

LAUREN HALSTED

## Lay me down to sleep

December walked in with a bone to pick  
And my teeth were bared.

Time for contractions, the 'tis and 'twas,  
For Mary's contractions: in pain, pushed out,  
Taking pains in pushing out his head.  
What a joy to be chuted into soft hay  
And showered with gifts.

I want to remember being swaddled  
And bathed with a warm rag,  
Milk fed then spoon-fed, feet small  
And soft from disuse.  
Instead I remember teeth,  
The sharp pain of them pressing  
Out into my mouth, born out of struggle.

Cracks in the cold pavement outside  
The dentist make a cross, and I wonder:  
What happened to Jesus' baby teeth?  
Did Mary keep them?  
Did she touch them sometimes,  
Running a saintly finger over  
Each pebble of bone?

I bite through a rotting December.  
I tear it apart, swaddled in flies.  
I am catching on to rot, the tricks of time,  
Ticking clocks and flipping calendars.  
I arm myself against it with sharp words,  
Poised in the shard of my mouth, on my shark teeth.  
I run over each speech with a sharp tongue  
Before I sleep to make sure of each word.

*For now I lay me down to sleep,  
I pray to God I'll keep my teeth.  
If God should die before I wake,  
I'll try my best to take His place.*

NORA BARTRAM-FORBES

Undyed



KARTHIKEYA GAUTAM

## The Bus

by Lina Züchner

He darted his eyes for a split second at the others waiting. A stout balding man, a frazzled family of 4, a greasy youngster. Eyes down. There were others too, but he didn't dare risk another glance.

As the bus materialized on the horizon and trundled down the lonely road, the flames of humiliation that scorched his cheeks began to nip at his heels and creep up his pant legs, consuming his entire being. His clothes were too tight, too starchy and rigid, polyester and canvas smothering him in a corporeal inferno.

Sweat beaded on his temple and his head throbbed with a dull, relentless buzzing as his thoughts spiraled in every which way. They floated above and around him, bouncing frantically off of signposts and pavement and zippers and the braces occupying the mouth of the greasy rascal. Was there a queue? Did he dare disrupt its hierarchy? Maybe it would be better this time if he was among the first to board — surely nobody would mind if he took a step closer to where the bus would stop.

With tremendous effort he wrangled his unruly thoughts, taming them with each gulp of sticky air he could get down, summoning the guts to make a move. But the second he set his boots back down on the gravel a foot to the left, a gush of frigid liquid assaulted the back of his head and migrated downwards, gluing his shirt to his back. Whirling around, he saw the cherub-faced little one of the family brandishing a squirt gun, shaking her head with disapproval while her parents scoffed and shot him a nasty scowl. A booming voice emanated from the stout balding man: "That's not how things fly around here, son." He wished he could say *I was just trying to do better*. Instead he simply waited, dripping in a defeated silence.

He thought back to the first time he had ever tried to set foot on the bus. How naive he had been, watching hypnotized as each passenger before him gave the driver a kiss on the forehead before presenting their tickets. When it was his turn he hesitated—unfamiliar with this custom—but nevertheless planted a quick kiss on the driver's wrinkled forehead. In an instant the driver's fists slammed into his stomach with astounding force, sending him tumbling out of the bus and onto the ground. "Who do you think you are, you pervert!" cried the driver. For a moment he just lay there, face flattened into the gravel, paralyzed amidst a sea of pointing fingers and shrill laughs. With tears in his eyes, he scrambled up and limped home, replaying the moments leading up to the incident and combing his memory for clues about what might have caused this fate.

The next time, he waited until all others had boarded the bus before gingerly handing his ticket to the driver, whose piercing eyes bored into his soul. Grateful to have made it on unscathed, he opted for a window seat near the back and allowed his consciousness to dip into the lakes and forests as they whipped past. The sound of water dribbling somewhere stirred him from his trance. He caught sight of a pair of dress pants in a nonchalant bunch around skinny ankles, his gaze following the legs up to see a lanky man in a suit taking a leak in the middle of the aisle. A chorus of cheers—of "Hey man, nice stream!" and "Good job, have you been working out?"—and a steady round of applause echoed through the bus. He felt he should probably join the applause so as to not be singled out again, but a single clap of his hands triggered an abrupt "get a load of this guy" silence and 30 swift head-turns. Shame broke out in a gnarly rash across his face and guilt grumbled deep in his gut. "C'mon bro, really not cool," said the lanky one, pulling up his trousers.

The last time he rode the bus was many years later. He felt different that day, that

day of all days! He arrived at the stop much earlier than usual, itching to see where this brand new feeling would take Him. As the others trickled in, He stood observing them from the front of the queue, draped in rich velvet and miraculous confidence as He basked in that tender and intoxicating moment. He waited until He could be certain they were watching Him too before flinging off His velvet robe, beaming as it danced in the air before crumpling on the gravel and revealing the crisp white mankini He had chosen for the occasion. Ha! He was feeling nice and loose now. He performed a simple dance, jerking His body around in a series of belly rolls and hip thrusts that tested the integrity of His attire. His appetite grew as He realized He had yet to be confronted by anyone. When the bus came, He stood tall and proud, drawing a baggie filled with white powder out of His mankini and waving it around in the air before opening it up, snorting a pinch of the powder, and strutting onto the bus. He paused in front of the driver and leaned over, waiting. The driver complied, knowingly reaching into His mankini top to procure His bus ticket. Speaking in a raspy voice, He told the driver, "You were in my dream last night, and we made love." Without waiting for a response, He sashayed to the very back of the bus and sprawled Himself out over several seats. Now He watched with glee as the ground outside became littered with abandoned garments, feeling pride cascade over Him as the bus began to gently rock with the motion of the others imitating His dance and draping themselves horizontally over the seats and over each other. Through the jostle of limbs, He locked eyes with an unsure-looking younger man who sat fully clothed, upright, and very still in a seat at the front. His jaw clenched and He felt an uneasy tingling sensation rising in His throat...

