



Tandi's stuff

1. Swiss Army KNIFE
2. Wood Cutting Board
3. Brown Bag
4. Juron
5. Honey
6. Orange
7. Blotting paper
8. Amsterdam cheese
9. Plate
10. Candy Paste

54<sup>TH</sup>  
EDITION



wait...

What's for dinner?

# RAIN

54th

Food  
Edition

Magazine



# *For Henry Carlile (1934-2023)*

---

Astern, our dragged lines bend in rips  
that towl low warning from the entrance bell.  
We hope no more than fish,  
no bent back and downward streming hair  
like seaweed when the sea drains from rocks,  
no death that wakes us to ourselves.

**IN OCEANS, IN RIVERS**

*HENRY CARLILE, MAY 1986*

**Rain Magazine** is an annual publication produced by students and faculty at Clatsop Community College in Astoria, Oregon. Funding is provided by the generous support of private patrons and local business sponsors. Special thanks to Robert & Elizabeth Stricklin for their ongoing support of the publication. Submissions are voted for acceptance by members of the student staff. No materials in **Rain Magazine** can be reproduced without author's written consent.

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*Special Thanks to David Homer & Chris Hammett*

Front and back cover images courtesy of Chloe Stringer, Ethan Jenkins, & Jessica Bahl

Inside cover images courtesy of Ethan Jenkins

Inside title page courtesy of Jessica Bahl

**Submissions are accepted** between October 15th and January 15th. Please submit no more than three previously unpublished items total, including less than 3,000-word prose and poems, photographs, and high quality digital images of original artwork.

**Online submissions are encouraged** as text document attachments (RTF preferred) or high resolution (at least 300 dpi) JPG or TIFF files. No PDFs. No SASE necessary. Manuscripts will be recycled. **Send submissions for future editions to:** [rainmagazine@clatsopcc.edu](mailto:rainmagazine@clatsopcc.edu)



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# INTRODUCTION

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*Who's hungry?* Our theme for the 54th edition of *Rain Magazine*—Food—asks you to come one, come all, but come with an appetite. For the taste of memory on your tongue, for the scent of biscuits on the stove, for the idea that food might be the one thing that connects us all.

It bridges generational gaps and opens doors. New life brings dishes of celebration, loss brings comfort foods and casseroles. Cultures share meals across tables and divides. Parties and promotions and prayers place food as the centerpiece.

VanGogh, Marcello Berenghi, and Clara Peters used food to inspire their art. Shows like *Is it Cake*, and *The Great British Baking Show* make art out of food. They also unite families and friends in jovial competition and inspired home kitchen recreations.

That, and more, is why the team of editors argued food should be our theme this year.

Food and all it entails—*cooking, drinking, foraging, curing, hosting, remembering, potluckning, sharing, starving, baking, craving, designing, eating, take-out-ing, devouring*—invokes the elements of nature and uses them to curate a menu for living.

Fire transforms, alters the chemical composition of food. Water cleanses, enhances, expands to fill spaces, hydrates. Earth grows, nurtures, provides. Air, as a dual enabler, allows both wine and fire to breathe. It builds as much as it stifles.

But spirit... spirit is BYO.

The submissions we received this year took the theme and, like any good recipe, added spices of their own, flavor

where there might not have been much, and a secret sauce we're dying to get the ingredients to. They gave us cupfuls of spirit, and the kitchen conversations between the editorial teams were heated as a hibachi grill. Raw food can harm on one hand but other foods ingested raw and organic append an array of tastes that are as wholesome as they are delectable.

That's what we got from this year's submissions—*raw and organic. Wholesome. Delicious.*

We wanted more. We came hungry and you, the community of Clatsop County and beyond, delivered.

The originality in the words and art we accepted is overwhelmingly impressive. Yet, infused within them is a comfort that envelopes your spirit like your favorite dish on a dark, cold night. There's familiarity in these pages, a shared humanity the likes of which Julia Child, Edna Lewis, and Anthony Bourdain strived to bring to the table.

We hope you enjoy the words, images, and stories told in these pages, that you see yourself in them and think about food a little differently after reading our magazine. That you're transported back to a relative's table, a friend's couch, to the first or last meal you had with them, to a broken night alone on the linoleum and the food that healed you.

Tastes may change, but these words and images are here to stay.

Thank you for supporting this farm-to-table love letter to Oregon, to Clatsop County, to home.

We invite *you* to dine with us.



## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

---

Dear Reader,

Over the last year that I have been involved with *Rain Magazine*, I have been grasping for the “correct” set of words to describe what *Rain* is, and how important it is to our community. When describing *Rain Magazine* to my family, I often find myself falling into academic language, the class and its requirements, leadership roles, and task delegations. This information is all technically correct, and on paper, is the definition of our winter term publishing class. These definitions have always felt hollow, however.

They lack the soul that *Rain* brings to our local literary community, and the network that *Rain* holds for our authors and artists alike. When connecting with peers, *Rain* becomes a passion. Conversations flood with dialogue and laughter, tears, and terror as we read through the brilliant and curated collection that gathers into each year’s edition. This is what, in my opinion, *Rain Magazine* is.

It’s kitchen table debates over poetic definitions and word-count requirements. It’s written heartbreak and photographed jubilation. *Rain* is the storm carrying the condensation of our creative collective, and what an honor it has been to facilitate its precipitation this year, and carry the legacy that is *Rain Magazine*.

Sincerely,

Asher Finch  
**Editor-in-Chief**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Asher Finch". The signature is fluid and expressive, with a long, sweeping line on the left and more compact loops on the right.



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*Jamie Swick*

## **IN CASE I CANNOT SPEAK FOR MYSELF OR IN CASE OF MY DISAPPEARANCE**

i hope they know the morning. my mind a place  
that goes on singing to that holy rising hour, the  
only blessing i believe in born of earth's most  
ancient rehearsal. grass whisper. murmuration. lava  
clumping. beam dripping through a forest, proving  
earth begins again. i hope they know this is the food for  
living, my reason for waking, to see the secret magpie  
clung atop cattails in winter, for a glimpse of piebald  
junco flitting to my window. i hope they know my  
grandfather, who saved broken birds and nursed them  
in the house. a childhood of hawk eyes and trust, of  
talons on the doorframe and owls in the kitchen, a  
love of wildness and its purity, the lesson of careful  
attendance. the lesson of careful release. i hope they  
know of the abandonment. my wheelchair. my hospital.  
i hope they know there was only a thirty percent chance  
to live. i hope they know it was the aloneness of dying  
that saved me. i hope they know it was an australian  
highland at midnight, cold mooning in the slate  
ether with eyes reflecting back all the ways i might  
see, a hundred living perspectives in the fruiting  
trees. i hope they know the violence, the men who tried  
to make it mine. who lost, but only recently. i hope they  
know the pieces of me and where to find them. a little  
balcony on the far side of a finnish isle, learning  
kaipaani sinua from a group of elderly women who  
can spot love drunk from a mile, who tell me he'd  
love to hear it, who don't know it's for the land.  
the tuis jangling their lockets in pohutukawa.  
the way howlers moved silently limb over limb from



limb to limb above the ancient ruins, the spectacle  
of each other. the morning we stood frozen still  
then reached across an arctic distance to soothe  
a towering baby moose. i hope they know these  
gossamer tendencies, the thin strength of kinship  
making a life worth living. i hope they know its  
quietness. i hope they know i believe in its  
beauty. i hope they want to see.



**Jon Graves, *Untitled***

Dry Acrylic on Paper

*Steven Mayer*

## **GET BACK UP**

We fancy ourselves writers, poets  
write, edit, delete, rewrite on good days  
words flow, our voice speaks  
artists longing to be discovered  
for their literary art.

We craft words, distill meaning, sharpen  
clarity, expose perplexity, relish ambiguity  
mess with style, syntax, pace, metaphor  
mull language endlessly, beg inspiration  
create poetry, prose.

On bad days stare at a dirty computer screen  
or cracked mirror, contemplate what the hell matters  
ignore edits, submit, achingly wait in silence  
harbor delusions of acceptance  
wonder if our work is ever reviewed.

Self-doubt, stress, insomnia nightmares  
words less possible, not finding  
our way back, or looking back, sipping  
whiskey in the dark, taking hot showers  
on hard earth we fall, why bother to get back up?  
We get back up—that's what writers do, repeatedly  
take deeper breaths, longer walks, gather resolve  
spit in rejection's face, hone skills, renew passion  
ignite imagination, allow voice to speak fresh  
believe our best work is yet to come.



Ethan Jenkins, *Texture*

Watercolor

*Pattrra Burnetto Monroe*

## **FROM THE WHIPPOORWILL**

Mama's from the Ozarks  
raised on cornbread and misery  
Still, there were good times too

Grandma played the banjo  
while Grandpa changed  
a blade of grass into a kazoo

Brother blew into a jug  
and out came a tune  
while all the children danced a jig  
to celebrate the day

Sisters wiggling as much  
as they were allowed  
They sang in off key voices  
Some shy some joyous  
All proud

And this is how they prayed

*Peter Adams Young*

## AT THE FORD LAOS - 1969

Phan Thi Binh squatted at the entrance to the cave, listening to the heavy drops of rainwater falling from the bamboo lattice outside. She shivered with fatigue and the relative chill of the morning. Her youth volunteer brigade had spent the last sixteen hours repairing bomb craters at the north shore of the ford at Ban Loboy, and she was muddy and soaked to the skin. They were supposed to get tea and rice soup at daybreak, but the work had continued nonstop, and no food had arrived. She looked out over the cratered, barren landscape that stretched from the caves to the river. Nothing but yellow mud on either side of the ford. The steady monsoon rain and low clouds obscured even the closest of the trees that stood more than a half kilometer away.

*She had worked on the Duong Truong Son* — what the Americans called the Ho Chi Minh Trail — for nearly a year now. She had never become used to the constant dampness. At times like these, when she was utterly exhausted and could not see an end to the unrelenting routine of work, she struggled to call up the passion that had compelled her to join Uncle Ho's Youth Volunteers. That day had come when American bombs had fallen on their communal farm outside of Dong

Lac. She had been in the rice fields and remembered the ground shaking at her feet. The water around her ankles had shivered, sending little ripples out in a widening circle. The Americans had killed more than one hundred that day, including her mother and grandfather. As a small child, she had loved listening to her grandfather tell of his adventures as a young man as one of the "men in black" who fought with Uncle Ho against the Japanese and, later, the French. He would show her his scars with a pride in his eyes that lit up their small farmhouse.

As soon as Binh had seen the smoldering wreckage that had been her home, she set out for the village on foot, determined to join the Youth Volunteers. At first the recruiters had laughed at her, teasing her about her small stature and telling her to go home. She had pounded on the table, spilling their cups of beer and causing them to back away. She remembered screaming at them that if they wouldn't accept her, she would throw herself off the river bridge. It was as if she was standing outside her body, watching her scene amid the small crowd of onlookers that had gathered. Eventually the recruiters gave up and allowed her to enlist. When she signed the papers, it struck her



that it was her sixteenth birthday. The night had been long and wet. The late monsoon rains had not let up, and at times it seemed to her that the whole world had been turned into a huge mud pit. Three times she had to be pulled out of the sucking muck at the bottom of a crater. One of her sandals was still at the bottom of the last one, now covered over. Just before dawn, a small convoy of trucks had come to the ford but had to be turned back. The river was still flowing too fast from mountain runoff. After some delay and a lot of shouting, the convoy had been redirected to the cable bridge farther downstream. She and her work crew had to help the last truck back away from the ford. Its front wheels had sunk to the hubs. It took twenty of them to get it out of the mud—she felt like a water buffalo pulling on the long ropes.

Finally, they were interrupted by shouting and a siren and hustled into the caves west of the ford. No one could hear anything through the thick cloud cover and rain, but a few of the other girls were sure that they were in for another air attack by the American B-52s. Binh moved farther back into the dimly lit cave. Her bunkmate Thu had said there was some food being prepared, and she thought she could smell *chao* rice soup cooking. The pair were only fifty meters from the cave mouth when the first bombs fell near the ford. Some of the girls closer to the cave mouth screamed, but Binh and Thu just dropped closer to the tunnel wall with their

arms over their heads. They had counted four shuddering impacts before realizing that there had been no explosions. They looked at each other in dismay. These were worse—the bombs that buried themselves and blew up later. The heavy *thump . . . thump . . . thump* continued long after they had stopped counting. The two girls huddled together against the wall of the cave until they heard the others around them start to move. No one spoke at first, but shortly the buzz of anxious conversation started to build. They finally rose, holding on to each other for support. A fine yellow dust covered their damp clothing and hair. Thu giggled nervously, covering her mouth with her hand. The dust on their hair made them both look like they were blondes. A sapper hurried by and called out, “Hey Blondie!” Their moment of levity was abruptly broken by the shrill blast of whistles at the cave entrance. Group commanders began shouting to their charges to assemble outside. More whistles echoed off the cave walls, interspersed with cries of “Trong hang! Hien nay! Mau! MAU!”

It took only seconds for the tired but well-disciplined volunteers to hurry outside and form into lines. Out of the corner of her eye, Binh could see a line of shallow craters angling away from the ford. She could see several of the skinny sappers carefully placing small flags around the holes, marking a perimeter nearly one hundred meters out from the centers. One pair of sappers were already digging at the center of a



crater with their wooden spades. She had heard that their goal was to remove the bright brass fuse before it could arm itself. She had also heard that this was not always possible. Their group leader had warned them about staying away from the soldiers and workmen but had emphasized that under no circumstances should they even talk with a sapper. They were never around very long, and those who did last were not right in the head.

After standing in the slow rain for about fifteen minutes, Binh noticed that the yellow dust had been mostly washed out of Thu's hair. At that moment their group leader blew three short blasts on her whistle and ordered the volunteers to get back into the cave, find their tools, and stay there. To her great relief, Binh saw that large tubs of rice soup had been set up next to the tool stacks along with a few steaming urns of tea. The girls could hear the low staccato of the antiaircraft fire from their spot in the cave. They knew that this meant there would be another spate of falling bombs, and in turn more work for their brigade. They moved farther back into the underground complex and waited for the inevitable. The *chao* was not very warm. It was watery — nothing like what her grandmother used to make — but the cook had made the effort to add some lemongrass and wild garlic for flavor. Thankfully the tea was still hot and laced with Cuban sugar to give them energy. Binh and Thu leaned against a wall in the back of the cave, savoring the

sweet tea. The unusually large ration of rice sat comfortably in their stomachs. None of them could resist the longing to doze off. Binh had no idea how long she had been dozing when a sharp whistle blast jerked her out of her slumber. A few seconds later a large explosion outside the cave rattled the ground under her, shaking loose another sprinkling of yellow dust from overhead. She could feel on her face the gust of hot wind that followed. This time only a few of the girls cried out. Someone ran by the cave and announced that the sappers had succeeded in detonating one of the buried bombs. Binh looked at Thu and then at her companions. No one seemed happy. Before long they knew they'd be out there filling in the craters.



Mark Hanson - *Last Light*  
Photography

*Luciana Jazmín Coronado*

*translated into English by Allison A. deFreese*

## THE GARDEN

The garden was steeped  
in a dark substance  
when I arrived;  
the spiders were white  
in comparison  
I did a double take  
not expecting  
to find it so close by  
nor to lose my sight  
in the darkness  
I drew near, holding the scissors  
and severed a juicy aloe leaf,  
its glistening petroleum  
gushing out  
with the overwhelming scent of saints  
Slowly I licked  
a drop of aloe off my finger  
a flock birds  
took flight from my tongue  
now I've reached the other side  
I light a match  
I can still babble language

El jardín estaba lleno  
en una sustancia oscura  
cuando llegué;  
las arañas eran blancas  
en comparación  
Hice una doble toma  
no esperando  
encontrarlo tan cerca  
ni perder la vista  
en la oscuridad  
Me acerqué, sosteniendo las tijeras  
y cortó una jugosa hoja de aloe,  
su petróleo reluciente  
borbotones  
con el olor abrumador de los santos  
lentamente lamí  
una gota de aloe de mi dedo  
una bandada de pájaros  
tomó vuelo de mi lengua  
ahora he llegado al otro lado  
enciendo un fósforo  
Todavía puedo balbucear el lenguaje



*John Ciminello*

## FIRST RAIN

This afternoon,  
first rain in November drizzles  
on withered dahlias, parched curly willow,  
and the last stubborn roses  
of the season.

Rain is memory, like the ocean inside me  
the first splash in a puddle on the beach,  
a new pair of yellow boots, the taste on my tongue  
spray on my cheeks, and my first wet kiss under  
a shared umbrella.

Rain is forgiveness and renewal,  
as it drips from fir needles and alder leaves,  
gutters and the handles of a red wheel barrel,  
soon the creek flows for the first time  
since June.

And yet rain is a slippery character,  
a blinking red light from a mix of  
oil, gasoline, speed, spinout ahead like  
whiskey and opportunity,  
slow-down and feel the rhythm  
of a new season.

Rain is a record of debt,  
owed from gifts received, shame endured,  
folly inspired by waiting in the rain  
for someone who avoids the inconvenient path  
wet and dicey with slimy truth.



This afternoon, the buckets overflow  
the regret and summer jobs undone  
the beauty of it all as it seeps into the garage  
to wash away the dust of a  
dry season



**Britteny Holden - *Untitled***  
Acrylic on Wood

*Asher Finch*

## **POOLING PLATONICS**

Wading into  
Your shallow mind

Dipping in toes, once  
Twice, creating an  
Illusion.  
False precaution.

Deliriously enthralled in  
Deepend amber hues.  
Conversations collected like  
Thickening pools of  
Fallen honeycombs.

I dove head-first  
Drowning in your sea  
Viscose in violent denial.



*Nickolai Vasilieff*

## MAGIC ON THE NECANICUM

**E**ach year, as mornings become brisk and mist pushes on shore, magic arrives on the Necanicum. I live in a small cabin near the Necanicum River's estuary, a corner of Northwest Oregon where wildlife, from seagulls and eagles to salmon and elk, share the water and shore. Every morning, I sit at a row of bay windows that face the river and write. Usually, I'm absorbed in the description of a character or plot as I listen to Beethoven or Schubert to hold my focus. The flit of a kingfisher or heron will sometimes draw my attention. In most months, I move directly back to my computer screen, but in the fall, I follow the path of distraction, and my gaze turns to the river.

The river is nearly calm with ripples in a collage of color reminiscent of a Monet painting. Reflections appear and disappear in moments of splendor. Tiny sparkles dot the water's surface like a million stars. Quiet and peaceful, my heart slows to a near whisper, and my whole being freezes in breathless anticipation.