LINA ZÜCHNER



CATHERINE CHEN

## Cypress Cantate For Vani

If I were a frog in a lily pad pond  
I'd sit in the scum, content  
Chasing skeeters down and taking great guzzling gulps  
Of the dark and the cold and the wet

In my green dark wet dark home in the earth  
Where the sweet leaf rots and carpets the shore  
I sit eyes blinking wide tongue zapping out  
To strike at the wild mayflies above

In this green dark wet dark home in the bog  
My belly is full, and I float half-submerged  
The skin of my back dappled yellow by sun  
Has warmth seeping to fill hidden cores

Under the lichen garlands of skyscraping trees  
My soul knows all of its shoulds coulds and wants

Should care about humanity slip dripping away  
Could unzip my moist coat, shrink up to girl-form  
Want to float froggy arms stretched wide and embrace  
This green dark wet dark cradle of moss

CLÉMENTINE LARROUILH

## Floating

by Meghan Wells

The grass is soft and not damp, cool and cushioning my body just right. It tickles my legs and my arms and my feet. There is a slight wind that gently caresses my skin, but does not conjure goosebumps.

You are lying beside me. Your breathing is so soft. I cannot hear it—you are silent, but I feel your presence. It pulses next to me: a soft warmth. I brush my pinkie against your hand; your fingers entwine with mine. I sigh and stare up into the black night sky.

A few stars dot the darkness here and there. Stars remind me of freckles, except stars are pretty, and my freckles are not. Your skin is completely clear.

“Pretend you’re facing down.” Your eyes search mine questioningly. “Lay flat and stare straight up. Pretend the sky is beneath you and you are looking down into it.”

You take a deep breath.

“Incredible, right?” I say. Your hand squeezes mine tighter. “Right now we do not exist. Right now we are limitless.”

I want to tell you things. Things I’ve never told anyone. I want to tell you everything. I want you to *know*. But I stay quiet.

The air is pleasant. The mellow wind whistles a tune as it blows through the branches of the trees. Melodic like your voice. I love the sound of your voice. I wish you would let me hear it. But you stay quiet.

We're still floating, you and I. The stars and the moon are below us. There is nothing above us. Nothing else exists. Nothing is real.

The sadness of contentment is crushing. I try not to let my heart break, not yet. Enjoy the bliss while it lasts. I will my eyes to stay open, gazing down into the sky. It's like a dark, still sea. I want to swim in it, stretch out my arms and propel myself forward, become one with the darkness.

I wish I was a star. Do stars feel pain?

Your breathing is quiet again. I don't have to look at you to know you're still there, but I do anyway. Breaking the illusion, my eyes tear away from the starry sea and land on you. So perfect. So close to me.

Weeds and flowers tangle in your hair, and I know the time is near. They look like they've been there all along, like they grew straight from the roots of your scalp.

You're still looking down at the sky. Your eyes have gone glassy, like you're mesmerized by the wonder. I take it all in. You're enchanting. Otherworldly. I marvel at how I could ever forget you.

I give you another moment, then squeeze your hand once more. Your head turns to face me. I smile softly. I tell you I love you.

The grass beneath you has grown, quicker than I would have liked it to. But I try not to get angry. It is out of my control.

Your thumb traces circles in my palm, setting my body alight in a warm glow. Soon I will have to let go, I know. But not yet.

I can hardly see your legs anymore. The grass and weeds have grown right through them. “Does it hurt?” You shake your head no.

“It feels like a hug.”

The grass keeps growing, little wildflowers now sprouting from your chest, your shoulders, your knees. I can make out their bright colours through the dark. Blue like a robin’s egg. White like the feather of a dove. Yellow like the sun. None of them are as beautiful as you.

You squeeze my hand one last time before your fingers slip like sand from my hand. I cannot bear to say goodbye. So I stay quiet.

You are almost completely hidden now, though I can see a few glimpses of skin between the green of the weeds. Your eyes are still uncovered, and with one last look into mine that says a million things words could never tell, they turn away from me, and gaze back down into the sky. You’re floating again. I smile.

The grass finally envelops your body, and you become one with the earth. A single tear rolls down my cheek.

Take me with you, I want to shout.

But I stay quiet.

MEGHAN WELLS

# Simulacra

*Of sights made strange and new, sing, Pareidolia...*

## I.

In a rotated, funnel-cloud photo,  
a Christ-like figure hands raised palm up.

## II.

King Kong Moloch,  
Empire State Building through mist  
in apartment window.

## III.

Adam Ant or possibly  
George Best  
on a plain stainless-steel teaspoon.

## IV.

On a footpath, a benign stone  
head with a hooked nose.

V.

The Crucifixion Tree,  
a freshly-flowered shrine.

VI.

A weathered root  
wood hand holding a cigarette aloft.

VII.

Easter Island face  
in a tree trunk.

VIII.

Birch-stump Nessie.

IX.

A dark-cowled warrior,  
a burnt-out tree trunk.

X.

An orgy in a tree.

## XI.

Out of mossy rock,  
trollface.

## XII.

A driftwood torso and two legs to the knee  
the member halfway down the thigh  
eight feet long and too heavy to transport home.