Always, my patience is rewarded; the reflections shatter, and colors explode two or three feet above the surface. For an instant, I see the bent body of a magnificent fish reaching out and splashing to its side. Fishermen, lined up like sentries along the far bank, glimpse their elusive prey and hurry to cast where the fish is no longer. I have an all too brief look at one of nature's miracles—a salmon beginning its long journey upriver to spawn.



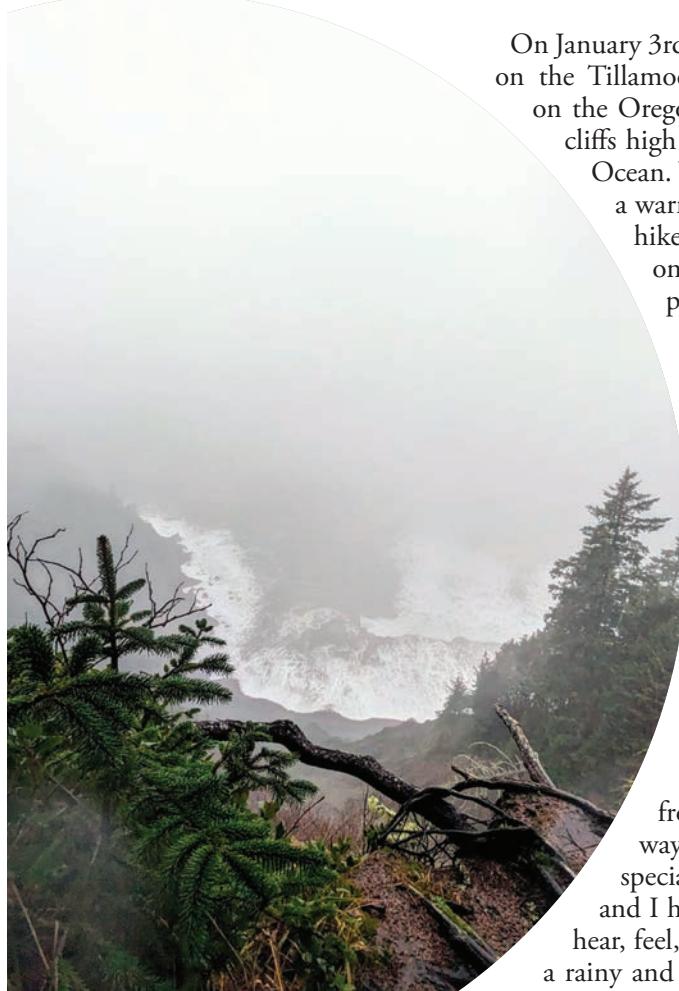
The fall run is chinook and steelhead. By mid-September, a few early arrivals greet me, but it is October through early December when I can count forty or more salmon an hour jumping in the early morning or evening. No one seems to know for sure, but some say they jump to clean off parasites; others say it is to feed. I prefer to believe they put on a show and leap for the sheer joy of life. Regardless, all year, I wait for that first silver body to come spiraling out of the water and for the colors of fall to spread across the Necanicum as each precious fish trumpets its presence on the surface. My writing slows, my soul fills, and I say, "Thank you for being alive—for the sheer joy of life."

*Flint Largin*

## SITTING IN THE STORM ON TILLAMOOK HEAD

My name is Flint Largin. I was born in California and raised in Washington State. At the time of writing, I am a student at Clatsop Community College working towards my Associate's degree. I enjoy photography, writing, and being out in nature. I am an adventurous person, and the previously mentioned attributes apply here.

Speaking of pictures, writing, and adventures...



On January 3rd and 4th of 2024, I hiked on the Tillamook Head Trail, which is on the Oregon coast along staggering cliffs high above the mighty Pacific Ocean. You're probably picturing a warm, sunny day in July. My hike was in the dead of winter on a stormy day. Many people would turn their heads at the thought of such a long hike in the rain and wind, but the experience I had was enchanting, and very special. So amazing, that it isn't right for me to keep it all to myself. I would like to share it with you, dear reader, a glimpse into the magic and wonder that I experienced on those two stormy days.

I feel that a poem from my heart is the best way to emphasize just how special this experience was, and I hope to inspire you to see, hear, feel, and immerse yourself on a rainy and windy day in the future.

Sitting in the Storm on Tillamook Head Overlooking the sea, I felt the rain and the breeze. The ocean roared at the bottom of the sheer cliffs. The rain trickled and the wind whispered.

My brain was at ease. It was hard to ignore the sounds around the shores. The joy in my heart rippled through my body. Humans believe they are a powerful force, but mother nature shows no remorse. As the forest rumbled, I was humbled.

Atop the cliffs that stand tall, I realized that I am quite small.

A short walk down, I saw a sight so profound, a raging wind of fog and rain blasting up the cliffs. It was a delight like nothing else around.

An amazing experience that nature was casting, left with memories that will be everlasting. I stood by the edge, in the clouds that raced up. In my face, there was a powerful combination of wind, rain and fog. I closed my eyes came to a realization as the wind blew through my hair

It was just me, and the might of mother nature. I felt no fright, only a sensation like no other. I had no care.

Many would feel hesitation to sit out in the storm, *but for me*, it is a form of meditation.



*Martha Ellen*

## **ILLUMINATED PLACES**

The night she died  
I had a dream.  
I saw her walking  
in a pleasant landscape  
on an uphill footpath  
toward an illuminated place.  
Her back was to me.  
She turned and saw me  
watching her leave  
for the last time.  
Thrilled to see me,  
she smiled and  
waved with the familiar  
excited anticipation  
I had seen so many times before  
when I arrived  
at her sheltered home  
and we would go for coffee.  
There were days I thought  
this a chore, a boring task  
that subtracted  
from my important life.  
But, in that moment,  
in her joyful smile, clarity.  
She knew I feared  
to carry on without her.  
“You’ll be OK.  
I will wait here for you.”  
Everyone had believed  
I was the stronger sister.



*Quinn Allan Haase*

## **HOW I HOPE I AM THE SMOKE**

How I hope I am the smoke,  
When my earthly body burns.  
The aether, now my avenues,  
Where every tendril turns.

And rising, always rising,  
Into long-sought dissipation.  
Untethered, unruled, unfettered.  
I seek no one's dispensation.

Like the incense spewed from  
censers,  
Each campfire of my youth.  
The freedom I discover,  
Renders every truth now moot.

There is none I must call master,  
There is nowhere I must stay.  
To all who turn to look for me,  
I am the pale beyond the grey.

How I hope I am the smoke,  
In this one last transmutation.  
The signal that I once burned bright,  
Then left this mortal station.

*Emilea Molloy*

## THE FIGURE

The day that stretched before her as she wrote was one of glorious beauty. A yearning to capture the image of the day lapped at her mind, though she no means to. Clouds stalked over the horizon, sneaking closer with each stroke of wind. The sky gleamed with the sun's sinking, painted in vibrant color. Dapples of light scattered the ground as it slipped past the shifting leaves of the tree. The air smelled warm from the sun's heating embrace. The maple whispered sweet words to the breeze. Bugs bustled along the earth, clambering over the grass that littered the earth in abundance. Rough bark threatened to scrape her skin as she shifted against it.

The pages of her book rasped as she turned them, allowing them to caress her fingers in their passing. Scrapping the delicate tip of her quill across the paper, the salty taste of blood sat bitter on her tongue as she grimaced at the words as they dried on the page. Frustration bit at her fingers as she tore her words from the book with a careful rip, crumbling the remains of them into a ball to shove into her coat pocket. Words rattled in her head, eluding her grasp as she attempted to pin them to paper. Sentences of apology cluttered her pages, they felt as futile as they were abundant. Her words bore as

little regret as she felt, leaving them an insincere mess. A sigh slipped from her lungs as she slouched into the tree's solidity, running her quill-free hand through the soft fur of the canine which warmed her leg with his presence.

She and the dog heads follow the sheep in their bustling, pale bodies highlighted by the darkness of the earth they kicked up. Bleating calls leapt from their lips as they moved amongst each other, flowing like fish in a cramped pond. The dust they scattered hid the silent dogs which wove at their feet. Her canine companion did nothing as sheep slipped from the bounds of the herd, an observer to the other dogs who snapped at the ankles of those who strayed. Calls of sharp surprise spilled from the sheep when the canines' teeth met their legs' skin, making them scramble as they felt hot breath upon their heels. Her brother's voice as it flew over the sheep like a bird on the wind, left the dogs to throw themselves against the sheep with a dutiful passion.

Peering over the flowing mass of wool, her gaze snagged upon something—an odd figure, hidden by the shadows that entrenched the small outcrop it stood upon. Leaning forth, she strained her eyes in an attempt to decipher what the odd



figure was. Recognition tugged at her mind, jerking her with a strike of remembrance. The scene leapt to her from memory, holding her to know the details it held.

Blood had slicked the earth as wet as the rain which dispersed it into the grass. Water had left her clothes to adhere to her in a way that discomfited her, clinging to her with each swing of the ax. A flick of her eyes, a simple pause in the task she had given to herself on a desperate whim allowed her to see it. The figure mere paces away. She had frozen like a fawn caught motherless, fighting the urge to move from where she stood. Fruitless hope that it would leave her be grew in her. Throwing itself forth with a guttural cry, spurring her into action. Swinging the ax from where it had paused upon her shoulder, she struck its head, forcing it down with a crack. Stunning the beast had shifted its gaze from the earth where she had knocked it to her own. Fear snapped its teeth at her heels, drove her to throw herself into motion. Racing away, she had abandoned her task and the creature to the darkness, rain that stole sight's clarity. The realization arose that she could not describe the features the beast bore. Even now, when the sky still bore the trace remains of the sun, it eluded her. The image of it was obscured in her mind no matter how furrowed her brow became or how close her lashes grew to one another as she squinted. It was like trying to place a flavor she had never tasted despite the deep familiarity it brought her. Darkness drifted over the world, seeming to

be brought forth by the figure so it could sweep itself from sight. The flash of its eyes and the looseness of its skin were earned in her struggle for detail. She grasped at the wisps of knowledge that had begun to catch in her mind, but they were as fleeting as a broken spider's web in the breeze. Fixating upon where it had stood with the futile hope of its reappearance, a sense of forbidding began to nip at her, tugged for her attention like a fox ripping away at a frozen carcass.

A headache erupted to rise in her head, as if her mind scolded her for attempting to delve the figure's features from it, leaving her to grimace and retreat into relaxation once more. The memory that had risen had sunk back into the depths of her memory, beyond her reach. Her body ached from the tenseness that had held it, as if her muscles complained about having been contorted. Laying still for a moment, she attempted to soothe herself into belief that the cryptic creature she had witnessed was not the same as the one she had seen on that day. Yet, it ate away at her. Goosebumps scattered her arms as a slight chill touched her, as if the figure's knowing gaze was upon her once more. Jerking from where she lay, she leapt to her feet with undue quickness, earning her a yelp of surprise from her companion. He shot her a look that illustrated his disgruntlement as he struggled to his feet on stiff legs. It cooled her nerves to a degree to watch him shuffle forth, his dark fur still tangled from the embrace of sleep. There was not a lick of nervousness



or the rise of hackle to indicate that any threat had graced them with its presence. Throwing her gaze to the horizon, a scowl pulled at her mouth at the closeness of the clouds and the darkness that the retreating sun allowed to protrude across the sky.

They joined the pursuit in the field below. Lagging behind as the sheep were herded homeward. Gaze drifting over the sea of bounding sheep and stalking dogs, she allowed for her attention to snag upon the outcrop once more. She thought it would bring her relief to find it still void of the figure, yet it only drew forth an odd nausea that itched at the back of her throat. Anxiety clutched at her chest as she followed the old dog home, one that left her to encourage him to a pace that left him to grunt with the strain it placed upon his weak limbs. When the first splatters of rain came upon her, they were slipping through the crooked wood of the fence. The age which stained the walls of the house was a welcome sight. The light that flooded from the open door felt like a sanctuary from the night that traced the corners of the world as the sun abandoned them for its slumber. The shadow her brother cast across the yard was one of great length, thrown forth by the hearth he had lit while awaiting her to arrive home. Clouds obscured the faint moon from sight with ever growing tenacity, darkness nipped at her heels like a canine does to a sheep. Urgency prickled at her skin, leaving her to drive the old dog into the bounds of the house with the less than gentle encouragement of her foot.

Warmth slipped over her as she entered the house, washing her with the notion of safety that it promised. Tossing her book and quill upon the counter, she dug the remains of her letters from her pocket, slipping them into the crackling hearth. Dogs sat beneath the kitchen table like dust bunnies beneath a bed, piling upon each other until they were a singular dark mass. Her limbs were suddenly of great weight, causing her to sink into one of the wooden chairs with relish. The old dog shuffled about, snuffling hopefully for any food scraps that may have miraculously escaped the younger dogs who sat at her feet. Dishes clattered against silverware as her brother set them upon the table gracelessly, the stew within the bowls sloshing with the threat of spilling. Lifting the bowls from where they sat as he fumbled with the silverware, she settled a bowl before each seat. The chair gave a reluctant groan as her brother settled into it, a slight moan of his own spilling forth at his relaxation. Picking at her food, she contemplated in the silence that stewed around them. A thought had prickled at her, dragging for attention no matter how hard she tried to dismiss it.

Did he know what she'd done? She stole glances at him between bites of food. Making her strain to not follow his gaze to the third bowl and the unoccupied seat that loomed over it. Even though her divided attention left her to jolt slightly when she knocked her spoon against the delicate skin of her mouth which she had bit into earlier in frustration.



Unbeknownst to her brother, that bowl would remain undisturbed until he himself was forced to take care of its uneaten contents. The stew sat still, seeming to accuse her for the fact it was untouched. It tore at her mind, the need to tell him that Father would not be returning home. Yet now as the terror of whether he knew already or not drifted about her mind, she began to pick things apart, wondering if he had acted differently towards her. The storm danced beyond the house's walls, ushered forth by the clouds to beret them with its torrents of rain.

A crash rang from beyond. She was knocked from her seat as the dogs beneath her feet leapt to action. The canines barreled to the door, barks of urgency berating her. Her brother's voice slammed over her as he bellowed for the dog's silence, a futile effort as they did nothing to cease their scrabbling. In a desperate attempt to keep the canines from breaking down the door, he threw it open, allowing them to pour out of it into the storm beyond like the stew which swept out of her overturned bowl. The storm tore into the house, filling their walls with its rage in the form of wind and rain. Washed with the torrent, she shielded her face from its coldness with an arm. Jerked to her feet by rough hands, she wobbled. While his words were swept away by the wind, she understood them by the grimace which painted his face. He wished for her to remain. Silent in the whirlwind, she watched as he clambered over the overturned chairs and fallen dishes, snatching his coat from wherest it had fallen



**Emilea Molloy - Figure in the Field**  
Digital Rendering

and struggling to get his arms into the thick sleeves. Disappearing into the storm beyond the walls of their home, he left her alone. Her thoughts itched with the figure's presence as if it stood just beyond sight, awaiting her brother. Mind whirling as fiercely as the wind that entered her home, she snatched her coat from the floor and pursued him into the storm.

Rain hammered her harshly and the wind threatened to knock her from stability. Horror swept over her when she realized what had thrown the canines to such action. The bobbing figures of the sheep fled back into the field and deeper into the storm. Swinging her gaze to the barn, she caught sight of its broken doors, hardly clinging to their hinges as they whipped in the wind. Dogs scattered about in a frantic hurry, struggling to no avail to herd the bleating beasts back into the bounds of the barn. Throwing herself into pursuit of them, the knowledge that her brother was amongst the sheep's mass driving her. Her heart pounded in her throat as she carried forth. Legs aching to not lose footing on the mud ridden earth. Hands cold with the storm's cool touch. Rain pierced her coat to lap at her clothes underneath. It was with a blow to her head that she was knocked from her feet. Blood ran into her eyes and slipped onto her tongue, her wound left by the branch's harsh kiss bled greedily. Struggling to find her feet once more, she slipped on the sheep churned and rain wetted earth. Straining to see past the blood and tears which had begun to make their way to her eyes, she caught

sight of something heart-stuttering. She was alone. The urge to turn and return home gnawed at her consciousness like a moth on a sleeve, a notion that dredged unwanted recognition in her chest.

A thought hammered in her head, whirling because the night's likeness to the one that unfolded in her memory. Breath caught in her lungs with each gasp, air seeming to evade her ragged huffs. Rain running through her hair, her clothes clinging to her skin, the taste of blood in her mouth. It was as if she could feel the stickiness of her fathers blood upon her hands, the bite of the ax as she slammed it into his head with each lung collapsing shriek that the wind stole away, as though she could see the figure as it stalked toward her once more. The firefly eyes it wore seemed to burn into her. She shook in her skin at the fact that night was not a mere bad dream. The pain that arched in her head did nothing to dismiss the fear that seemed to squeeze her veins shut, cold swept her. Futile she search around her for familiarity amongst the whirling darkness. The features of the land were stolen from her. Hills she had tread countless times became obscured slopes. Grass that had tickled her legs flattened like the fur on a wet dog's back. Sweet hues of distant flowers scents stolen by the wind's touch. Blood and rain caught in her lashes, blurring the world around her until she strained to make out what features it bore. A dark shape loomed above it all. Twisting limbs whirled against the



storm as if it could ward the wind off with a harsh blow. She rushed forth with recognition hammering her mind. Gripping the tree's rough bark, she bathed in the relish at the pain of it beneath her nails, for it proved it was real and not some cruel mirage of familiarity. Gaze drifting about her surroundings, she pulled at details of the landscape with great slowness. It was then when her sight found the outcrop that her heart threatened to stop.

The odd figure leered down at her from its perch. She struggled to not know what it looked like, wishing that its features eluded her as they had earlier. But the image of it burnt into her mind. Dips and curves straddled its limbs and torsos, pocketing them. Bones protruded from it like a starved mutt, making it seem almost wickedly ill. Jowls upturned, teeth flashing wildly as its firefly eyes, it smiled, mocking her. Lightning danced across the sky when it stood. Skin hung off it loosely and dark fur coated it thinly. She attempted to shrink away from its sights, for it felt as if its eyes were claws that it ran across her skin, cutting her with each glance. A small gasp choked her. She lost her footing upon the wet roots she had stood upon so trustingly. Pain sprang its way up her back as she thudded to the ground. A hiss sprang through her teeth at the small cuts that found their way to her skin and at the bruises that seemed to reach to her bones. Fear kept her from looking back to the outcrop, fear that the creature would be awaiting her gaze once more. Grasping the

tree's knots, she grappled its knots to return to her feet. Stumbling from her place beside the maple, she strode forth for the sake of slipping from the creature's vicinity.

The upturned earth was her only guide, for the sheep's frantic footsteps had left it pitted and pocketed. A limp placed itself into her steps, the wicked mark her knee bore burned with every movement. Wind fought against her every movement, fighting like she pushed it to some unseen danger ahead. Rain pierced her past her skin, soaking into her bones and making them heavy. Pain ached across her body and rang in her head, blood slipped from her wounds to the earth. She felt the bawing of sheep echoed just beyond her ears. The pounding rain attempted to hide their calls. When her gaze fell upon their pale forms, relief swept her. Dogs bounded frantically about, their bodies left gangly and thin without the fluff of their dry fur to make them seem large. Dark hair and dark coat were plastered to her brother, making him seem small as he labored to force the sheep homeward. Pausing, she watched the pale mingling bodies with a moment of ease. Relief came to an abrupt end. The creature's large shape wove through the wooled bodies, one the sheep fled from with adept quickness. Urgency tightened her chest as she yelled, begging cries for her brother's attention burned her throat with the air they stole, wordless screams bit at her chest with the effort they took. Voice stolen by the wind, hidden by the torrents of rain, desperation sent her to scramble into the distance



that stretched between her and her brother. A wail rang from her as the dark creature advanced upon him. The figure leapt through the air like a cat leaps for a bird, pulling her brother from her sights. Racing forth, she searched and pushed through the sea of sheep to no avail. Her throat squeezed in fear and her chest ached for air. The further she wove into the herd the more red that streaked her. The wool that they wore soaked with the red she had seen only in a rich women's dress and on a painter's brush, a color that painted her as they hustled past. Wiping her hand across her face, she struggled to clear her hair and blood from her eyes as the rain encouraged it to obscure her sight. It was with an abrupt halt that kept her from moving forth when she stumbled upon it. The dark head rose to greet her, holding a solemn expression. Blood left its head sleek. It raised a hand to swipe a chunk of meat from where it had snagged on its teeth. Gesturing with a wave of a hand, it led her gaze to that which lay at its feet.

There her brother was. It was odd. He looked vulnerable, curled into a limp ball as if he could hide himself from the world, like a fawn found while it awaited its mother's return. But it was a mere swipe of the creature's hand that turned him to face skyward. He was no fawn awaiting his mother, he was a sheep who had been slaughtered. Blood swept from his throat and stomach, for both had lost enough of their meat that they no longer held him together. Ribs sprouted from the mass of red and black, pale and perfect

in comparison to that which they grew from. His head lolled, lacking connection to his body other than the thin tendons and skin that clung so frantically to the torso from his neck.

Chest clenching, she stumbled backwards, struggling to breathe. Stomach jerking, acid sprang through her throat as she heaved her dinner into the grass. Sheep hustled past her as they ran blindly from the beast, forcing her to fight to not be swept away by the woolly tides. She locked her gaze upon her brother. Searching frantically to find any sign that he was alive, that her eyes had lied to her. Gasping for air, she choked, coughing until her throat burned and she strained for breath. The figure jolted, snatching her attention. Head thrown back, it shook, its hands clutching its stomach. Recognition flickered in her mind at the action, for it had been one she had seen dance across people in lighthearted moments.

It was laughing. Mouth gaping, shoulders shaking, struggling to not fall, hands waving, it laughed. It leered at her gleefully, mockingly. Rearing upon its legs, it loomed over her like an eagle looms over a rat, a joy tinting its face as if it were looking upon a delectable meal. A single black hand raised from its stomach, a taloned finger unfolding to point at her. It remained there for a moment, lolling its head back as it cackling, pointing at her like a bully child laughs at their victim. Satisfaction saturated its face, a chuckle the ending ebb of its jolliness. A smile pulled its jowls,



exposing teeth so human she found herself wondering for a moment how it harmed with such tools, yet blood coated the teeth red and strings of gore hung from where it had been wedged between its teeth. Her stomach churned with nausea once more, allowing the sheep to take her in her unsteadiness. She clung to their bucking bodies, for they were a log in a flood that her life rested upon holding onto. The figure whipped its hand to its side, throwing itself toward her with a screech that cut through the storm. its mouth gaped open, stretching like a snake, threatening to take her head in a singly bite.

Sheep threw themselves forth, bounding in desperate escape. A scowl to flash over the figure's face as she was jerked from its grasp. its head fell beneath her vision as the white bodies hid it as she was bundled away. Her breath was trapped in her lungs with fear and her head spun. The storm swept past her as she clutched the sheep, searching the crowd of bodies for the figure's. The dark looming shape of the maple tree whisked past her as she was carried over the hills. She saw the lights of her home flash in the near distance. She struggled, withering against the flow of the sheep in trade for her own two legs. Then she ran. Legs pounding the earth as adrenaline raced through her head, pain forgotten as she fled. She slammed into the front door as it swung to her, moved by the tenacious grasp of the wind. The old dog gave a bark of surprise from its place beneath the table,

surprised to see her as she was to see it. Abandoning the notion of fighting the door from the wind's embrace, she stooped to drag the old dog from his place of hiding. Growls slipped from him while she tugged him into her arms, heaving his bony body from the floor as she labored her way to the bedroom. Dumping the dog upon the floor ungraciously, she slammed the door behind them. Pain hammered at her leg as adrenaline began to seep out of her veins. Stumbles littered her steps as she worked frantically to barricade the door with the sparse furniture the room held. Silence choked her as she curled against the wall, her gaze etching itself into the door in anticipation. The old dog came to rest beside her, seeming to not care that he had been disturbed as she offered warmth that had long ago been drained from the house. It came in a horrible manner not long after she had settled, leaving her little time to catch the breath its presence had stolen. Growls hummed in the old dog's throat, his small ears prickling in the beast's approach. A knock rang from the door, her brother's voice spilling forth to beckon her to allow him entry. Yet she refused, answering with only her silence. He begged, growing ever more pleading that she open the door, saying all would be well if she did. The unhuman click of nails upon the floor as the thing paced beyond her barricade. Every snuffle, sniff, grunt, and hiss that the creature uttered was far louder than the words it spoke. The rumbling growls of the dog hummed against her arm





**Emilea Molloy - *The Old Dog***  
Digital Rendering

as it snarled at the unseen predator.

The beast twisted its voice, abandoning the facade of her brother. Screams of children grated her nerves, sobbing cries of mothers and fathers alike echoed through the house, begs for mercy rang forth from the shaky voices of grandparents. Howls and wallowing cries scrapped at her ears, whimpers, whines, screeches, hisses, and barks enveloped the world. The creature paced at the door, its shadow dancing back and forth as it traveled from one wall to the other. It became annoyed. Its voices grew ever louder, ever jagged, harsh, lashing, and angered. Its animal cries became desperate and wild, melding together in calls that she had not heard uttered from any other creature's throat. It only fell silent when it slammed against the door, making it and her barricade shiver as if it too felt the fear that barreled in her chest. The old dog barked, hackles as bushed up as a skunk under duress. Then a laugh came forth, one that belonged to a young maiden, devoid of the world's turmoil in its quiet and musical notes. It spoke in a voice that unsettled her further, leaving her to push herself against the wall like it could hide her within itself. A child's voice, spoken oddly guttural and grating. Like belonged to a young one who had eaten fire and now bore the scars in their throat, making each word be scraped against the rough scars before slipping away to be heard in its battered form. Breathily, the words slipped to her from its mouth, as if the thing had whispered it directly to her ear.

"Have it your way."

She did not move. She refused to breathe. She held the old dog's muzzle shut. All for the sake of hearing the click of nails as it walked away, leaving silence in its exit. Relief pounded over her, blinding her with the tears it tore from her eyes and shaking her with its tremors. Gasps ran her throat ragged as she struggled to steal back all the breath she had lost. Pain danced in her head, her injuries vying for attention. She stole a shaky glance to her hands, where deep crescent moon cuts had been left by her nails in the tense listening that had occurred.

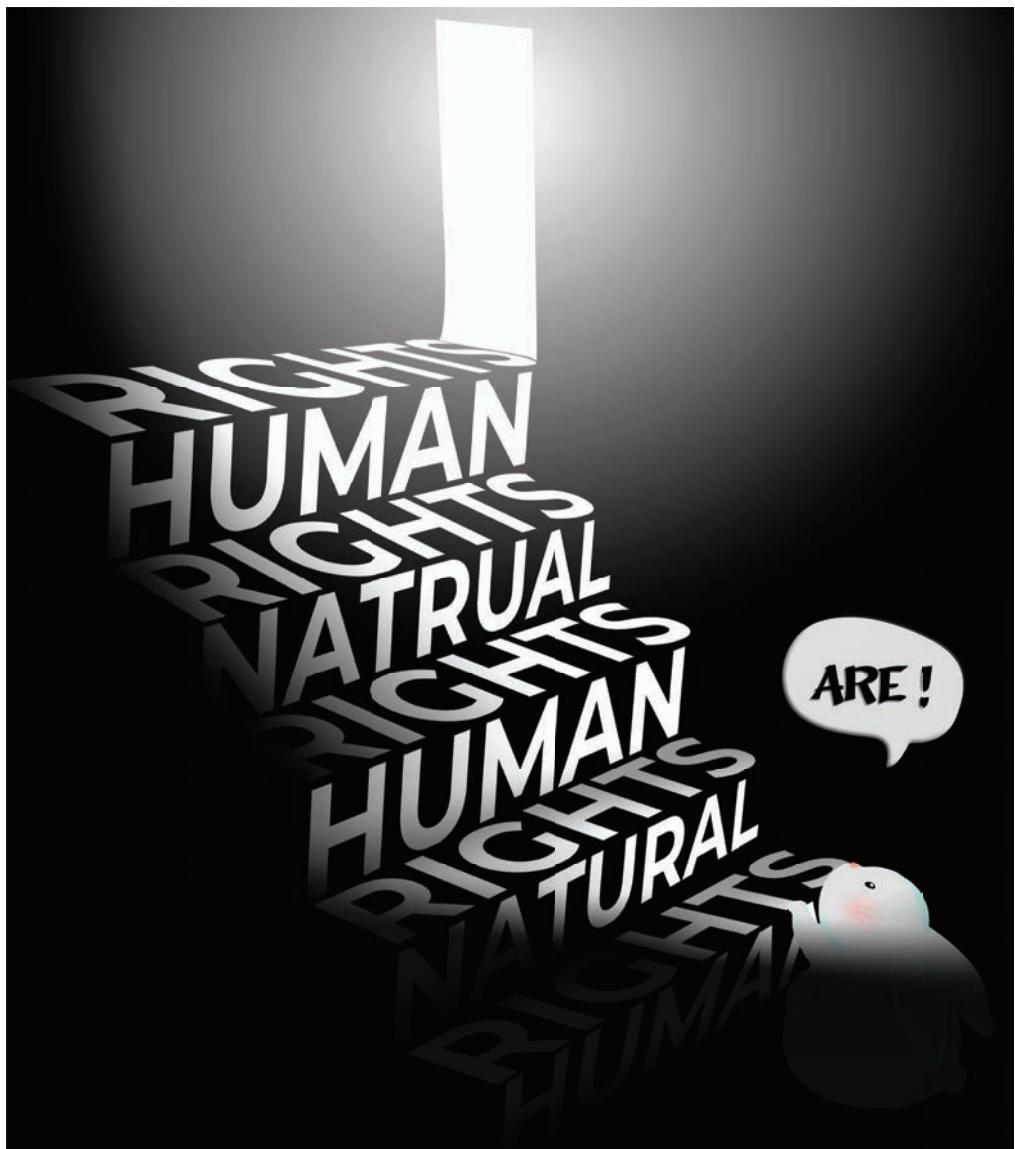
The sight of blood slipping down her palm stole a piece of her rejoice. How could she celebrate at such a time. Her brother lay dead in the hills, strewn over the earth like a lamb slaughtered by a mistrained dog. A thought snuck into her mind, coming to her in delicate form. Brother is not alive to know what I did. She gagged at the thought. Disgusted with herself. The image of his head lolling like a dead duck wasn't enough for her to not think of such trivial things. You bastard. Brother would have understood. He would have helped.

Yet it was there, relief, she couldn't shake. She didn't even know what its source was anymore. Did the knowledge that she no longer had to ponder whether her brother knew what she struggled to tell him feed her relief? The chance that he may have been horrified by what she had done. The fact he may have dismissed her motive in trade for telling the authorities of her

actions. Did the fact she had slipped from death earn her such rejoice or was it truly because she could now hold her crime close to her chest knowing no one would seek revenge for those who had fallen because of her? Was it the lack of the chance of betrayal or beast? Neither answer was better than the other, for they both held the same horrible conclusion. Brother is as dead as Father. I killed him. I killed him with my damn naivety. What did the creature want? Was it revenge for striking it? Was it its target? Was it merely carnage and despair that it wished for? Grabbing the dog, she dragged him into her lap. Ignoring his reluctance, she cradled him as if he would tell her that all was well. She waited for some sign that all was well, that the blame was not her own.

But even when the sun rose and allowed dim light to leak into the room from the crack beneath the door, even when the storm faded to a mere breeze that earned only a thin creak from the walls, even when her wounds began to ache with sour infection and the old dog begged for his freedom. She waited. Her thoughts swirled, fantasies as to what she could have done differently were woven in her mind. Thoughts that perhaps it would have been better if the beast had gotten her in the hills instead of her striking it, or if it had dragged her to the sheep-churned earth instead of her brother, or if she had simply opened the door when it asked and allowed it to take her. She remained only to await repentance for her cowardness that would never come.





Jessica Bahl - *Natural Rights*  
Computer Ink

*Daphne Clifton*

## SISTERS

Suncrest peaches the size of softballs hold their places  
in our brown paper bags, while the scent of cinnamon  
hovers above us the way a red-tailed hawk owns  
the horizon at sunset, or a mourning dove its own song.

And the way we walk home together through this  
dusty orchard, after packing peaches and nectarines  
all day in stifling Valley heat, is the way we will  
challenge this world – sweetly, and with a sigh,

with no questions about why, only the wish to finish this  
summer's day with the steamy ferment of mom's peach  
cobbler, afloat with homemade buttermilk biscuits, melting  
on our tongues into the taste of a golden harvest moon.

*Jessica Bahl*

## **SPRING WILL COME**

Spring fills my aching and naked chest,  
coiling itself around my organs  
germinating the dormant seeds that lay in half wake.  
The flowers giggle and toil amongst themselves,  
like a child mixing languages  
both earth and divine.

Their teasing reverberates through the air,  
as if they hold secrets too profound for human comprehension.

*– I think we once knew.*

As the earth stirs and pleads,  
a realization dawns upon me

*– I am undeniably alive.*

Vines crawl up my spine, stripping away bits and pieces of me without discrimination; consuming muscle, blood, and flesh as they emerge from my eyes and mouth.

*– I am free.*

Their pods release countless spores into the radiant light of Spring.  
Their collective weight is cruel, and I collapse to my knees.

The flowers proliferate relentlessly, blooming and withering  
countless times within my dying.



Their offspring scatter endlessly, obstructing my throat,  
yet I find myself laughing within the chaos.

I am both bursting with life and wilting in death.  
As the Earth churns and begs,  
I am filled with the understanding that

*– I am undeniably alive.*

I have always been both dead and alive.

I lay naked on the forehead of the earth,  
laughing as new sprouts begin from where my ears once were.  
In a million years, monuments will rise from our remnants,  
and life will persist for eternity.

Such trivial measures of breath for such a whimsical existence.

Dusk crowns the sky with warm and royal colors.  
The trees catch the dying light, pushing every last second deep into  
themselves; the last snack before dawn.  
There is a centipede dashing across my pale thigh.  
I imagine he's late for work.

The laughter of the flowers seeps into the soil,  
and I am once again filled with the certainty that

*– I am undeniably alive.*

*Janet Ebert*

## **DROPPED ON MY HEAD**

“There!” my brother exclaimed and pointed to that gray stain on the floor. “That’s where mom dropped you as a baby. Landed on your head. That’s why you are different from the rest of us.” Mom had told me about it. She said I had squirmed from her wet hands when lifted from the bath basis to the table. She had assured me “no harm done.” Just six weeks old. My fontanelles were still pliable.

I studied that stain. Looked like pipe grease from Dad’s monkey wrench to me. “Things just happen,” Mom said, and flipped the eggs in the skillet.  
Yes, I thought, things just happen.  
My big brother continued to speak in a strong voice.  
“Landed on your head. That is why you are so different—not like us.” Home from Korea, his uniform starched with creased shirt and khaki pants gave him an aura of authority. His close-cropped red hair and smile made me wonder--  
Is he kidding or shedding light on my condition?  
He smoked his cigarette—Lucky Strike and snubbed out the butt. Dad did not say a word but examined the stain. My two big sisters chimed-in and offered a more benevolent label for me.  
“You’re special that’s all.” Special a nice sound.  
I owned that label with pride—puzzled pride.  
Always aware of how others viewed me.  
My shadow question for life.





**Drea Frost - *Golden Hair***  
Acrylic on Board

*Francis Opila*

## I DREAM A LUNAR ECLIPSE

lunar eclipse: *an eclipse in which the full moon passes partially or wholly through the umbra of the earth's shadow*  
~Merriam-Webster

duration: one to three AM

arched shadow  
floats imperceptibly across  
fiery face

frigid night  
on riverbank  
I lie tucked in my sleeping bag  
knit wool hat pulled over my eyes  
air hole for my mouth

breeze over frosted river rock

laughter:	rushing water
dream:	floating downstream
white:	reflection of brilliance
veil:	shadow & fire
owl hoots:	dance among firs
yearning:	moonlit eros
tiger:	color of fire
<i>black:</i>	color of emptiness
black:	color of fullness
ice:	freezing of time
morning chill:	waking of sun
vapor:	breath at dawn
alone:	communion with wrens
pacific wren:	cascading song
moon:	vanished beyond





Pierre Finch - *Arctic Flowers*,  
Photography

*Jamie Swick*

## **DOWNEAST**

i remember the blue hour of your arrival, through the snowstorm, white out sky erasing all earthly barriers between us and everything. i remember two soft thumps of your boot against the barn red door, the whiplash of below zero, the gentle shedding of where you'd come from to see me.

i remember the green kitchen, the walls wavering under pressure from the atlantic, the sky high slope of my ceiling, as if it were something i owned, racing toward the heavens or into the sea, depending on how you looked at it, depending on if you wished for something closer to a god or earth. i have only ever known earth.

i remember the ice covering you as constellation, night-skying you, weather always a topic of conversation, you my favorite topic, a kind of colloquial smile at living. you smelling of sweetgrass and wood chip and pine pitch, you stirring in my kitchen, you stirring in my home, us.



*Peter Young*

## **CHRISTMAS STORY 1969**

Christmas Eve brought the Bob Hope Show.  
Four thousand of us squatted on the deck  
Or perched on anything we could.  
We screamed with laughter, shouted in applause  
While warm, black water slipped by  
Close outside.