## XIII.

In a teacup's bottom, a bespectacled face  
left in the sink the day vacation began two weeks ago

## XIV.

In a photograph, profile  
in a rusty sandstone extrusion, not far off,  
a paler, aquiline face smiles, chin in waves.

## XV.

Hydrocephalic Alien Skulls,  
Snapdragon capsules,  
*Antirrhinum orontium and majus.*

BRYAN SENTES

# The Blue Bundle



KARTHIKEYA GAUTAM

## untitled

a dusk sucked dry of sap  
                  bitter fruit  
in the art gallery waiting.

                  nothing  
but the childhood house  
sounds like laughter—  
                  that pounding.

so now Canada:  
this corner store dwelling.

every orient is its own promise  
in the end: a house  
and then  
                  the window.

stuttering this *Other* rhythm  
poetry is inhabiting.  
someone has said this.  
someone must have.

## Revelation

by Amalia Mairet

On Thursday morning, I get a splitting headache behind my right eyebrow. Bizarre, pounding and stabbing, it threatens to pop my eye out of its socket and onto the floor of the lecture hall. I drive the heel of my hand into my eyebrow and blink hard at the projector hanging fifty feet in front of me. The eyeball starts to swell and redden, weeping and pressing backwards into the soft matter of my prefrontal cortex. Ahead, my neuroscience professor lectures about how emotions can affect behavioural and somatic responses.

It goes like this: John feels a deep sense of dread, and then the brain behind his eyeball starts to hurt like God is poking it with a huge and punishing finger. So John holds that part of his cranium as if he can soak up the headache with his palm. Or: John feels like his eyeball is going to explode in the back row of his lecture hall, and this sensation strikes a pang of dread directly into the bone of his eyebrow. So he clutches his face and turns to Cooper and says, *I have to get out of here*. The whole scenario depends on your perspective of cause and effect. Either way, John collects his computer bag and water bottle, his fur-lined hat and wool scarf, and all the while he apologizes in a whisper, saying, *I'm sorry, this headache is killing me*. And regardless of the order in which the dread arrived, Cooper says, *Dude your eye is really red* and John says, *Shit* and steps over seven sets of knees and seven laptops and says, *Sorry sorry sorry sorry sorry sorry sorry* until he is free in the tiled hallway.

A thick mist of droplets hangs in the air, painting my cheeks, crusting over the leather top of my hat like a scab. Sidewalks are covered in an indomitable sheet of ice. The buses scare in all directions like a flock of pigeons. I blink the welling tears from my right eye and step between clusters of bumps, the ice's top layer splintering and shattering under my boot. A man on the street corner says

something from behind several sheets of perceptual glass—I take out my headphones and say *Sorry?* and he says again that he likes my hat in an underwater warble. I say *Thank you* and swim away from him through the soupy air above the sidewalk.

As a student of science, John is troubled not only by the pain but its origin. He understands the biological facts of the situation: a headache is nothing more than a triggered neural pathway. But, equally, he knows that things don't happen in the body for no reason. The brain itself doesn't feel pain—it doesn't have the proper receptors. Headaches come from other nerves, the ones tucked inside blood vessels, for example. Most somatosensation is a straightforward process of stimulus and response, but headaches are not so simple. John's brain is yelling that something is wrong but it won't tell him what, which is making him very nervous. His comeuppance has arrived—for what, he can't be sure. Perpetual dehydration, maybe. But he worries the pain is retribution for something much worse than that. The guilt hidden in his cerebral veins has finally come to get him. As he walks, he mutters, *What the hell did you do?*

At home, I call my mother and nobody picks up. I call a clinic and the voicemail tells me all appointments are full. My roommates sit in tableau: Harper and Gilad at the dining table, Clare fixing the lamp, Naomi sweeping the corners of the kitchen. I take two Advil and ice my traitorous eyeball, burying my face into the velvet side of the couch. My roommates swarm to my sickbed, their questions bouncing off my forehead like stones. I tell them I have appealed to higher powers (my mother, God, a doctor) and one of them will reveal what is wrong with me. The window glows cold and blue behind my head. Delirious, anguished, answerless, I fall asleep. It goes like this:

I. Ephesus. Clare is cooking dinner in our kitchen. There is a chicken breast in a

nonstick pan, and she is burning the living hell out of it. Pasta is boiling over to her left. Clare sighs and says, *I don't know why I'm such a terrible cook, I spend all this time and it never tastes good.* I take over, stirring the sauce and moving the chicken. I say *You're not a terrible cook, you just need to keep trying. Be patient. You make good chili.* Clare strains the pasta into the sink, half-full of dishes. The kitchen fills with plumes of white steam. I say *Cooking is a temporary measure anyhow—nobody cooks in Paradise.* Clare gestures to the Formica countertops, the mismatched mugs and bowls, and says, *This isn't Paradise?* Laughing, I say *Paradise would have a Tree of Life to eat from. No more frozen pizza or canned beans for dinner.* There is a tree in the living room, by the green couch, but it's just a regular tree. Clare pulls a carton of spinach out of the fridge. I stir the sauce again and say *Cooking is about love. My dad taught me to cook and that's why I wince whenever you chop vegetables. The problem is your mother loved you too much and now you can't cook for shit.* Clare rinses the salad. I say *Maybe cooking was my first love, and that's why I can never leave it alone.* The steam flashes red. The fire alarm blares once, a warning. Clare says, *See that, they know you're lying.* I say *You're right. First love, that was Olivia.*

- II. Smyrna. Naomi is getting married. She said she never would, and yet here we are in a pretty wooden room with candles and heavy curtains. I am wearing my old grey suit, the one I will be buried in, and it hangs off my shoulders and hips at square angles. I hang around the back of the room, kicking at the green shag carpet, picking at cubes of cheddar and crudites with a toothpick. I watch from across the room as the couple feeds each other a slice of coconut cake and forgets their guests. The bride (Naomi) wears an incredible, ugly white dress with strange poofs and tulle and satin flowers. The other bride (not Naomi) is a short golden smudge that I don't recognize. Eventually, I come to get a piece of cake and she throws her thin arms around my neck. A little tiara is perched in her curly hair. I say *Congratulations.* She says, *Thank you for coming.* I say *Of*

course. You, vowing to be faithful until death? I couldn't miss it. I'm being shitty and I don't know how to stop, so I just hug the new smudge-wife like an old friend. I say *Where's the honeymoon?* Naomi says, *We're going to London for 10 days.* I say *London, England?* Naomi beams. *No, London, Ontario.* They're going to hell. She looks maniacally happy.

- III. Pergamum. Harper is sitting on the brown couch under a blanket, across from me as I read. Every so often, one of us shifts to light a stick of incense, and sip from a blue glass of water. There is a white bowl of cherries in the middle of the coffee table. We talk, and the words come out as little white stones and drop onto our laps. We hand each other these stones in small clutches. Harper, faithless, but with an appropriate fear of the unknown, is reading about Jezebel. We are arguing silently about the Nicolaitans—according to the New Testament, they enticed people to eat things sacrificed to idols or commit acts of immorality. I cough out a stone that says, *What do you think really happened to them?* Harper hands me a stone that says *Well, what is an idol anyway? Or immorality?* I say *I think religious doctrines are generally about not transgressing norms. Don't forsake things that are supposed to be sacred.* Harper says, *But that's so difficult when you don't know what's important until you're getting punished. Even when I try to be careful, I get martyred anyway.* I say *I guess God decides what's sacred, and His definition is different than ours.* I place the pebble in her palm. I reach for a cherry, and something invisible smacks it out of my hand.
- IV. Thyatira. Class begins, and my professor starts discussing vectors. Apparently, the world is organized into invisible grids in four dimensions. The Science faculties are aware of this fact but neglected to share it with the Literature students. I learn that vectors are just objects with both magnitude and direction, flung out into the white graphing paper of the universe. Anything can be a vector, its particular sensibilities mapped into numbers and

expressions, contained between parentheses. As he lectures, the black gridlines appear on my white shirt and pants. Math can be comforting, if you know the rules. But it also tells you what's at stake outside your own head. Turns out, the matrixes are built for shifting, turned things inside out so we can find them again. I sit in the chair, my skin superimposed with my guts glistening in the fluorescent lights overhead. I don't know how to reconcile the two images yet. Of course there is a pop quiz. I watch the Engineers fill out their tests and feel the archangels of algebra staring down at me from the ceiling with their lightbulb eyes, daring me to write a proof so they can prove me wrong in real-time. I can't do anything unless it's perfect, so I bite all the tips off my pens. The gridlines fill the room with their flawless, obvious logic. The ink drops blot my name from the paper.

- V. Sardis. My mother is worried about apathy. I never buy anything new—she says my life is a bland parade of black thrifted t-shirts and I am becoming lukewarm. She sends me Downtown with her credit card and instructs that I buy three new items before coming home. In an hour, I collect a pair of small gold hoop earrings, a white linen dress, and some eye drops. I stop at the bank, holding my shopping bags under each arm like wings, like a fanned-out paper accordion. Sweat bathes the base of my spine. While I am waiting in line for the ATM, a robbery occurs in slow motion. There are people in black masks and they have guns and they order us to get down. This kind of thing happens all the time. I lay down, my cheek on the cool marble floor, and face the wall. I stare at the printed labels on my paper bags. There is yelling, all of it slow and indiscernible. When the moment is right, somebody fires a gun and it hits me in the back. Since I'm a Good Person, I don't feel any pain, but warm blood leaks out onto the floor behind me. I let it gush between my fingers as I wait. Before I lose consciousness, somebody wraps their arm around my shoulders and props me up against a wall. My mother murmurs little sounds as she rests my head on the

marble corner, lays my hands at my sides. I die on her makeshift throne of objects.

- VI. Philadelphia. Gilad and I are going to see a movie. The theatre is in the basement of an endless mall, so we wander around for a bit before the movie starts. We peruse the various posters, debate the trivia questions. I suggest we try one of the life-threatening movie theatre chilli dogs. We split a large popcorn instead. As we wait, I notice a familiar figure: tall-ish, tan overalls, short brown hair. I nudge Gilad with my elbow and nod my chin towards the man. I say *Is that Ryan?* He says, *Oh. Yeah, I think it is.* My arms start to tingle, shoulders to fingertips. My chest tightens, quickens. We haven't spoken in six months. My entrails crawl upwards into my throat with their mucosal limbs. I say *Can we go hide in the mall? Can we go to HomeSense and smell all the candles?* Gilad says, *Come on.* I say *Gils, when they call our name for the popcorn he's going to see us. I don't want to see how he looks at me.* Gilad says, *Can you just be brave for a second? You can leave, but they'll still call your name. The words will hang in the air with nobody to claim them.* I say *I wish I could turn into one of those pillars.* Gilad says, *I don't think that's how this works.* He takes my hand, runs his thumb over mine, squeezes twice. He says, *Maybe if you own up to it, God will give you a new name or something. But the only way out is through.*
- VII. Laodicea. The studio has a cream couch and a black cat. Somebody is in the shower. Somebody is watching a loud television in the next room. Mumbled sounds echo through the drywall, across the concrete floor. The room is cold and my clothes are missing. On the counter there is a set of keys, a thin metal curtain rod, two smudgy glasses of water, a single red apple. I turn the handle on the kitchen sink and drink ravenously from my cupped hands above the marble bowl. Drying my hands on my thighs, I start to clean up, placing the glasses in the dishwasher, wiping crumbs off the counter from a meal I didn't