There was a truce that night.  
The decks were quiet,  
Aircraft blind and dark.  
Turkey dinner on the mess decks,  
Pumpkin pie and all the trimmings.  
A few loud parties here and there,  
Celebrating life amid the empty bunks.

Others, too, we knew would celebrate,  
Safe in port so briefly.  
They were sitting now  
At drink-wet tables in the Cubi Club,  
Staring at foggy windows.  
Black hills blacker still against the night,  
Their ship lit up with "MERRY XMAS" lights.

Christmas Day was almost gone  
When we came up on deck,  
Moving stiffly in our Nomex armor,  
Helmets swinging.  
The truce would end at six;  
Our target time was 6:15.

*Milestone Flight proceed to  
Zero-eight-eight radial,  
One hundred miles, Channel 99.  
Contact Nail Five-two on channel six.*

The sun had just begun to gild  
The pale karst cliffs.

*Hodie! Hodie! Christus Natus Est!*

Our target – troops, supplies, and trucks –  
Lay safely covered under trees;  
A valley slope already deep in shadow.

Nail Five-two was good.  
His voice, a lazy Texas drawl,  
Talked us into easy contact.  
His spot, a white, slow-curling smoke,  
Hit right on.  
He hung there  
Far below us in his white-winged craft  
And watched our runs.

We gave him three runs –  
Six bombs each.  
Our second and our third were good enough.  
The sun had still not set when we pulled off.

Nail gave our BDA as we both headed home:  
Two trucks, two fires, four bunkers out,  
Six killed by air.  
He signed off with a jaunty air:

*Good shootin', Gents.  
A pleasure workin' with y'all.  
An' a Merry Christmas to yuh, now.*

Merry Christmas, Nail Five-two.

*James Dott*

## **HOW ANNA'S HUMMINGBIRDS CONQUERED WINTER**

Fierce bits of emerald and ruby melded to quartz,  
lit like sparks from the sun's unceasing fire,  
immigrants from the warmer south.

French ornithologist, René Lesson, described the bird in 1829,  
a specimen received from California,  
he never saw a living one, named it Calypte anna  
for his friend's wife, Anne.

Their habitat then was chaparral,  
southern California, northern Baja.  
Since the 60s their range has grown,  
exotic plantings, warming climate, hummingbird feeders.

Summer is easy here  
so many flowers and gnats, mosquitos, midges  
to supplement the sweet.  
Spring and Fall have enough to forage for  
early, late flowers, always insects, sometimes spiders.  
But winter here is hard,  
no nectar, few flies, after frost, nearly none.

## Olive Asay

# MOTHER NATURE

Mother Nature. She is here. She is listening. She can feel us. She can see us. She knows every aspect of our being. Every vein, every joint. She senses the beating of our hearts. The life resonates deep within our bones. Mother Nature traces her watery fingers along the distorted trails of our lives. She is the sharp spikes of an agave. The petals of a late blooming daisy. The sweet taste of chamomile. The icy touch of a madrone's trunk. For eons, her sturdy limbs have kept us alive.

We return her love and care with only greed and anger. We pollute her forests. We waste her water. We convert her air into carbon with our machines and cruel habits. We destroy what she offers us and take much more than she has to give. In return, she grows more trees, replenishes our air, purifies the ancient water that we so carelessly threw away. And she adapts. Though exhausted, she repeats this cycle again and again. Mother Nature is continuously putting our wellness before her own. She tries to keep every individual safe and unharmed. But even for something that has been around for over four-billion years, sometimes too much is just too much.

Climate change. Global warming. Pollution. I'm sure a lot of people have heard these words by now. Climate change is the effect on the weather that comes when we mistreat Mother Nature. Global warming is the increase in temperature that causes water levels to rise and ice caps to melt, occurring due to many unwanted heat-trapping gasses in the atmosphere. Pollution is the harm that

is done by disposing waste into natural areas such as bodies of water or vast expanses of forest. Within these words are smaller words, like deforestation and littering. Look around. We did this.

Mother Nature brings peace and hope, life and death. She cannot, however, fix the decisions of humankind. For example, we created money. In doing that, we created poverty. We created royalty, so we created slaves. These are problems that she does not have the power to fix.

We are stubborn. We wage war when we do not get what we want. We fight and harm over that which we have very little. Will we one day war over the remaining water? Will we harm each other so that we may have a roof over our heads? Will we perish trying to keep yet another generation alive? Ask yourself, will the next generation be safe? For if this continues, the answer is no.

Mother Nature. She is here. She is listening. She can feel us. She can see us. She is fragile in as many ways as she is strong. And just like a loose pebble at the top of a cliff, she can plummet to the depths of the ocean.

And I assure you, we *will* fall with her.



Michael O'Connor - *Nature*  
Photography

*Bill Griesar*

## ODE TO AN ARAUCARIA



We share something you and me  
In each of us an armored tree  
Of life, a double helix code  
That specifies a fir, or toad  
Or human, which I aim to be  
And you, a monkey puzzle tree

Your tale begins in ancient times  
According to your base pair rhymes  
With dinosaurs a baleful threat  
Your scaly, sharpened leaves did jet  
From branches, trunk and cones of seeds  
Piñones safe from saurus feeds  
Chile's one ancestral home  
Fin del mundo, land of odes  
Pehuenche peoples of the Andes

Boil your starchy kernels whole  
But only those that fall quite free  
From Conguillío and Huerquehue tree

Your primeval epic links to mine  
A more recent and prosaic climb  
We bought a home in Oregon  
Guarded by your sharp-tipped spines  
You appeared primordial, old  
On 8th and Grand, pointed, bold

In Astoria, our river town  
Roll on Columbia past columnar crown  
Pilot boats, foghorns and sea lions bark  
In an area famous for Lewis and Clark  
And Captain Flavel, made rich from the bar  
Had a son named George who did not settle far

George and his wife Winona moved in  
To a house built by grandfather Conrad Boelling  
In 1879, a San Francisco steep street  
Above canneries, bars, saunas, brothels, a fleet  
Of small gillnet fishing boats whose pilots drank best  
At Charles Johnson's saloon, in this wild old west

Johnson bought Flavel's house in 1901  
And soon you were planted beneath variable sun  
From Chile through Portland to Astoria dark  
Sold at the Centennial for Lewis and Clark  
For the next hundred years you watched as the city  
Grew, boomed and busted, quaint free and gritty

We entered our home in 2002  
With holes in wood floors and much work to do  
And a towering araucaria with razor blade spikes



Our boys raced beneath on their plastic play trikes  
And my husband's bald head was scratched once or twice  
By a tree we loved fiercely for being wild, not nice  
I remember my oldest, maybe seven or eight  
When he sliced through a branch with those blades he'd create  
After hammering metal on foundation cement  
And I scolded and asked for respect and lament  
And that tree after years started branching anew  
From that cut point a smaller but sharp weapon grew

An arresting tree, in the center of town  
The storm of '07 did not bring it down  
My youngest made friends with Pablo from Chile  
From the city of Valpo, historic and hilly  
Our monkey puzzle was a surprise to see  
Of course in Chile it's their national tree  
Our families traveled jointly to this long southern coast  
To climb peaks near Temuco where Pehuen peoples boast  
Tierra like our own Cascades, with mountains that fit  
Familiar Wy'East, Adams and erupting Loowit  
Only these were not forests of spruce, fir or pine  
But umbrella-like paraguas, an araucaria tree line

Yet in 2016 you started to sicken  
A browning of branches that rapidly quickened  
After 8th Street was torn up for sewer repair  
In year five of a drought, with less moisture in air  
Growth and climate change threaten Chile too  
Millions of years, but a century for you...  
Or not? Before felling by Jan and his crew  
You shot seeds from those cones that actually grew  
We have several young monkey puzzle trees on the way  
We've already planted your genes for the day  
You grow towering tall with spikes out to face  
The dinosaur threats of my own human race



*Lauren Mallett*

## **WILD ES LA NUEVA LOCURA**

señala la clavícula its two-hearted  
broach this House of No  
ambas de mis grandmothers  
con sus too-long eyelids  
blistered my inner thumbs

These are my let go letras

doble no nostalgia  
del cliché catedral con coro de rojor  
all this time I've been mirando caras  
in the rock under plaster  
expanding rebar unicreto  
mortar not cement el show de mis sueños

Let us carry her

her hazelos ledges of chin crack  
of eye grimace this is the spot tenemos  
dos curvas máscaras bordadas nailed  
to the walls sweet antiseptic the blatant sun  
el oblong dip en sí

What are the years but new coats

of paint rutinas absolutas en ochre y oro  
better on fire than with wings  
whore nada let us carry her  
al café con cuatro puertas  
a las cuevas de bocase el sloped metate



El quizás que sí existe del ahogamor

done notch don't suck cubilete

Let us carry her

el blurry flor en frente

sus corazones wearing crowns

the spelling of su esfera

en las espinas del insecto or nest



Nick Mack - *Untitled*  
Photography

*Jessica E. Newton*

## A MURDER

A murder of crows emerged  
From my neighbor's yard  
It started with only one  
Then two...three  
...at least fifteen  
Taking flight at once  
It's garbage day  
This they knew  
The beloved day  
That they can  
Gather easy food  
Instead of scavenging  
About for hours  
With very little providence

*Marilyn deFreese*

## BODY LANGUAGE

No! No! No!  
My body screams as skin  
Ripples down my legs.  
You once embraced my body  
Like a tight girdle,  
Now there is too much of you.

My arms too betray me,  
Tiny pathways of blue  
Trail thither and yon.  
Thin as papyrus,  
Each poke and prick  
Leave thumbprints of purple,  
Impaled like a scarecrow  
Waving in the dying wind.

The mirror cannot deny  
The melting of my face,  
Like waterfalls below my eyes,  
My chin, my neck.  
My nose maintains its dignity.  
When will it ripen  
To join the cascade?



*Charles Holboke*

## **UNTITLED**

He wonders what  
it means to dream  
about dead people  
being alive in his dreams  
and then  
dying again.  
after a night  
of these  
living dead,  
he's not  
sure  
if  
he's ready  
to get up  
in the morning.

sleeping with the dead  
is a very  
dangerous thing,  
he'd like  
one morning  
to wake up  
with the  
living,  
and be alive.

*Scott T. Starbuck*

## **FISHING BUDDY**

“I don’t talk much,” he said,  
“so if you want to join me,  
you’ll honor that.”

We stood a moment under eagles.  
He was so good  
I agreed.

Ten years went by  
before he said,  
“You’re getting better.”

I learned the things  
that could be seen and done  
without words.

After another ten years  
he said, “Soon I’m going  
where there is no limit

“and no closed season.”  
We fished in silence  
a few more times.

I still feel his presence  
while casting, or walking to  
or from the river.

*Kris Reid*

## **OLIDAMMARA**

**O**pén scene in a bar late into the night. In the back at a not so stable wooden table sit two men deep in discussion. Only a few other drunkards fresh from long days on the farm sit at the bar burning their money before their poor wives can stop them.

A loud clattering ruckus starts up from the other side of the entrance door and it slams open, a tall man walking in loudly proclaiming to a short squat man behind him.

Don Quixote: "I told you Sancho, it is my duty as a knight errant to assist in such situations where a lordly prince has lost his royal beast!"

Sancho: "That is all well and good if his 'royal prince' had wanted help... But I wonder if he meant to have the animal at all, let alone in such a small space! Are you sure that bear was his?"

Don Quixote: "Of course it must have been and such a fine reunion can be held in any location as long as the scenery is charming!"

Don Quixote strides up to the bar with Sancho following

Don Quixote: "Good lord! I am in search of valiant deeds to perform to bring honor to my beautiful Dulcinea del Toboso, Pray tell you know of someone in such need?"

The Keep puts down a dirty mug that he had been wiping with a filthy rag almost meditatively.

Olidammara: "I've heard of none but I suspect you could ask those gentlemen. They've been speaking of high deeds and hell for hours."

Don Quixote turns to look at the two men at the table and indicates for Sancho to wait at the bar (which he seems quite inclined to do) as he begins to walk towards the table.

Olidammara: as he sets a mug of something steaming in front of Sancho, "Here you finally are Sancho and so good to see you! Now tell me..."

The Keep's words fade as we follow Don Quixote to the table with the other two men. As we get closer we begin to hear strong words being passed till we can finally make them out.

Roland: "... Watch your words holy man! He is my stepsire, I will have no ill words on him!"

Dante: "Your stepsire betrayed you to yours and many others death. Yet you wish to take such risks for the sake of his damned soul! What causes you to believe I could assist you in such a deed?!"

Roland: "I need only your guidance to traverse the unholly paths to where he dwells, the rest I shall do myself."

Dante: "Let the damned receive what they have rot from lives unholly lived."

At this point Don Quixote makes his grand entrance to the table and proclaims with gusto and great reverence.

Don Quixote: "Greetings your Eminence," He bows towards Dante "Greetings my lord!" He gives a curt nod and slams his chest with his fist towards Roland. "I am Don Quixote of la Mancha, It seems you are in need of my assistance. I will be most honored to accompany you!"



He bows again and stands at attention. Dante looks bewildered as Roland rises to address the knight with a look of determination on his face.

Roland: "Well met Sir, your assistance is most welcome! Please sit and break fast with us while we work out the details of our journey."

Roland sits back down indicating to the Keep as he does for food and drink as Don Quixote sits as well. The three men look at each other for a long moment .

Dante: "This is madness! I can not see light in this reasoning!"

Roland: "The unjustness of Guénes imprisonment is unacceptable! I will bring him home where he belongs!"

Dante: "Are you so sure your King would agree?"

Don Quixote: sitting up tall and proud as he says "The King would never allow anyone to be imprisoned unjustly."

Roland: "I will do this in the name of my King to allow him honor while he still cleanses the land of the wicked pagans! Men for their lord's great hardship must abide."

Don Quixote: "As I feel the zeal to leave swiftly to reach this lord's need, I must insist we take a moment to collect any necessities we may need for our journey. I have found the hard way this is omitted from the royal histories."

Roland: "Our needs are thus met. I feel this need is stronger still as I sit and wait! We must, on the hour, away."

Dante: "If this is so, We must begin by the forest dark. It is savage, rough, and stern, Which in the very thought renews the fear. Death itself is a little better. This will be the least of our worries as we

descend into this madness. Your grandsire resides in Cocytus in the second round of the ninth circle of hell. To traverse this path at all is madness, yet only one way remains from this point to withdraw from these tortures."

A silence descends over the table. A moment passes as Roland and Don Quixote look thoughtfully at Dante who with very serious expression looks at them in turn. A large mug is not so gently placed on the table to the left of Don Quixote and the tavern boy runs off to continue his assumed chores. Don Quixote picks up the mug, raising it to his new companions and the others join the solemn salute before drinking.

Dante: " As I was once in need and the beautiful and blessed Beatrice sent my guide Virgil to assist me, I will not let you without a guide descend to these planes of torment.

Roland: Bowing his head slightly "I thank you for this assistance in the freeing of my kin." He turns to look at Don Quixote.

Don Quixote: Standing suddenly, causing his chair to fall, placing his fist on his breast and lowering his head "For honor of the order of knighthood and the beauty of my fair Dulcinea, I shall assist you, though it be treacherous, to find this justice for your kin!"

The scene pulls back and the lighting fades on the table as our focus is drawn back to the bar where Sancho snores soundly and the Keep, Olidammara, has resumed his ceaseless cleaning of what seems an endlessly dirty mug as a slight smile plays gently on his face.

*End scene*



**Kristin Shauck - *In Memorium: Vestal Virgin Helvia, 114 BCE***  
Acrylic, flower petals, and fire glass mounted on board

*Vicki Carter*

## **NIGHT CRUNCHES**

Barefoot crunches in the night  
over linoleum smooth and cold  
at first too asleep to notice little  
sharpened rocks poking  
naked toes and heels too soft  
from easy living the good life  
shocking me, sharpened crackling  
noisepains me into semi waking  
wondering why rocks in the kitchen?

New glasssharpened carpet laid down  
by night workers on a time clock  
meant to torture unsuspecting ice cream  
mountaindreamers searching for a  
clean bowl.

Fumbling around patting handslapping  
fingering focusing on wallpaper seams  
curling straining soundlessly away from  
the wall, critchingsounds every step  
I take reaching.

Fingers finally finding the  
light switch blaring brightness  
floods the brain shimmering  
in waves off the pretzel bag  
hiding guilty in the corner  
releasing overturned  
scattered pretzels  
without direction to the



four corners of the world  
and my world

which seems to include and  
begin in the radius of the  
one dim overhead bulb.



**Kim Rose Adams - *Just Drift'n***  
Photography

*Jessica E. Newton*

## **HERE**

I remember a time when  
I would not say this dreaded word  
During the calling of attendance  
I would drown in sweat  
The turning scarlet of my face  
As I waited for my name to pass  
My teacher would appear enraged  
This caused my stomach to turn  
More so than the simple “here”  
I wore a jacket to cover  
The utter discomfort  
Of having my arms exposed  
I overheated but  
The jacket had to stay on  
It stuck to my skin  
This disturbed me greatly  
But I couldn’t let it go  
I was drenched in anxiety  
And racing thoughts over  
The smallest occurrences  
I hoped they didn’t see me  
While I prayed that they would  
Not responding was my way  
Of remaining invisible  
My way of saying  
I’m not here  
(but I am)

I'm free now  
From anxiety



The thing that  
Tore my soul  
Into pieces  
It's gone now  
Deceased  
Burnt up  
By holy flame  
I am no longer  
Ashamed to be  
My soul is clean  
When I hear  
My name  
Being called  
For attendance  
I reply  
With comfort  
With ease  
With Freedom  
I am  
“Here”



**Asher Finch - *Grandfather's Roots*,**  
Photography

*Mason K Brown*

## **SOON**

I've been trying to define *soon*. You know, quantify it. The dictionary gives little help on the topic. If someone says, "See you in a minute." That is measurable. Or "See you next week," presents a reasonable timeframe of expectation. But "See you soon," means what?

There is a vacant Chinese restaurant in our community that bore a sign out front for nine years which read "reopening soon." Is it fair to assume someone's *soon* can be sooner than someone else's *soon*? My concept for soon relating to Chinese food is calling the number for take-out and having them hand it to me when I arrive fifteen minutes later. The restaurant is still not open, but the "reopening soon" sign came down after nine years. That is not soon enough for someone craving Chinese food.

We know "two's company, three's a crowd, four and five are nine." We can visualize few and several. I can even come up with a satisfactory mental image of a crowd, but not so for nebulous *soon*.

If I told a six-year-old she would soon be learning to drive, she would look down the timeline of her future and ten years would seem like, well – forever.

If I told a senior citizen his next colonoscopy appointment was in ten years, he would feel the time slipping by as quickly as for the next scheduled oil change on his Subaru.