eat. My brother calls. When I pick up the phone, he says, *Where are you?* I say *Don't worry, I'm fine.* He says, *Okay. Have you eaten?* I say *Of course. I'm eating right now.* I pick up the apple and take a bite, gnashing the fruit between my teeth. He says, *Gross.* I walk to the window, look out over the brick buildings and the dried-up river in the distance. I say *I miss you, bud. How's school?* He says, *It's fine. I miss you too. Are you sure you're okay?* There are fingerprint bruises all over my body, snaking their way up my torso, darkening my wrists and throat. The sink water has turned to blood on my thighs. He says, *Can you just come home?* The call disconnects. I stand before the window, drawing air into my lungs. I pick up the curtain rod and smash every mirror in the room, until my chest is heaving, until the floor is a blood-wet mosaic of glass, lit in a thousand directions by the morning star.

When I wake up, orange light is dawning through the living room window and the suffering is over. Sleep has mended the stabbing in my cortex. There are twenty-four figures around me on the couch. I blink again, clearing the fluid from my eyes, and four faces come into focus. Each of them is refracted, multiplied sixfold by my tears. Someone hands me a cup of tea. They ask *How's the headache?* They ask *Are you feeling better now?* They ask *What were you dreaming about?* I sip the tea and shake my head.

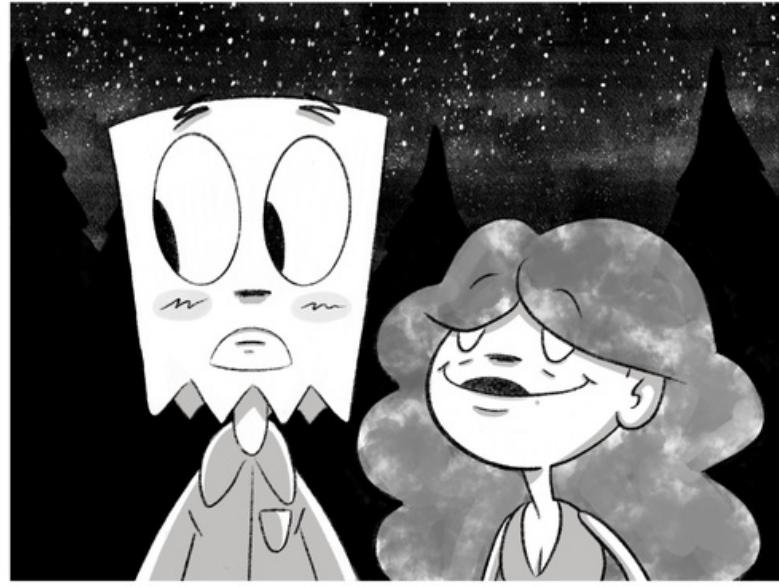
It goes like this: John sees a series of dreams that bud from the neural circuits in his frontal lobe and hippocampus, and he wakes up feeling a new kind of peace that arrived out of nowhere. Or maybe: John awakes and a strange calm has taken over his body, down to the cells. He recalls his seven dreams of everything wrong with him and the memory should fill him with fear, but it doesn't. The logic can go either way, depending on your perspective. Regardless, John has the frightening dreams and the deep serenity, and he reconciles them in a kind of backwards conclusion. He begged God for an answer about the pain; all he saw was his own

life, the good and the bad. Terror entangled with the people he loves, one big jumbled sleep cycle. He could try to write it down, the revelation, but it lives too deep in his neurology. He sits with the knowledge, the world made over in secret.

Outside, rain patters the window, running a fresh and bloodless river through the gutters. It is Thursday again. The ice has melted. Outside, there are twenty-four new stars in the sky. I know because I counted. A good prophet takes note.

AMALIA MAIRET

# Up in Smoke



THOMAS SEQUEIRA

A lot of poets....  
from and for Gina Granter

A lot of poets would make  
something of your status

the day the stock markets  
crashed to a close in minutes

panicked by the day's pandemic.  
“M insisted walking the last two blocks

to daycare. She loves to sing (hum,  
because she doesn't know the words,

but she does know several melodies),  
so to keep her moving along I sang

the first line of a favourite of hers,  
she'd sing the next, and I would

follow. And I remembered  
my grandparents singing

line by line like this together  
in their kitchen. My grandfather

in his spot by the fridge, tending the fire,  
chain smoking and drinking beer,

my grandmother preparing a meal  
for the house full of us. The smell

of fried cod and drawn butter.

My grandfather and I would sing

Black Velvet Band the same  
playing cribbage or crazy eights.”

BRYAN SENTES

## Cleansing

Sweep the dust,  
scrub the sink,  
wipe the dirt  
from the sill,  
weed the dandelions, taking out the taproot,  
rake and bag  
winter leaves,  
split the wood, stack it  
and gather chips,  
vacuum up  
the car crumbs,  
crush the mosquito  
with a finger,  
pour boiling water  
on the colony of ants,  
fling rocks at night raccoons  
owning your garden  
then sit down,  
lick the beer  
from your lip,  
scroll past  
when again  
mounds of rubble  
smoke,  
a single mouth  
opens.

HAROLD HOEFLER

## Notes From My Twenties

by Chelsea Dwarika

### **Fear and love walk hand in hand.**

I'm all alone. I've got it under control. I can't depend on anyone else. I am independent and my hands are in fists and my stomach is in knots and no one will ever care for my pain, only for the fruit it bears.

My mother in the kitchen, my mother sobbing from the bedroom. My mother says *forget it, I'll do it myself*. My mother complains that no one is helping, but she won't let me touch anything. She got this trait from her mother, and we passed the torch and we celebrated our exhaustion and we made ourselves martyrs; quiet and capable and full of resentment; full of guilt when rest was even dreamed of, let alone taken.

I frisbee a star into the sky so high that it won't come back and then I ask my lover to go get it for me and then I say never mind, I'll get it myself. I stack seventeen ladders in a pile and I reach it and I return triumphantly, and my lover wilts away and I say I can't believe no one stays.

### **I am just like other girls, but mostly I am furious.**

The woman I am now: driving home at night electrified to my favourite songs, following gut feelings and microbes and incorporating bran into my diet;

The wide-eyed girl in 2012: dreaming into space at 4 am, starting songs over and over again, choreographing them to imaginary kisses and sunsets and running to catch your lover before they leave forever;

A woman, on edge: always ready to fight, always looking over her shoulder, daring a man to cross her just one more time;

A woman, soft: some days, but not often, I wear satin, get a pedicure, drink matcha, buy myself flowers, light palo santo, I roll my shoulders back and drop them, I lie on the floor, I let myself melt into the carpet.

**The love I've been looking for has been with me this whole time.**  
To me, from future me—

I am kneeling at the altar of who I know you can be. I am begging you to get out of bed. The leaves are drooping and the collection of half-drunk coffee mugs is growing, but I know you're in there somewhere. Hope is in the forward motions. Do not let yourself be consumed. You haven't even had breakfast yet.

**Balance, or the sweet spot, or taking your time.**  
Self-care is a series of promises I'll keep:

I'll rest when I am weary. I'll rest when I am wary that my body and mind have been running in circles for hours too long, coughing up fumes; relentless pressure in my temples.

But I won't stay in bed and wallow so long that I miss the warmth of the sun on my face before it leaves for the evening.

I'll wait a beat to respond when life makes a sudden hairpin turn that makes my stomach do the same.

But I'll allow myself a few private moments to look into the emotions that barge in first, then usually dissipate at the doorstep. I'll sort out the truth from the barbs that will do no one any good to speak out loud. How do I feel, really?

**I am my own house.**

*To Ollie, on our walk home.*

Let me tell you about the rooms:  
There's a variegated monstera in one—

I think of S, wanting to drive around Westmount and steal plant clippings from the gardens of the rich.

There's a storm cellar with custom shelves, maybe covered in ivy, with loads of space for things that only serve a purpose at a certain moment in time: candles, a radio, grit, determination, a cage in the shape of a heart, extra resilience, a shovel, a raincoat. Things we can't throw away but keep with great reverence, things to weather storms.

There's a room that's an echo chamber to sing and cry and bounce words off walls—maybe a tall shower with eucalyptus and lots of windows.

*And yours?*

In my house, the oven is always on. In my house, I've always got an extra chair for the long wood table in the middle of the dining room. An extra chaise by the fireplace. Another pillow for the guest room.

There are dark corners that don't scare me—think ladders up to a skylight with a window seat swing, confessional almost, close to the stars—and there are quiet closet doors that do.

In my house there is a room for dancing and the door is never fully shut. It's a carnival of coloured glass, a tickle trunk full of lace and skirts for twirling, a revolving door of all the people you've ever loved.

My house is hundreds of stories tall: built on stacks of polaroid photos, ticket stubs, dried flowers, handwritten recipes, love letters, thank you notes, and a series of vulnerable text message screenshots.

**Questions for women:**

How do you get your winged eyeliner so perfect?

What do you think about getting along just for the sake of getting along?

Where do you keep your anger, your annoyance, your shame, your guilt? In boxes on the top shelf, embroidered onto your shirt pocket, in a jar that's almost overflowing? Or do you press them into your journal like flowers? Do you add honey when you stir the pot? Would you call yourself 'close'? Are you pulling away or do you walk hand in hand?

Is it okay to feel bad? Is it okay to say so?

## I used to let love take everything I have.

(not anymore, not after you.)

I try to choose me but you left your necklace on the bathroom sink.

With you my days are a rollercoaster, a *will-they won't-they, when will he realize that I am all he's ever wanted.*

I dream of the day you lose me and it hurts you so bad.

But then it hurts me that it hurts you, even in the fantasy.

On Sunday evenings I feel numb in the places you once made electric.

I know our Sundays from now are dreamed of, but not promised.

I write to you in the stars. I think of you thinking of me. I wake up thinking about your scent. I go to bed and remember when you were last in it.

I'm intoxicated when we scream at each other. I am feral wanting to be right and to do right and to feel like I deserve to be treated right.

I keep twisting my own fate to fit you. The universe is sick of me pulling strings and picking petals to keep you here.

My stomach feels heavy like stone fruit, a peach that fell out of a picnic basket into the gravel, bruised and sticky, sickly sweet on the outside as I apologize anyway until it feels better. Until I have martyred myself enough.

I try to choose myself, and I'll try again tomorrow.

## Yes, all women.

Once, [REDACTED] texted me that I was something of a wild animal lol, and then expected to see me again.