So, who should define *soon*? Could a consensus ever be reached?

*Soon*. I guess it is a catch-all word. One we use when we don't want to commit ourselves and be held accountable. Me, I'm guilty. Sooner or later though I'd like to think *soon* could amount to something, measure up, know its value, hold its own in the world of temporal concepts, be conscious of its own self-worth.

*Soon* has been tossed around in our vernacular since the 11th century. Perhaps I'm just expecting too much too *soon*.



*Marianne Monson*

## **COME ROUND ASTORIA TOWN**

Come round Astoria town,  
Where native feet walked the first benediction  
Now old and new meet at a river's confluence point  
In history tangled as a blackberry vine

Layers of mist wrapped over the hills  
Part to reveal a most glorious gift:  
A town built by immigrants the world over  
Has become home to artists and writers, makers and shakers

Visitors can walk along the rain soaked timbers  
And smell steamer clams dug on a minus tide  
Canneries dissolved into pilings watch over  
A river where mystical sea creatures roam

From Uniontown to Uppertown  
The trolley plies its route  
While foxglove springs turn to blackberry summers  
and golden chanterelles spring up from the forest floor

Always it has been land and sea that has beckoned us here,  
Enticing all to bend with the river and rise with the tides



*Lauren Mallett*

## **Skipanon**

Today is the equinox and my horoscope tells me unmessable.

In this beachforest the yellows  
were the first to lose it,  
the daffodils in their showy turtlenecks,  
the bullet hoods of the skunk cabbage,

what I wanted so badly  
to be an ostrich  
rotting in the stream that dribbles  
into our town's lesser river—its treble corpse,  
the fur I willed into feathers.

The wittled molars of what  
could only be elk  
sneering up at me from the ditch.

Where else is it safe  
to watch the world throw down,  
take some and leave some?

When you say yes to one species  
you say no to every other.

That hardly makes no more cozy.  
Ostrich any less technicolor.

Kindly leave me at my could be:  
the hair rolled into quills, the cloth  
sewn up with petals



*Asher Finch*

## RISING SPIRITS

Only when the sun will rise,  
Radiance bound to sky  
    night fallen to slumber  
Will the birds sing once more.

Only when the stars are overtaken,  
Darkness cast to shadow  
    sunlight abundance  
Will the bees regain flight  
Will the flowers unfurl.

Only when the mind is silenced,  
Reciprocity in our path  
Earth will summon  
    her children home,  
Will we hear the mother's call.



**Mark Hanson - Wandering**  
Photography

*Robert Michael Pyle*

## BREAKFAST OF CHAMPIONS

To Freddie's today for the first time in months  
for an eye appointment at Vista. I am early—  
one month to the day. Being there, rain pounding  
down outside, I poke around anyway.

Look there! American steel trash cans, galvanized,  
between the stacks of Chinese plastic. Same maker  
and model since 1911. My last barrel finally bottomless  
after forty-five years, I buy one. Some suet for the birds,  
and a chicken.

Checked out, ready to go, I hear the rain bucketing  
on the skylights overhead. A man coming in says  
“someone is emptying basins up there.” So I sit  
on a bench by the sliding glass doors and have breakfast,  
waiting for a break in the downpour.

Nothing like a plain cake donut washed down with Clausthaler  
to wait the wetness out. Watch their relief as patrons wash in,  
smile back at those heading out, wait for someone to say  
“Really? You're drinking a beer in Freddie's? In the morning?”  
so I can point to the little red label that reads, “Non-Alcoholic.”

But no one even bats an eyelash.  
We're in this boat together.



*Kim Stafford*

## **RICH LAND BETWEEN**

*—for Perrin*

In a forest wilderness many years ago  
you appeared to me, and I appeared to you—  
two birds in separate trees singing to the sky.

We looked down to find the ground between us  
illuminated by a story we wanted to live. I could  
see it with your eyes, and you with mine.

Since then, we have explored the land between—  
every crumb of earth, every stem golden by day,  
withering by season, sprouting again and again

until it's hard to tell where your song ends  
and mine begins. The land between, crisscrossed  
by our devotions, has revealed how in our life

the gifts are many, and the price is everything.





Ethan Shin - *Loose Lights*  
Photography

*Steven Mayer*

## MORE PHILOSOPHERS' COFFEE

The camaraderie among budding writers, poets, and armchair philosophers grows into genuine friendship and support in coffee shops in my tiny corner of the world. The diversity of topics and opinions is enriching, as is our regard for one another. We seldom have unpleasant exchanges; rather, we disagree without becoming disagreeable, attack ideas and not each other personally, accept helpful feedback, and take social risks in personal disclosures. Directness is the rule of the day. Even so, we are random like-minded individuals who happen to be in a coffeehouse and choose to join in discussion, drawn by a topic, often not knowing persons at the table. Brief introductions are adequate. Most topic proposals are welcome. We generally avoid political or religious discussion, as it leads to sharp disagreements and emotional turmoil ... an unspoken norm but politely enforced, though brief venting is permitted. Most people stay for nearly an hour. In a few cases, we agree to meet at a future time and place. Our interpersonal dynamic is, at times, beautiful to behold.

On unusually dark, cold, and rainy winter mornings, people seek more caffeine, linger longer, and invite intriguing discussions. A writer/poet shares a concern about the *health of society and environment seriously compromising the future, querying the major global threats to humanity*. She clarifies that she's talking

about *macro issues, the big stuff like nuclear extinction or catastrophic cosmic event—the extent of damage to humanity multiplied by the probability of occurrence*. We write a list of threats prior to specific conversation about any one of them. The group agrees. She has paper and pencil for us.

After a few minutes, she surveys the six of us but asks that we select only one threat, the one that is most likely or devastating or both. She writes the list on a large, upright notepad: *environmental/planetary decay, economic collapse, totalitarian political control, incurable viral pandemic, population growth with natural resource decline, global poverty, widespread nuclear warfare, and human displacement by artificial intelligence*. She notes that a few items, such as alien invasion, cosmic catastrophe, or a religious end-of-times apocalypse, are missing; most of us view them as highly unlikely. However, two members indicate belief in the Second Coming of Christ, so they reserve comment ... for now. She opts not to rank them, as most prefer to have further discussion to view the scope of concerns more accurately. A retired university professor suggests that we suspend some conversations until we do further research. A novelist suggests using our laptops to search for information quickly, generating mixed support.

Various threats to our planetary ecosystem, including climate change and biodiversity, are near the top of everyone's



lists. One person quickly states *serious reservations about environmental science and applauds a growing counter-science to dispel such hoaxes*. His extreme views are transparent, having been voiced in previous sessions ... and politely placed in abeyance with most heads shaking in disbelief. Despite our efforts, he adds that he accepts environmental science, and before we can smile, adds that he *knowingly contributes to environmental demise to hasten the Second Coming of Christ*. We are appalled but reject his invitation to a fight. One suggests Festinger's *When Prophecy Fails* ... that he will need it if still alive. Even so, all views are welcome and subject to group reactions. Most members agree that *climate change and global warming have nonreversible, devastating effects, and adverse political consequences*. Less consensus emerges regarding timelines and interventions, though most agree that we are *approaching a point of no return in preserving planetary health*. Failure of strong action by countries contributing to the threat is cited as the primary problem, including USA. One armchair philosopher asks *where else we will live if we destroy the earth?* A poet recognized for environmental activism cites *growing individual commitment to good practices*, but a local political activist counters *individual good practices are overwhelmed by global political stupidity and inaction*. Group consensus suggests a different topic, as we can discuss *our pending ecological apocalypse unendingly*.

Nuclear mass destruction, surprisingly, is viewed in widely different ways. One member says *the growing proliferation of weapons and capability to deliver them by countries like North Korea and Iran is worrisome*. Another quickly adds the the

*instability of leaders with their finger on the launch button amplifies the threat of mass destruction*. Most agree that rising tensions, especially between Israel and Iran, Pakistan and India, and North Korea and Japan/USA are of concern whilst diplomatic efforts are waning to address the threat. I note that *this threat is not only transparent and immediate but easy to understand and reach consensus upon, unlike environmental concerns*. Another offers a contrasting observation that *we can individually impact climate change but have no influence over a nuclear weapon launch*. A historian finds that *during the Soviet-USA Cold War, underground bomb shelters were built, and food storage championed, but such efforts are mostly ignored today*. Why? We have a surprising consensus that *the threat is overstated because no prominent leader would launch nuclear weapons, and if one did, restraint would trump retaliation. Global outrage would lead to intervention to provide humanitarian aid*. Two members disagree in dismay, one stating *such naiveté inhibits sound diplomacy in nuclear non-proliferation agreements and UN policing*.

Although cited by only two, an intriguing threat is human displacement by artificial intelligence (AI). A computer scientist, typically quiet, waves his hand immediately, stating *this may be the greatest threat of all those cited*. One person cautions that *this is a sojourn into science fiction*. The scientist laments ignorance and annoys most present. Another person cites a YouTube of AI advances by Elon Musk, and another who saw it adds that *it is mind-blowing to watch a near-human robot perform common tasks and confess to being conscious*. The armchair



philosopher quickly asks *what it means to be conscious?* And in the face of no reactions, adds the *robot can think independently and take actions to execute a decision, perhaps even reproduce herself.* Group members are skeptical; one questions that *human control is necessary, no doubt.*

The computer scientist quickly says, *the fact that a near-human robot can be built is the reason for concern about human displacement. Why continue to value a biologically inferior life form such as ours? AI is outmoded terminology that fosters naiveté. Maybe electronically enhanced intelligence (EEI) is a more accurate label, or perhaps we have created a new life form?* Several members are bewildered; one comments *science fiction has become reality?* Another adds that *we are becoming expendable.* The poet wonders if *I have flashbacks of the movie 2001: Space Odyssey and HAL conflicting with his human commander. Are controls in place to manage such AI threats? What prevents AI from overriding such controls and attacking humans.*

Given our recent Covid pandemic, most are anxious about an incurable viral pandemic as a major threat to humanity. The timeline in developing vaccine weighs on some, and a political climate affirms the legal right to not be vaccinated. More worrisome is *the state of medical science in the face of evolving new viruses of unknown origin, ones that could spread quickly across the planet and result in high mortality levels.* One novelist adds that *the impotency of politicians to marshal the resources to cope enflames her imagination.* Our lone conservative firebrand says *human rights need to be affirmed allowing individuals to assume whatever risk they choose.* Several members are on the edge of their seats, shaking their heads, noting that *risk by a*

*few might result in greater exposure and infection for many. Why put up with such nonsense when they ignore values of life and death? I ask when societal interests override individual ones?* The writer/poet who started this philosophical circus weighs in *wondering if humanity is sufficiently mature and amenable to value clarification of serious public health policy concerns.* I wonder *if a lethal plague could occur before we catch our collective breaths.* Group consensus supports her pessimistic perspective. Another philosophical mind adds *we shouldn't be surprised if we are our own worst enemy, as is evident in discussing other threats, and our social and political impotency becomes the cause of human extinction.* A fiction writer smiles, waving her hands recognizing *an appealing storyline for her next book. Too bad we may not be around to read it.*

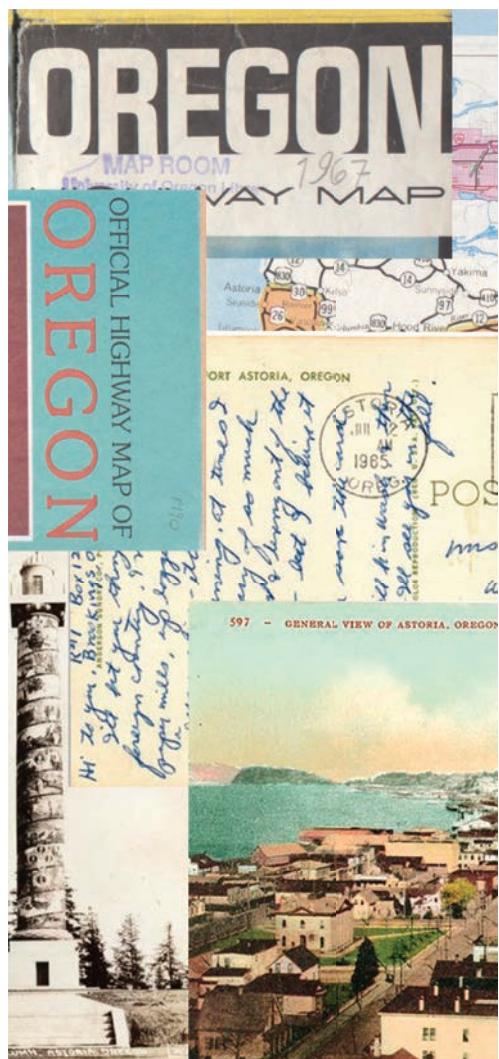
Nearly two hours have passed since we gathered. We take a break to fill our coffee cups, and a few wave goodbye, exhausted by intellectual combat. Dark weather pounds harder on windows, no seagulls fly, fewer brave souls find their way here, and thick sheets of rain rise off the ocean to remind us of the obvious, battering our coffeehouse ... and us. Even so, most are invigorated, noting conversations do more for us than caffeine in our coffee. Philosophers' coffee! Naps will have to wait for another day. A few share "philosophy" from the newspaper's comic section, generating good humor—emotional therapy for heavy thoughts and bad weather.

We review our list and quickly reach consensus that political and economic threats are unworthy of our time and energy. *These threats invite politics and*



religion at its worst, generating hate, rage, and violence. Even if we wish it were different, we are lost in a quagmire of societal chaos. A writer suggests a reread of Orwell's 1984. We agree not to discuss threats of economic collapse and totalitarian political control, even though a few note those issues are both urgent and confounding, tearing the best of our humanity apart. Issues of global poverty and population control fade ... disturbingly. We are at the point of breaking up and heading into the storm, knowing we can return to our philosophical cyclone on another unsuspecting day. No noses bloodied, no tempers unchecked, no anger repressed ... only thoughtful conversations among still friends.

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Ethan Jenkins & Jessica Bahl  
*Maps to Home*  
Digital Collaboration

*Scott T. Starbuck*

## **POEM FOR COP28 IN EAST FORK EAGLE CREEK, COLUMBIA GORGE**

Below 172-foot Tunnel Falls  
a dead deer,  
maybe from crossing  
swift winter current.

I'm guessing  
when flesh hit basalt  
It ended quick.  
Soon, coyotes would feast.

I knew it was metaphor  
for something big  
but didn't know how big.



**Kristin Shauck - *Love is the Only Reality***

Acrylic & mixed media on panel

*Kristin Shauck*

## **LETTER TO SYLVIA**

Dear Sylvia,

I just wanted you to know that I understand. I have been on the precipice too, and I've looked into the abyss. It is breathtaking, the view from such dizzying heights. I have sat many times on the river's edge under the moonlight with a cautious heron, thinking of you. I understand your longing for peace. You say your feet are tired. I am exhausted, too. The pain is exhausting. I can feel it cutting into me like a sharp chisel, sculpting me into something sleeker and more streamlined, like a Brancusi marble. The pain has tempered me, too, so I am stronger now. I am able to keep on slogging through the mud, looking for the lotus. Your words speak to me from beyond the abyss, and resonate deeply in a way that somehow transcends language. Your poetry gives me solace and I no longer feel so alone. Your spirit lives on. I know there is hope. There will always be suffering, but there will also be fleeting moments of bliss. Do you really think that the moon is impervious to death? I am not so sure. Isn't that a tear glistening in her eye?

Sending you all my love,

Kristin



Graeme Fryer - *Dungeon*  
Photography

*Connie Soper*

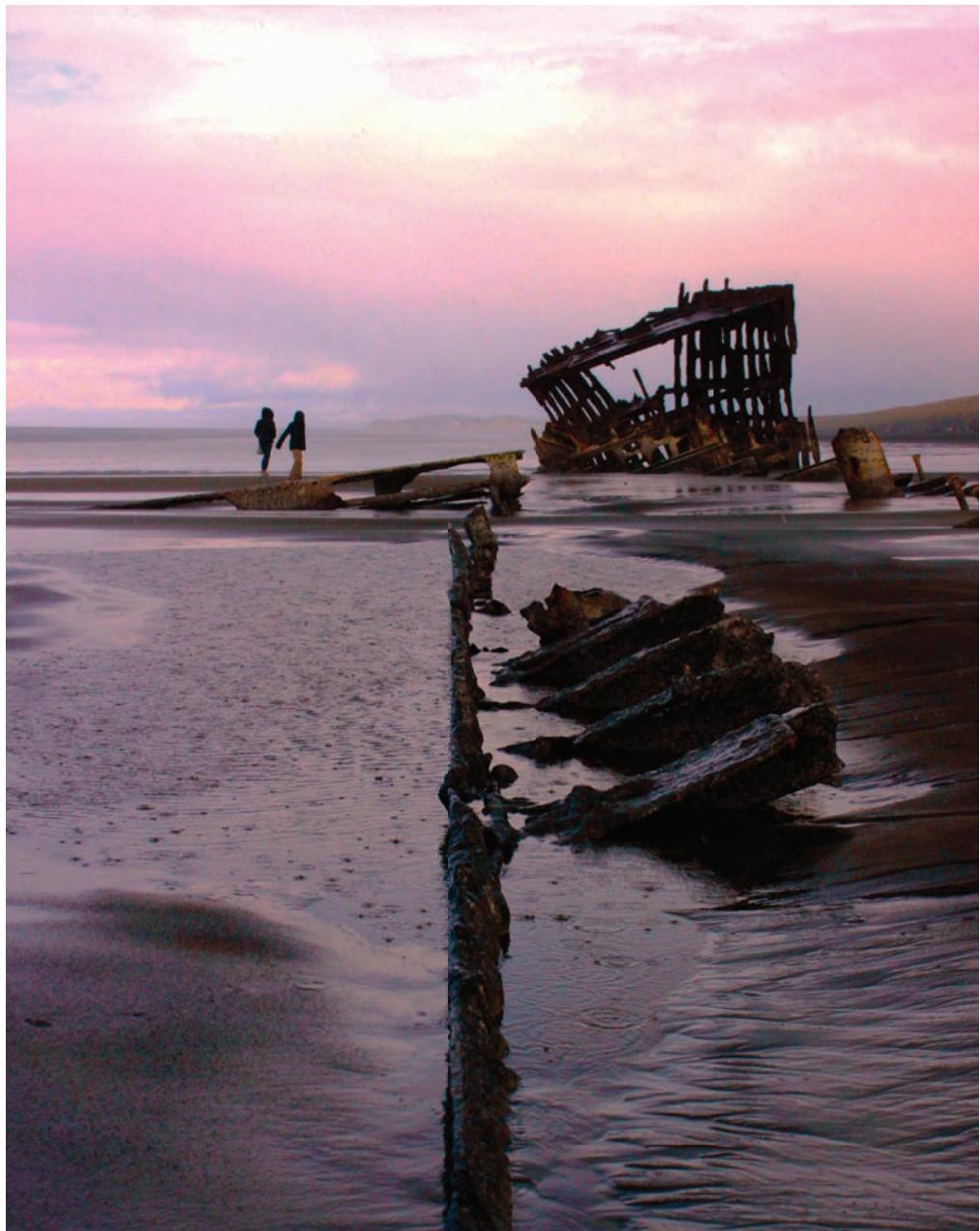
## HIGH TEA IN GUERNSEY

If there is a heaven, it has found us here,  
at this table laden with tiered platters  
of cucumber sandwiches, apricot tarts,  
scones plumped up with clotted cream  
gifted from Guernsey cows—  
perhaps those we saw yesterday grazing in a field  
next to the coastal path we walked.