[REDACTED] expects me not to make a scene (I'm frozen on the sidewalk, sobbing audibly) after saying the most heartbreaking things in the open air.

When I tell [REDACTED] I don't love the way he talks about other women, and I expect more from men I want to call my friends, he bolts out of the restaurant.

[REDACTED] insists he doesn't want me, but he doesn't want me to leave, either. He's sitting in his car outside my apartment when I walk home.

[REDACTED] holds a knife to my throat for show and tell—months before I find out the astronomical number of people he has lied to and left empty. I spot him on a street corner, just before the truth comes out; I smile or nod or attempt something civil in passing, he looks right through me, it's chilling. Makes sense.

[REDACTED] tells me she's not even his type: a barista, dark hair, not white, nose ring. I blame her until I know better. It wasn't her fault.

[REDACTED]'s throwing soup bowls and remote controls, threatening to light dollar bills on fire.

[REDACTED]'s drinking at work, telling us we're like the daughters he never had one day, and hitting on us the next.

He's taking photos of my apartment from the outside.

[REDACTED] leaks my full address and phone number into a fake dating profile, and of course it's the week a storm knocks out the power citywide, and the door to my building remains unlocked, and I push my pathetic dresser up against my apartment door like people do in movies.

Why should [REDACTED] have to get lectured about how to talk to women? He's not the one who followed me around the grocery store, all he's saying is that my dress was a little short, and what did I expect, right, he didn't come here to get in shit for something someone else did.

He was hard and I didn't even touch it.

**Isn't it lovely to belong to yourself?**

It's the start of another year so I pull a tarot card, and I get The Lovers.

I meet a man with kind eyes and dreams as big as mine.

We are ships in the night, collisions in a grocery store aisle, pinky fingers wrapped around each other. For a split few seconds we hold each other close, and you make me smile.

Our story isn't a romance for the ages but it is one for today, the year, the month, the metro ride, If it is more, so be it—

But if you need a bigger pot, a wider ranch, to shake yourself loose from my embrace in this lifetime, in pursuit of more or different or quieter or rounder... then who am I to get in the way? Who am I to assume the blame, when you're just asking for what you need?

I don't shrink—we make room. And you're off to make more of your own magic. No hard feelings. Thank you for your time. See you in my dreams.

**Love is gentle, honest, boring, peaceful.**

Love says: come and sit.

Show me what you mean. How do I love you better? Let me rub your shoulders, let us rest together. Lay down your pain, it looks heavy. Did you drink enough water today? Lean on me. I need your help. I don't know the answer but maybe we can find it together. I think I was wrong. I'm scared but I'll jump because you're here with me. Let's just sit for a minute. I didn't mean to yell. I know you

didn't. I know you just weren't feeling heard. Can I draw you a bath? What if we think about this some more and come back to it later? That shouldn't have hurt my feelings but it did. Thank you for letting me know. I love you and I want you to feel safe. I got you a cookie. I put your socks in the dryer to warm your cold feet. I know I don't have to. I know this helps.

## **Shedding.**

I am right where I'm supposed to be.

I am deserving of love. My quiet power is still power. I don't have to be everything to everyone. I give myself permission to take up space. I value my own company. I learn from my mistakes. I get to be soft. I know what I'm willing to fight for, and what isn't worth my energy. I don't need to fill the silence, or change the world every single day. I am healing multiple generations. I am seeking peace. I hold myself accountable. I can admit when I'm wrong, but I've stopped apologizing for simply existing. I am capable of anything I put my mind to. I am too much sometimes, but only to the wrong kinds of people. I can leave the party whenever I want. I don't need to earn this meal. I am nurturing my inner child. I'm no longer embarrassed to be a woman in her twenties—curious, hungry, figuring it out as I go along.

CHELSEA DWARIKA

Exstasia



KAYA DAVIES

## funeral music

when daughter is fifteen        grandmother dies        and mom picks the funeral music.  
all her life mom's mother forced her to have short hair.  
mom      in petty protest      keeps daughter from cutting hers  
  
and it grows long limp dank tangled  
unruly lines coming out of daughter's head      run-on sentences      the grammar all wrong  
cells of the scalp writing out unhappy years like a suicide note.

when daughter is sixteen        grandmother's ashes long-since spread  
daughter hacks hair off over the sink      thinking, put the whole thing to rest.  
wanting to live. wanting short hair because it's the future. thinking, lead in a sci-fi, woman or robot.

living in mother's house        what use does daughter have for the evidence of years  
when the years aren't hers?  
when the evidence would be used against her?

when daughter's hair grows she cuts it again and again  
like at persistent weeds      that gentle way to only kill herself a little  
trusting no one else to pick the right funeral music.

time passes        cells replace themselves    she puts lines from her head on the page.  
lives in her own apartment. mom's hair now long and silver, things are alright.  
daughter's hair grows        she hears music. starts to want years.        starts to want evidence.

BRONWYN GARDEN-SMITH

# CONTRIBUTORS

## POETRY

**Nora Bartram-Forbes** is a poet and student of biology and environment in Montreal, Quebec. She has previously had work published in The Veg, Mister Magazine, and The Imagist, as well editing Slug Magazine. Her time is split between mastering the crossword puzzle, penning long emails, learning to identify wildflowers and falling in love with the people and places around her.

**christian favreau** is a poet and climate justice organizer living in montréal (tiohtiá:ke). He is the author of two chapbooks, the second of which, le (petit) filet d'indra, was published with cactus press in 2022. His first collection, kireji: partial portraits and biofictions, (jackpine press, 2021) was a finalist for the eric hoffer provocateur award.