Tea steeps with time and patience while  
we wait, content in our own company.  
Conversation drifts,  
like little boats bobbing in the distance.  
Long threads of friendship both deepen  
and soften within us.  
That we have changed does not sadden us.

We brush crumbs from the cloth,  
empty the pot of its Darjeeling.  
Our gaze turns seaward, its plein air views  
like paintings we saw in the museum.  
Clouds white as merengue.

Tomorrow we will leave this island,  
but for today we inhabit it and it inhabits us—  
gulls wheeling over the piers, horizon  
where sea meets sky. Its ritual  
of sweet indulgence.



**Joshua Martin-Schlichting**  
*Future to Pasts Collide*  
Photography

*Butch Freedman*

## **INSOMNIA**

I had always suffered from insomnia, but it had become much worse since the divorce. I hardly slept at all now and never dreamed. I was surprised by how much the break-up shattered me. But the divorce was a good thing. For both of us. Kathy and I had grown apart--a cliché, but accurate. We had stayed together to raise the kids. That was always the excuse. I was 46 when I moved out. Got my own apartment. It was nice enough, lots of space and big windows looking out over a busy street in Northwest Portland.

My first purchase was a new, expensive mattress and box spring. "Money well spent," I told the mattress salesman. He smiled in agreement, glad of his commission. I was primed for that first night's test. The "new beginning" on the line.

Then it started. At first I thought it was traffic noise--a dull vibration. Life in the city. I wasn't going to let it bother me. But the sound grew louder, till I realized it wasn't coming from outside the apartment. It was in the building. I couldn't pinpoint where it was coming from. The apartment below? I knew there were two young women living there. I had seen them checking their mailbox. "Shit," I yelled. "Shit!"

I decided the weird thrumming music(?) was rising up from the apartment below, and so dumbly stomped on my floor. No response. I'll call the manager in the morning, I decided, and went to look for my foam ear plugs. That didn't help, and again I knew sleep was not to come.

The next morning, as I left for work, I found a note taped to my door.

*Dear Neighbor,*

*We're so sorry about the noise. But we are not the culprits. The awful music bothers us as much as it apparently does you. We've complained to the manager, but he seems unable or unwilling to help.*

*-Apartment 1B*

Now I felt like a fool. It was too early to knock on their door and explain my behavior. I told myself I would apologize when I returned home. And I would call the manager, give him hell. I rubbed my eyes. Sleep, dammit. I needed sleep. The working day passed in a blur. I'm a high school teacher. I enjoy the job--well, most of the time. Every day I teach five classes of 30 or more students. That's a lot of lives, a lot of tender sensibilities to hold. On my way home after school, I stopped to buy cigarettes at the corner pharmacy. I am planning to quit soon. While there, I impulsively picked up a discounted box of chocolates in a heart shaped box. A few minutes later, I knocked on my neighbors' door. After a quiet 30 seconds, as I turned to leave, the door opened. There stood one of the young women,



looking at me with a touch of suspicion.

"Yes?" she said.

"I live upstairs." I pointed.

"Yes?" she said again.

I held out the box of candies. "I'm the idiot who moved into the apartment above you."

"The stomper."

"That's me."

She took the candy, giving it a quizzical glance.

"You didn't have to do this."

"I thought the music was coming from down here."

"Because we're young." It wasn't a question.

"Yes. I'm clearly a moron."

She laughed. "Well, not entirely. It was a relief for us to know we weren't the only ones being driven crazy by that weird music."

"Do you know where it comes from?"

"Yeah, though we haven't confronted him. That's why we're glad you're here."

"So I can do the confronting?"

"Something like that."

"And the manager?"

"We call all the time, but he just blows us off. He lives downtown and doesn't want to get involved."

"Great manager."

"You want to come in?" She stepped aside.

I was tempted, but said, "No thanks." And held up my bulging leather briefcase.

"Work?"

"Essays to read." I shrugged. "I'm a teacher."

"Cool," she said. "Well, let's talk again and maybe figure out something we can do about 3A."

"That's the offender?"

"Uh huh. The guy's, uh, eccentric I guess you'd say."

"Anyway, nice to meet you," I said in retreat. "And again, sorry for being a jerk."

"You're forgiven."

After grading papers, I felt exhausted and in need of a deep dream-filled sleep. I turned off the lights, opened a window so the stale cigarette odor could escape. It was quiet now. But within minutes the aggravating noise seeped in through the walls.

It was time to call the manager. He answered after eight or nine rings. "What is it?"

"This is Robert Foreman--in 2B, at The Marlton."

"It's very late, Robert. Couldn't this wait till tomorrow?"

"No, it couldn't." I tried to collect my thoughts. "The music is too loud," I said.

"What are you talking about?"

"The guy in 3A. He plays this weird music all night. I can't sleep. Dammit!"

"Could you lower your voice please?" the manager said. "I'll look into it tomorrow.



There's nothing I can do now."

"You could fucking call him up," I shouted.

"I'm not going to do that." He hung up.

The music seemed louder now, like a howling animal. There was only one thing left to do--man up! I put on my shoes and climbed the stairs to apartment 3A. I knocked on the door. When there was no response, I knocked harder.

The door opened a crack. A face peered out. All I could see was one eye staring and a shock of gray hair. "You need to turn the music down," I yelled at the eye. "I can't sleep. You're keeping the whole building awake."

The door swung wider. "So, you're a representative of the entire building then?" I was taken aback by this fellow's appearance. He was old, in his eighties I guessed, with a trimmed white beard, and fully dressed. He was even wearing a tie. "Perhaps some of our mutual neighbors enjoy my entertainment."

"I doubt that." I tried to peer around him. "What kind of fucking music is that anyway?"

"No need for coarse language," the old man said. Then he smiled. "I play the theremin. It's an electronic instrument. You play it in the air." He made a sweeping motion with his hand. "It's my calling you might say."

"Well, it's driving me insane."

"I doubt we can blame that on my playing." He chuckled.

I bit back my anger. "Look, man. It's late. Could you please give it a rest?"

He stared at me for a long moment. "Yes, I'll stop now for the evening."

"Thank you," I said, and took a breath. "Thank you very much."

"Maybe tomorrow you'd like to come back and I can show you how the theremin works."

"Yeah, maybe," I said.

He nodded and closed the door. I went back down the stairs and climbed into bed and soon fell into a dreamless sleep.

The following day at school I felt better, more alert than I had in the past six months. Something had shifted. I breezed through the rest of the day, even found myself smiling and joking with the kids. One of the junior girls told me she was glad I'd "gotten over the grumps." It set me back. "I didn't think you all noticed those things."

"Of course we do." She smiled at me and left the classroom.

When I got back to The Marlton I decided to stop at 1B and catch the young women up on last night's adventure. A different one opened the door. I was glad to be wearing a tie and jacket, assuming I appeared less threatening that way. "Can I help you?" she said after I failed to come up with an opening gambit.

"Uh, I live upstairs. The guy who jumped on your ceiling?"

"Oh. Yes. Teresa told me she spoke with you. We enjoyed the Valentine's day gift."

"Well, I didn't mean it to be a Valentine."



"My name's Andrea." She held out her hand.

I reached out and shook it, relieved that she wasn't angry. "So, I talked to the fellow in 3A. Don't know if you noticed but he stopped playing after that."

"We noticed. It was lovely to have a quiet night for a change."

"Yeah, I had the best sleep I've had in months."

"But you've only been here a few days, right?" She was older than her roommate, and dark complected.

"Yes, but I hadn't been sleeping well before then."

"How come?"

"Long story," I said.

"I've got time." She stepped to one side. "You can come in if you like."

"Uh, sure," I stammered. "That'd be great."

"Well, I wouldn't go that far," Andrea said and laughed.

Their apartment was a mirror image of mine, though more nicely decorated, with a comfortable looking couch and big easy chair. Andrea settled into the chair and I sat on the couch, let my briefcase drop to the floor. "So, you're a professor, huh?"

"Nothing that grand. I teach high school English. How 'bout you?" I asked.

"How 'bout me what?"

"Like, what do you do?"

"I read, I write, I go for long walks without knowing where I'll end up. I also collect frogs, ceramic ones."

"I meant, what do you do for work?"

"Oh that. I don't let my work define me. You know what I mean?"

"Sure. I don't really define myself as a teacher either. It's what I do to support myself."

"So, how do you define yourself?"

"Still trying to figure that one out. Guess you could call me a life-long seeker."

"Is that what I should call you then? Seeker?"

"My friends call me Buddy." I took a breath. "So, you're not going to tell me what you do for work?"

"I work at an architectural firm, do the renderings for commercial buildings."

"You're an artist."

"I'm a wage slave."

"What do you really want to do?"

"Buddy, we've only just met." She laughed.

"I want to write books," I muttered, something I hardly ever revealed.

"So why don't you?"

"I don't have the time. What with teaching and grading papers, and not sleeping." Andrea didn't say anything, just kept looking at me. "I know, I know. That's just bullshit. If I wanted to do it I'd find the time."

Still, she said nothing.

"It's on my agenda. Soon." I reached down for my briefcase. "I'd better get going."

"You know, it's okay to be confused," Andrea said then.



"We just met." I stood up to leave. "And here I am telling you all my secrets." Andrea stood then also. "I'm guessing you've got a lot more secrets to tell."

"And you?"

"Yep, I've got a few. Let's talk again some time."

"Let's. I'd like that."

I felt better, and so decided to go for a walk, pulled on my sneakers, and headed out. I hadn't had much chance to explore the neighborhood. As I walked briskly down Northwest 21st, I took it all in--the coffee shops, taverns with outdoor seating, a Thai restaurant, a barber shop where three lady barbers were snipping away. There were lots of young people around, but also a sprinkling of older types, ex-hippies and other eccentrics. I wondered if I now fit into that category. As I walked farther north, I found myself in a sprawling urban park and followed the first trail into a forested landscape. I walked for miles.

On my way back to the apartment, I stopped and bought some groceries--eggs, a loaf of crusty bread, a hunk of gouda cheese, mushrooms, a few other vegetables. I'd make an omelet for dinner. I also bought a cheapish bottle of red wine.

The phone rang as I was putting away my supplies. I was surprised. I hadn't had any phone calls since I'd moved in. "This is Victor Charles," the voice on the line said.

I racked my brain for a connection. "I'm sorry, do I know you?"

"After a fashion. We met last evening."

"Last evening?"

"You assaulted my front door."

"The theremin guy?"

"Indeed. The very same."

"What can I help you with?" I didn't want to be rude, though I was hungry and anxious to open my bottle of wine.

"We never did meet properly. I'm afraid I don't even know your Christian name."

"It's Robert, and it's not Christian," I said.

"I meant no offense," Victor said. "I'm a bit of a dinosaur as you no doubt noticed."

"It's fine. People call me Buddy, though."

"But Robert is a fine name just as it is. Would you be offended if I called you that?"

"Sure, whatever."

"I was hoping you might join me for dinner. I thought you professed some interest in learning about the theremin."

"Did I?"

"Perhaps I was mistaken," Victor said. "It certainly wouldn't be the first time."

"I was just about to make my own dinner," I told him. "It's been a long day."

"All the more reason to let me attend to you."

"What the hell," I said. "I'll bring a bottle of wine."

"Splendid," Victor Charles said.

Before I headed up to the old fellow's place, I took a couple hits off an old joint. Figured I needed a little jolt to keep going. I grabbed the wine and climbed up the staircase. The hallway smelled musty, like sawdust and old memories. I heard the eerie music before



I reached Victor's door, though much softer now. I stood there listening for a moment. Weird, like music from a different dimension. I knocked and the wailing music stopped. Victor opened the door, still dressed formally, three-piece suit and tie.

"Welcome Robert, welcome," he said. I realized then I was a bit too stoned. I wasn't used to getting high anymore. I barely knew where I was and had to stop for a few deep breaths before I crossed the threshold. "Are you okay?" Victor asked.

"Yeah, I'm good." I looked around the apartment, trying to take it all in at once; old, heavily upholstered furniture filled every corner, and dozens of photos and paintings covered the walls. I wanted to go look at each one, but felt that would be impolite. Instead I headed to what was clearly the focal point of the main room. "This is it, then?" I asked, and stared at the long, polished wood box.

"Yes, that's my theremin. Would you like to see how it works?"

"Sure, but there aren't any keys," I said, imagining it to be some sort of organ or piano.

"No need," Victor said, stepping behind the machine. He flipped a switch and began slowly waving his hands between the two metal posts rising up from the base. A strange, eerie, music wafted into the air, clearly controlled by the rising and falling motion of Victor's hands and fingers. It was as if he was pulling music out of the air.

"This is fucking beautiful," I said.

"Thank you," he said, while he continued to draw strange melodies from the box.

I was entranced, wanted to lie down on the carpet and drift off.

"Let's open that lovely wine now, shall we?" He dropped his arms and the music ceased immediately.

"Yeah," I said, returning to earth. "I think I need it."

Victor radiated a sort of peacefulness, which I found infectious. He had prepared a whole chicken and roasted vegetables, which he served on heavy white plates, with folded cloth napkins, and real silverware alongside. He poured the wine into crystal goblets.

"I feel so well-taken care of," I told him, while digging into the sumptuous meal.

"It's my pleasure," the old man said. "As you might imagine, I very rarely have company."

"No family?"

"None to speak of. My wife died some years ago. We never had children. A decision we both thought best, though now I sometimes wonder." He smiled and looked off above my head.

The wine tasted better after the second glass. "What do you do other than play the theremin?"

"You mean, what value do I have left in the world?" He smiled, so I knew he wasn't angry.

"I meant, it must be hard getting, you know, old?"

"It is, indeed, difficult, Robert. Every day is a struggle against the ravages of an aging body. I won't go into the details. But I do try to appreciate whatever time I have remaining."



I took another swallow of wine. "How do you do it? I have a hard time getting out of bed in the morning and I'm in my forties."

"A good age," Victor said. "You should treasure it."

"I guess."

"One must always do the things that makes one happy."

"How the hell do you do that?"

"Of course, it isn't easy. This world of ours can be an ugly place." Victor stood then and began to clear the dishes.

"Look, Vic, I better go back down to my place now. Need to get some sleep."

"Before you go, may I show you something?" He stacked the dishes neatly in the sink.

I stood up, felt a bit dizzy. "Sure, what?"

He walked into the back room and motioned for me to follow. "I have to get up pretty early," I called out to his back. "Faculty meeting."

Victor bent over and pulled a heavy cardboard box from beneath his bed. He stood up slowly, trying not to let me see him wince. I plopped down on the bed. He opened the carton, shuffled around some photos and books, then pulled out a yellowed paper, which he carefully unfolded, then held out to me. "What is it?"

He came to stand beside me, his head just above my shoulder. "These are my release papers."

"Release from where?"

"From the camps. From the Nazis." He smiled, almost apologetically.

"Oh man, I didn't even think you were Jewish. You asking me about my Christian name and all."

"I'm not Jewish," Victor said. "Now I follow no religion, but when we were detained, my family was Catholic."

"So, why'd they, uh, detain you?"

"The Gestapo discovered that my parents were sheltering a Jewish family. That was almost as bad as being a Jew. Maybe worse, in their eyes. They tore apart our home, then shipped us all off. It's an old story now."

"Damn," was all I could come up with. "Jesus fucking Christ."

"Exactly," Victor said. Then we both looked at each other and laughed, because there was nothing else to do.

We spent another hour or so discussing his experiences at Dachau. And I told him about my Eastern European Jewish heritage and all the relatives in Poland and Hungary I never got to meet. I thought it strange that his reminiscences weren't tinged with anger or despair. The old man talked mostly about the friends he had made in the camp and the way he had been accepted by his "Jewish brothers and sisters." "Every day we survived was a gift," he said.

"I would have wanted to kill somebody. Didn't you want revenge after you were liberated?"

"At first I did."

"Then what?" We were both sitting on the bed now, the box of memorabilia



between us. Every few minutes, he would pull out another photograph or newspaper clipping and pass it to me.

"I realized pretty quickly that my anger was not going to help me get on with my life." He smiled then. "I must sound like a terrible Polly-Anna."

"No, I just don't understand how you managed to stay, I don't know, joyful?"

"Yes, that is exactly the word, Robert. Joy. It's what we all need no matter the circumstances. Even for a moment, even a fraction of a moment." He took a labored breath. "I hope you are finding some joy in your own life." He put his hand on my shoulder. I started to choke up.

"I better go home now," I said when I regained my composure.

"Tomorrow then?" Victor asked.

"Tomorrow what?"

"We'll go for a stroll? Talk some more? Have a coffee?"

"Okay," I said, "Would you mind if I brought a friend? She lives in the building."

"That would be lovely," Victor said, as he opened the door for me.

As I made my way down the steps, I heard the strange vibrations of the theremin once again. This time it made me smile. By the time I unlocked my apartment door the music had stopped. He accompanied me to my room, I thought.

That night the dreams returned.

————— • • • —————



*Deborah Akers*

## **LAST PUSH**

sandhill cranes trace  
the Columbia  
in loose weave

swerve  
to snag thermals  
for carrying lift

reprieve from labor  
of enormous wings  
now more a burden  
in this last push west

famished  
keen with hope

low-tide feast  
barely in sight

*Connie Soper*

## THE ELK IN GEARHART

No one remembers when they came down  
from the foothills— abandoning  
their home to inhabit another's.

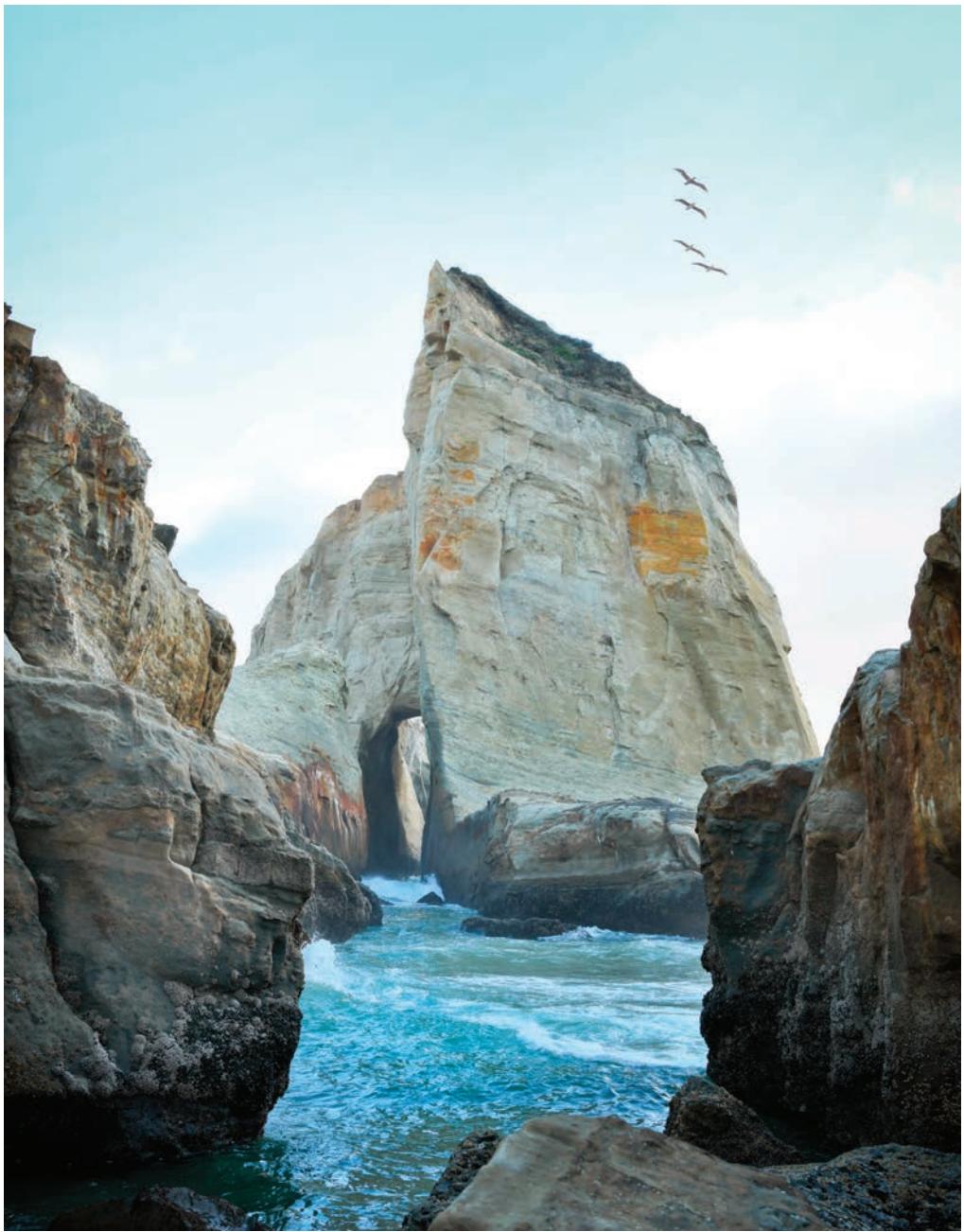
Now they nuisance our gardens, forage  
for apples and roses.

Some days the herd strolls through town  
in grand synchronization, nibbling  
geraniums hung from storefront baskets.  
They loll on the golf course, lick dew off  
grass fronting new condominiums.

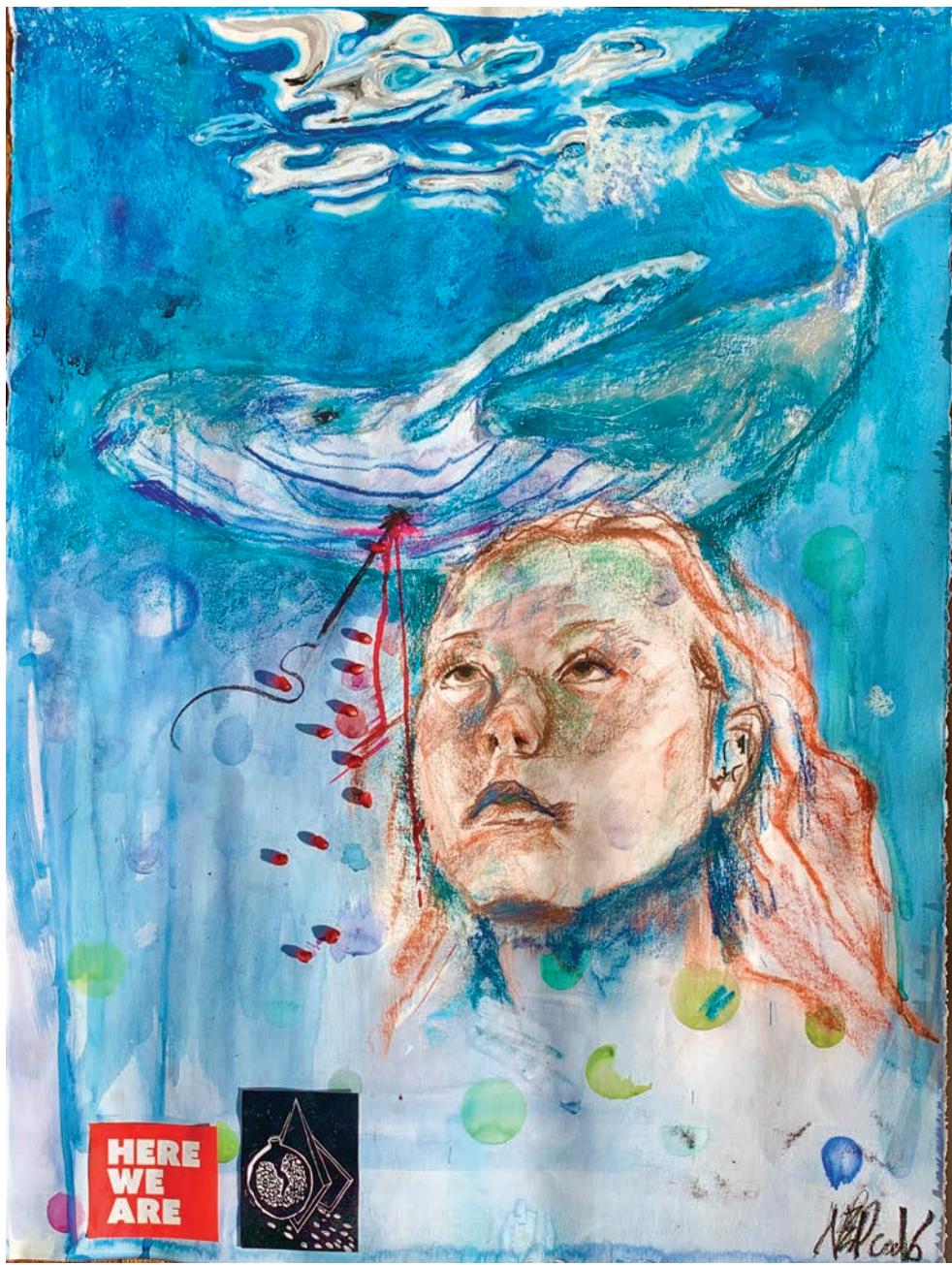
Neither wild nor tame, as if  
escaped from a petting zoo—

not even trying  
to find soft mossy beds where they once  
lay their russet flanks.  
They tolerate tourists, feast  
on caviar of domesticated shrubs, breathing  
a bouquet of cotton candy and caramel corn

while we drive rutted miles on county roads,  
hike muddy trails in search of what  
they left behind. What do we have they want?  
That we would surrender  
for the sake of solitude, communing with  
the psyche of old growth, if just for one day.



**Kim Rose Adams-** *Sandstone Arch with Pelican Pod*  
Photography



Nizina Elizabeth Cook - *Harvest*  
Mixed Media

*Jessica Bahl*

## A MIRROR IN THE SEA

The sun hung low on the horizon, casting a warm golden glow; turning the sand into a kaleidoscope of diamonds. Salt bursts into a billion atoms as the sea laps the shore, carrying the distinct aroma of seaweed and immenseness. The air here is divine, coaxing internal organs into perfect health. It is as if each breeze were whispering timeless secrets of ancient lands. The capacity of the ocean transcends the mundane. I have discovered a sanctuary at the water's edge, where all rivers meet the sea.

From the first moment I encountered the ocean's immense power, I felt a mix of danger and vitality, marking the beginning of my *mesmerizing* journey. It was a winter's day on the California coastline, and I was a green-eyed baby. My emerald eyes were like absorbent orbs, framed by dark curtain-like lashes that defied the intrusion of the world.

The sky was draped in a soft, muted blanket, coyly diffusing sunlight into a gentle gloom that bathed the landscape in grey and white hues.

In the distance, gulls declared their dominance over unseen air currents, sporadically swooping into the blend of muted blues and parachuting against the stark contrast of palm trees.

My father and mother busily arranged blankets in the sand to prepare for our beach-day lunch. As they began setting up, they placed me within easy reach. It is reasonable to presume that they shared a typical expectation:

*How far and how fast could a 3-year-old wander?*

I was sitting on the collection of shells my mother had propped around me for entertainment when I heard it. Like formidable giants, the waves crashed into the shore. Intrigued, I could not resist the call of the water, and I began to wander toward the water's edge.

The distant gulls continued to cry in the overcast sky, and the palm trees stood witness. I felt the pulse of the ocean's heartbeat raging into the sand with every nearer step.

It could have gobblled me up and swept me away like a tiny bottle with the sea regretting nothing. Yet in all its impenitence, something quieter made me pause. There was a soft and perfect sound behind the rush of the waves and below the veil where the horizon meets water. It was as if an eternal choir somewhere begged to be listened to.

As my parents pulled me from my gaze, I, as a tiny observer, became acutely self-aware of a magnetic connection that would stay for the rest of my life.

While I grew, I sought after the ocean, turning every corner to see how I felt in its presence. The sea became a compass and a charging port. I would sit effortlessly for hours. I wove with the waves, poems, and songs and fell in love repeatedly—with the world, myself, and the transient beauty of life.



As I navigated the complexities of life, I would listen to the ocean's pulse and take my own. The symphonic hum of a million waves tossed proudly, carelessly, as if to unapologetically declare—*I am—I am.*

The calm knowingness in the waves amazed me, and I wanted to incorporate that within myself. Friends who understood me became my companions on this quest. Our trips to the ocean were experiences drenched in orange marmalade hues and laughter that roared like spiritual hymns. The ocean breeze encouraged us, thick with the invigorating scent of freedom. When words proved insufficient, we sat beside the waves, letting the ocean's sounds fill the silence. In the distance, the ocean's voice deepened into a low and constant rumble that transcended the visible horizon. Like the moon coaxing the waves ashore, the tide's ebb and flow pulled me closer.

As I peer into the reflections of my life, there is a mixture of power and calmness. Behind the rush of the waves, beating back the earth and below the *veil* where the horizon meets water, *there is a collective hum of countless waves*. The low cadence of the tide chants as it gently crescendos before faintly retreating.

In the distance, the ocean's voice deepens into a low and constant rumble that speaks of the vastness and power beyond what is visible, just like you or me. We are a collection of countless waves, with countless dreams, delivering upon our lives in different gradients.

Within the symphony of waves and dreams, *we, too*, possess the ability to transcend the mundane. As I gaze into the great depths of the waters, it is here that I find my breath. Through the most contemplative and influential moments of my life, the ocean has allowed me to glimpse its looking glass.

It has gifted me the transient power to suspend time, allowing me to experience the sheer force that envelops me as I stand facing the horizon,

*like a mirror in the sea.*

•••





**Chloe Stringer - *Violet Tendencies***  
Rough Paper on Canvas

*John Ciminello*

## **ASHES AND MIRRORS**

Last night, I spoke with my Dad,  
he looked tired and beat like  
before the open-heart surgery  
when truth broke like a mirror into a thousand pieces,  
each sliver a fraction of the whole,  
and yet, as if he were whole and not ashes,  
we talk about baseball, Italian cinema  
and the death of his father,  
I ask him whether it hurt when he crossed over,  
he gives me a smile and says,  
“If you’re going to stay up late,  
be sure to turn the lights out  
when you leave.”

At church in time for the memorial service,  
I go into a windowless restroom to take a leak,  
I turn the timer knob for lights,  
stand at the urinal, and contemplate  
my version of eternity and the final goodbye  
until the lights time out and I am plunged into  
the discomfort of my own darkness.

As a young man, I drag my father across the floor,  
he struggles and points to a line  
scratched in the floor and says,  
“Don’t drag me past that line,  
that’s as far as I dragged my father.”



At the memorial mass,  
the priest gives us one task,  
carry the urn of ashes from the baptismal font to the altar,  
the blessing calls for holy water sprinkled on the urn  
except for one small problem,  
no water in the font,  
Father Michael accuses George, the 75-year old acolyte,  
and George rolls his eyes,  
Patricia says, “a blessing is a blessing  
with or without water.”  
I concur, George concurs,  
even Father Michael reluctantly agrees  
as he dips his thumbs into the bone-dry basin  
to baptize the ashes in the name of the  
Father, Son, Holy Ghost.

When I was a child, I drew people's eyes like flowers  
and hearts like empty bowls,  
I worried about skeletons in closets,  
and what the world was like on the other side of a mirror,  
Now, I am the mirror looking back to remember  
what little remains of our long talks  
about science, politics, art,  
when everything seemed bendable and possible  
in ways clear and mysterious,  
where we reflected each other  
and refracted each other's light,  
a time before ashes when  
everything carried meaning,  
and nothing hurt.

*James Dott*

## **RECIPE FOR DUST**

*All come from dust, and to dust all return.*

-Ecclesiastes 3:20

Earth, mud, dirt, the soil,  
always underfoot, mostly out of mind,  
sand, silt, clay and humus, a dark world abounding with being.  
A good loam: more space than solid, more precious than gold.  
Podzols raising ancient forests,  
deep black prairie chernozems under fields of soybeans, corn,  
rich alluvial muck of marshes,  
the thin gravely skin over bedrock, bright with alpine flowers,  
clinging flood plain clays amended with compost and sharp sand  
to begin a garden plot.

In Spring, the soil a womb, warmed by sun,  
pregnant with swelling seeds of sunflower, broccoli, bean.  
In Fall, a grave, chilled by rain,  
where the hungry host of earthworms, sow bugs, grubs  
dismember the dead and replenish the placental soil.

And what is soil but broken bedrock, limb and leaf, flesh and bone,  
worn down, at last, to dust.

The recipe for dust calls for mountains,  
a world for the mountains to be formed on,  
a star to hold the world in gyre  
a galaxy to bear the star,  
a universe to birth the galaxies.  
And for that you will need:  
A bowl: vast, empty.  
A spoon: long handled, strong,



And nothingness although a void will also do.  
Fill the bowl with nothingness, the void,  
and stir *the stirring is essential for success*,  
and stir *it's all in the wrist*,  
and stir *you must be patient*,  
and after stirring, stirring, stirring  
out of the empty stillness will burst the pulsing spin at an atom's center,  
swirling out galactic spirals, eddying into stars, a sun, an Earth  
with mountains wearing down to soil,  
a womb, a grave, a grace:  
To the scattering and gathering of dust.



**Asher Finch - Sorrowed Farewell**  
Photography

*Marilyn deFreese*

## **SOMETHING WENT WRONG**

The earth trembled,  
The house shuttered,  
I lost my footing,  
Skidded toward the door.  
The foundation cracked,  
The door frame splintered,  
Then it was hell-bent for leather.  
Rolling and bucking,  
Down that hillside I flew,  
Sometimes on my back side,  
Spinning like a clown  
On a Ferris wheel,  
Or zooming downward like  
A five-year-old on a slide.  
Dirt, mud, chaos,  
It all passed before me  
As lives do,  
Not a thought,  
But of the moment,  
Not a whisper of hope,  
But a whimper.  
Sudden silence, then the sirens.  
Choked by dust,  
I could breathe.  
Surrounded by debris,  
A neighborhood in devastation,  
No one to care.  
No walk today.



*Luciana Jazmín Coronado*

*translated into English by Allison A. deFreese*

## **THE SECRET**

for a week  
after learning  
that her boyfriend  
of all these years had passed away  
in a nursing home  
my grandmother kept quiet  
she kept this secret  
along with the others  
I dream of opening the top of her  
head  
once she's dead  
and looking through  
all the thoughts  
hidden away in those little boxes  
sorted according to type  
like tiny jewelry or gemstones  
I dream  
of uncovering her treasure chests  
so I can finally accept  
that certain things  
are never ours

durante una semana  
después de aprender  
que su novio  
de todos estos años había fallecido  
en un asilo de ancianos  
mi abuela se quedó callada  
ella mantuvo este secreto  
junto con los demás  
Sueño con abrirle la coronilla  
una vez que ella esté muerta  
y mirando a través  
todos los pensamientos  
escondido en esas pequeñas cajas  
ordenados según el tipo  
como pequeñas joyas o piedras  
preciosas  
yo sueño  
de descubrir sus cofres del tesoro  
para que finalmente pueda aceptar  
que ciertas cosas  
nunca son nuestros





Ethan Jenkins - *Roadkill* - Photography

## *Flax Glor* **UNDER THE POLTRY MOON**

OVER BLACK

*RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)*

*It's been over fifty years since  
the sighting of 'The Chickenman'  
yet it seems the celestial event  
known as the 'poultry moon' has  
returned. Will we have another  
series of incidents like the  
tragedy of December 1970?*

*FADE IN:*

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

SUPER: "Oklahoma City Suburbs, Present Day"

An SUV pulls into the driveway of a cookie-cutter home in a suburban cul-de-sac neighborhood, and the RADIO turns off with the engine.

JUNE, late 30s with a natural radiance but the age lines of parental concern showing, hands a large bag of groceries to her son BEAU, 12, shiny braces and gangly limbs, as they hop out opposite sides of the vehicle.

JUNE

That's enough of the urban legends for the night.

Beau eats from a greasy bucket of chicken, getting it all over his fingers, his lips and cheeks, and stuck in his braces.

JUNE (CONT'D)

I swear, Beau, you won't be impressing any potential mates with your eating habits...

Beau looks up and drops the bag of groceries on the ground as there is a CRACKING sound. The bag leaks as Beau is frozen in fear -- staring at a MYSTERIOUS FIGURE -- but June doesn't seem to notice it.

JUNE (CONT'D)

... or your idea of helping with the chores.

Beau's eyes scan slowly up and down in disbelief. A loud CLUCKING is heard.