**Clara Frey** is an 18-year-old Dawson literature student from Montreal. Her pastimes include reading, writing poems on the metro and battling the urge to use Chat GPT for fear of losing the beauty of the written word. Clara's work has previously been published in the Encore Poetry as well as in the Plant News, where she is a staff writer.

**Bronwyn Garden-Smith** is a writer of poetry and short fiction from Ontario who now calls Tiohtià:ke/Montréal home. She is the Outreach Co-Coordinator and an Associate Poetry Editor at yolk literary magazine. Her work has been published in carte blanche, Garbage Day, Goose, Acta Victoriana, and more.

**Harold Hoefle**'s debut collection of poems, The Night Chorus, was published by McGill-Queen's University Press. His work has won the Bliss Carman and Great Blue Heron poetry awards. He lives and teaches in Montreal.

**Clémentine Larrouilh** is an Urban Planning graduate student and aspiring poet. A Vonnegut enthusiast from Texas, she writes in an attempt to distill meaning from the mundane rhythms of the everyday. Her main sources of inspiration include the Mount Royal Cemetery mausoleums, snowy days, and the poem Here, There Are Blueberries by Mary Szybist.

**Khashayar “Kess” Mohammadi** (They/Them) is a queer, Iranian born, Toronto-based Poet, Writer and translator. They were shortlisted for the 2021 Austin Clarke poetry prize, 2022’s Arc Poem of the year award, The Malahat Review’s 2023 Open Season awards for poetry and they are the winner of the 2021 Vallum Poetry Prize. They are the author of four poetry chapbooks and three translated poetry chapbooks. They have released two full-length collections of poetry with Gordon Hill Press. Their full-length collaborative poetry manuscript "G" is out with Palimpsest press Fall 2023, and their full-length collection of experimental dream-poems "Daffod\*ls" is out with Pamenar Press. Their Translation of Ghazal Mosadeq’s “Andarzname” is forthcoming with Ugly Duckling Presse 2025.

**Bryan Sentes** is the author of Grand Gnostic Central (DC Books, 1998), Ladonian Magnitudes (DC Books, 2006), March End Prill( BookThug, 2011), and, most recently, the chapbook “As on a holiday...” (Cactus Press, 2021). Translations (with Antoine Malette) from Louis Riel’s Massinahican are forthcoming. More can be found at <https://bryansentes.com/>. He lives in Montreal.

## NON-FICTION

**Chelsea Dwarika** (she/her) is a Trini-Canadian writer currently based in Montreal, QC, Canada. She has creative roots in theatre/performance creation, but is currently experimenting with cultural/food storytelling, as well as using poetry as a medium for healing collective emotional trauma. Chelsea dreams of travelling the world, finding nostalgic connections between different cultures, and documenting these commonalities to inspire others to see themselves as crucial pieces of a vibrant global story.

## FICTION

**Lauren Halsted** is a third year film student studying at Toronto Metropolitan University. She dabbles in short stories and convert them into screenplays. Lauren loves to play with themes such as family, grief, love and longing. She strives to continue sharing her stories with others in hopes that it will resonate with them.

**Amalia Mairet** is a very scared woman from Victoria, BC. Formally, she studies English Literature and Psychology at McGill. Informally, she likes baking bread, arguing with her roommates, 90s Alternative and the mysteries of the human body.

**Jacob Sponga** is an undergraduate student at McGill University. His writing has been published by Expat Press and various Montreal publications. He likes to garden and read Tolstoy.

**Meghan Wells** (she/her) is currently pursuing an English Literature degree at McGill University. When she's not studying, you can find her in her cozy little room writing poetry, reading pretentious classic novels (as long as they're written by women), or crying to Lana Del Rey or Phoebe Bridgers. Her writing discusses love, beauty, and the torment of being a young woman. It all comes straight from the heart.

**Lina Züchner** (she/they) is a Montreal-based graphic artist and writer with a passion for all things quirked-up, whimsical, and bizarre. Through her work she invites viewers into her mind palace, often blending styles and mediums to create vibrant, playful pieces and silly characters inspired by childhood, humor, and daily life. She is thrilled to fill her days with art and writing after finishing her history and sociology degree at McGill this April. She was a graphic artist, graphic designer, font-creator, and writer for Scatterbrain Magazine from its inception in August 2022 until February 2024, and would love to create her own zine someday soon.

# ART

**Catherine Chen** is a final-year student at McGill University who has been making art for as long as she can remember. Her main inspiration comes from things she sees on the street, things she gets for free off the street, and things she does with her friends (sometimes on the street!). She's very excited to be in the first edition of Chouette! If you like what you see, follow her Instagram @catherineincolor!

**Kaya Davies** is a mixed-media artist from Vancouver, BC, pursuing a degree in English Cultural Studies and a minor in Communications. In her spare time she enjoys watching movies (+ logging them on letterboxd), drawing, and taking the bus somewhere and thinking about things for a long time.

**Karthikeya (Karth) Gautam** is a Montreal-based sketch artist, writer, and photographer. He completed his undergraduate studies in Political Science and International Development from McGill University in June 2023, and has since been working at an immigration law firm as a news and policy writer. He has been drawing, sketching, and painting since the age of three, after his grandmother encouraged him to channel his childhood hyperactivity towards creative pursuits. He specializes in pen-and-ink portraits, but also enjoys oil painting, watercolor, and figure drawing. You can contact him at @kartgautam on Instagram, or find his sketches at @karthsart.

**Thomas Sequeira** is a Canadian animator who draws in his free time. You can follow him at homer\_antonio\_art on Instagram.