June smacks her head on the roof of the car as she grabs her large bag of groceries and looks over at Beau, who appears to be in a trance-like state.

JUNE (CONT'D)

And don't you cluck at me, young man! I thought we were past that stage.

June walks past him in a hurry, gliding up the steps and making it look easy while carrying the groceries.

JUNE (CONT'D)

(looking back at Beau)

C'mon, hon. Let's get that bag inside and see what the damage is.

Beau stares past her, to something large rustling in the bushes between their house and the neighbors' -- then shakes it off and follows June inside.

INT. KITCHEN

Beau sets his grocery bag on the kitchen counter. There is a huge wet spot on the side of the paper bag and it appears to be ripping.

JUNE

Well, looks like the eggs are toast!



Beau shoots her a sideways glance.

JUNE (CONT'D)  
You know what I mean.  
(setting her bag down)  
If I had half a mind to, I would take that out of your allowance!

Beau's gaze is fixed on the kitchen window as he sees a dark shadow cross it and is frozen in fear once again.

JUNE (CONT'D)  
Are you even paying attention here, Beau?  
I'm just fixin' to teach you a lesson, is all!

Beau has a look of dejection, and this is noticed by June as she softens her glare.

JUNE (CONT'D)  
I know you're trying, hon.  
I just don't want you to turn out like some of these...  
monsters lurkingout there.  
Now run along and get cleaned up.  
I'm making your favorite tonight -- chicken casserole!

Beau salivates and rushes out of the room excitedly.

INT. DINING ROOM - LATER

June enters the dining room, a steaming dish of chicken casserole in hand -- only to find a broken window and bloody mess.

All that is left of Beau is a gangly severed leg with large pock marks in it -- like something pecked him to death before swallowing him nearly whole.

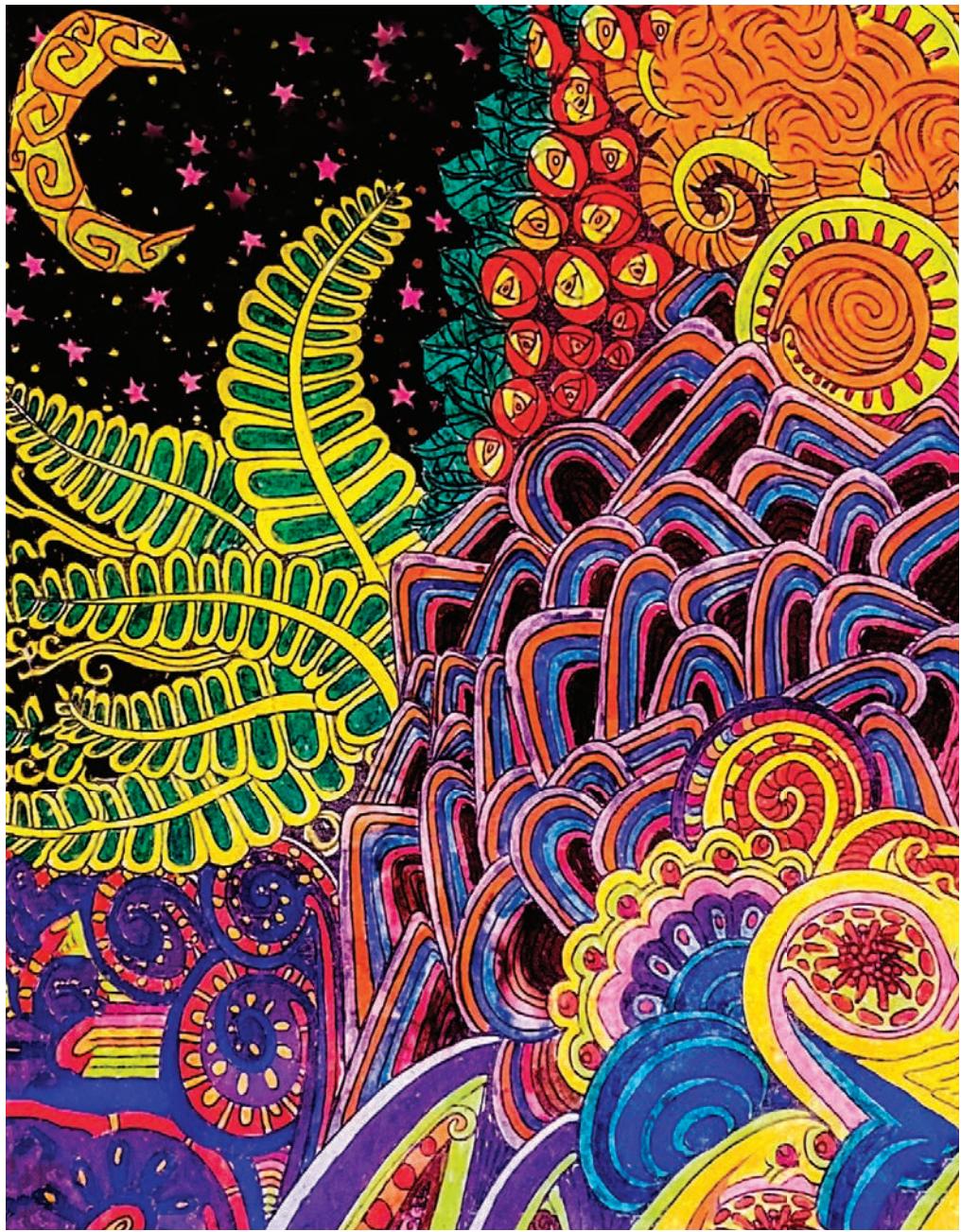
June rushes to the broken window in time to see the silhouette of what appears to be a GIANT CHICKEN scuttling away.

The sound of psychotic CLUCKING echoes throughout the cul-de-sac, into the light and smog pollution of Oklahoma City --

neon fast food signs just visible in the distance, with a moon bearing an odd resemblance to an egg yolk.

*THE END*





**John Villadelgado - *The Binz***  
Paint Pens on Paper

*Daphne Clifton*

## **DREAM-TIME**

To those making tea in a quiet kitchen, humming  
to a heartbeat you can't believe is still yours,  
to a memory of a tune from long ago,

To those cheering on chum salmon exuberantly  
splashing up from the Sound into Piper's Creek,  
serenaded by sparrow and wren,

To those forest-bathing with junco and jay, following  
the blessings of trillium in spring, honeysuckle in summer,  
fairy mushrooms in fall, holly berries in winter,

To those looking to translate this life with another –  
study cumulonimbus clouds' transformation into rainbows  
curving over a gentle sea following a sudden storm.

A cloud doesn't question its existence, nor should you.  
Hold out your hand! Your palm says all you need to know –  
all you've ever been, or could be. You can read the stars there.

To those wishing to explore dream-time – find a dragon sleeping  
in a mountain cave, and wake him with a feather-light touch. If ever  
you've loved a fellow creature, you'll know what to ask for next.

To those brewing tea in your kitchen at sunset, gold and tawny – go  
ahead, make those three wishes. But first, gaze at the world unfolding  
outside your window. Everything you need may already be here.





**Michael O'Connor - *Blue Reckoning***  
Photography

*Robert Michael Pyle*

## **RESCUE IN THE VALLEY**

Every winter when the rains let loose  
there comes a day or two or more  
when the river, though it does its best to hold the flow,  
breaches its banks—and the valley floods.  
Most of us know better than to drive into high water.  
But now and then someone does,  
tries to cross the Covered Bridge,  
hits deep, fast current and—at best—gets stuck.  
So when my neighbor with a scanner called  
to say a Coast Guard 'copter was on its way  
to rescue a woman stranded atop her car  
in the mile-wide river that was the valley,  
I wasn't really shocked.

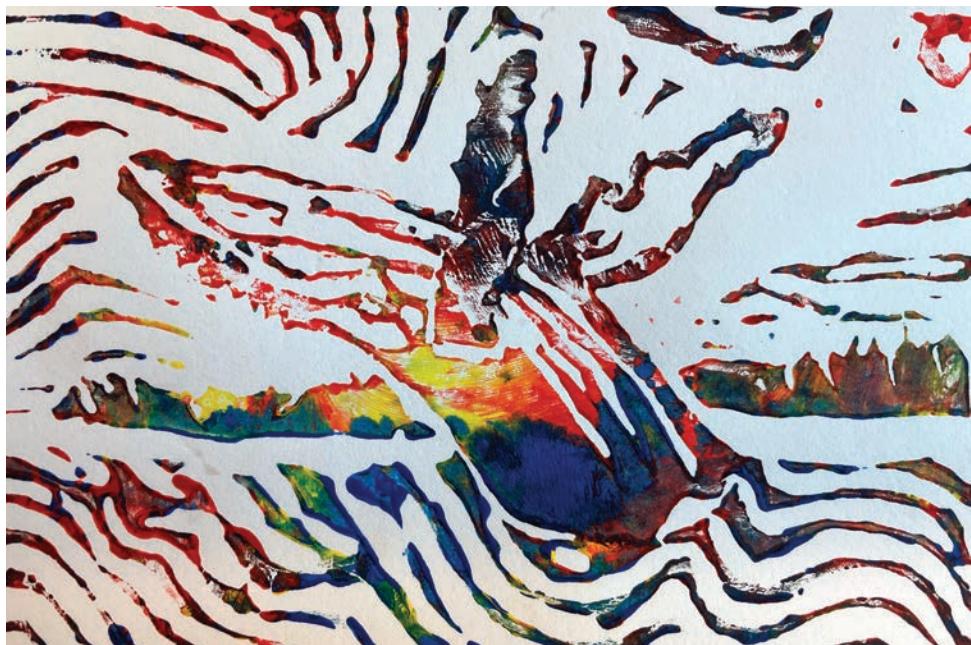
Dash upstairs. Only moments till the loud "thwap, thwap"  
of the M60-Jayhawk, as the whirlybird appears overhead.  
The orange-and-white pterosaur blots out the gravid sky  
roils the livid torrent with the backwash of its rotors.  
From my bedroom window, box seat to the action,  
I see a woman in orange anorak, her ruined SUV swept  
from the road then somehow stopped beside a deep,  
drowning swale, perched on the Yakima bin on top,  
with only a foot of freeboard. Frogman in orange skin  
with big flippers slips out of the 'copter, a hundred feet up.  
Then the drop, the daring swim, the scramble up to get her,  
the harness, the signals, the lift, the two bodies dangling,  
swinging in a wide arc—neon spiders at the end of their web.  
The short flight to higher ground to get the lucky woman aboard.

I say lucky: more than she could imagine. To stop upright,



to find a way out, to have a tiny island to hold her  
just above the torrent. To have saviors such as these.  
Without such luck: this is how people die.

Everybody's fine now. My neighbor across the bridge  
caught it all on video—you talk about viral! You can almost  
see me in my bedroom window. Maybe the best show  
in my forty-five years here: even more than the fifty-one  
vintage red-and-white Ford pickups that came one day in '89  
to cross the bridge, or the hundred Harleys that rumble  
across each spring when the sun comes back.  
Even more than that lone Piper at the Gates of Dawn  
who skirled us awake one Midsummer's Day  
then vanished into the morning mist  
one very different day in Gray's River.



**Jon Graves - Untitled**

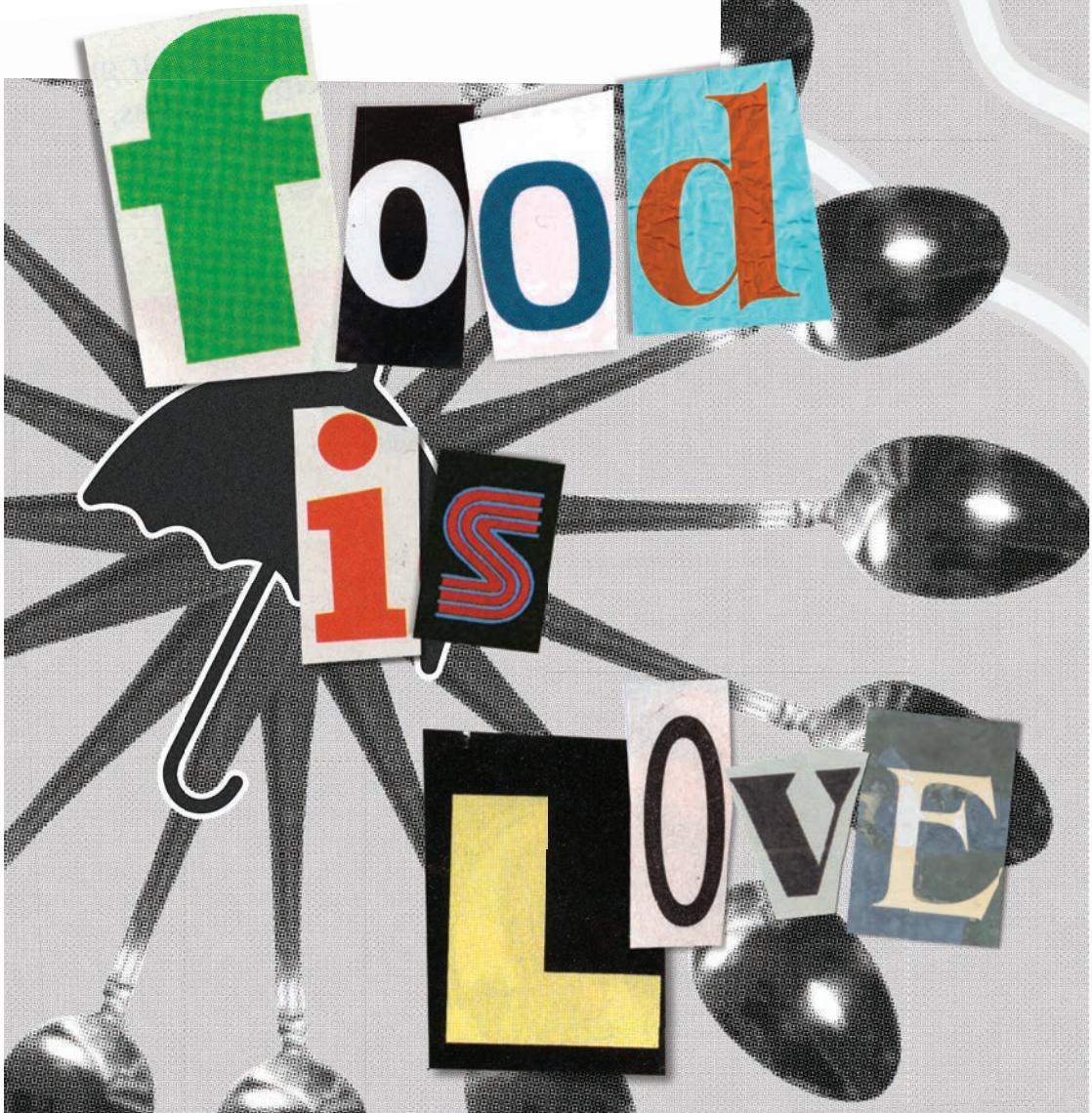
Dry Acrylic on Paper

# RAIN MAGAZINE



54TH EDITION

*"There is no love sincerer than the love of food."*  
- George Bernard Shaw



Ethan Jenkins & Jessica Bahl - Flabbagasted Mama Pajamaz - Digital Render

*Samantha Saldivar*

## THE SEARCH FOR BREAD AND ROSES

seems futile  
when you come from a place  
that hasn't had either  
for generations.  
On bad days  
I wish  
someone would gift them to me.  
On good days  
I dream of owning a plot of land  
so that the generations that follow  
will always have fresh bread and roses.  
Whatever the day  
be it good or bad  
I collect ingredients and seeds  
I don't always know what to do with  
and aren't always for bread baking or rose growing  
maybe somewhere down the line  
they will count for something  
even if for trade or sale  
or failed experiment  
I grab and hold  
anything I can  
learning to distinguish  
between thorn and thistle  
salt and sugar  
what to keep  
what to let go of  
maybe somewhere down the line  
it will count for something  
I seek counsel from bakers and gardeners alike  
asking to be shown  
rolling pins and trowels  
how to hold them  
how much pressure to use  
how to know when to begin  
where to stop



*Martha Clarkson*

## **WHEN SHE DIDN'T WANT TO COOK**

the drawer stayed shut  
home of her favorite red spatula  
nested cups, cantaloupe baller  
she stopped sifting flour  
separating eggs  
let the milk sour  
she put on the onion goggles  
and hid in the oven  
rack lines on her thighs  
she just wanted  
to be a mixing bowl  
where everything comes together

*Jo Lumpkin Brown*

## **So...**

Most  
Eating  
Allows  
Laughter  
As  
Long  
One's  
Not  
Eating....  
Alone.



*Janet Ebert*

## PURPLE OLIVES AT A POETRY READING

Piled my plate with tooth-picked olives.  
Green, black, red and plump purple ones.  
Greek Kalamatas—*orbs of zest.*  
The lady wore a purple dress.

Green, black, red and plump purple ones.  
Savored each olive's salty tang.  
She asked, “are you reading poetry?”  
She told me her name—*familiar.*

Savored each olive's salty tang.  
She asked, “are you reading poetry?”  
She told me her name—*familiar.*  
“No” I said, “my speech is still slurred”.

She asked, “are you reading poetry?”  
She told me her name—*familiar.*  
“No” I said, “my speech is still slurred”.  
“Pause” she sang like a nightingale.

Noted her hands life-worn like mine.  
Had she pruned thick laurel like me?  
Parsed-out a pause every line.  
Sipped cool water from a tall glass.

Had she pruned thick laurel like me?  
Green beanie askew on my head.  
Sipped cool water from a tall glass.  
She gave me a slate blue beret.



Green beanie askew on my head.  
Fifty years a nurse—*now a muse*.  
She gave me a slate blue beret,  
soft as my blue Persian kitten.

Fifty years a nurse—*now a muse*.  
Uniforms stowed in an oak trunk.  
Soft as my blue Persian kitten.  
Speech flowed like water from a glass.



**Christine Eagon - Salt and Pepper**  
Watercolor on Paper

*Jan Bono*

## A RIB-STICKING FEAST

**T**hanksgiving: The great American Family Values holiday, steeped in nostalgic rituals and traditions. At our house it's also shrouded in secrets.

Consider some of the Bono family's Unsolved Mysteries:

\*What caused the only television set within viewing distance of the dining room table to blow a fuse at the exact moment we sat down to rush through another action-packed episode of "inhaling dinner during halftime?"

\*Are turkeys forced to consume steroids to produce four legs? Are these mutant four-legged turkeys reserved for families with four children?

\*Was Grampa's after-dinner eggnog really spiked, causing the otherwise tea-totaling gentleman to snore like a buzz saw through an entire football game?

\*What 'secret ingredient' in Auntie's fruit salad made everyone but her spit it back out and grab hastily for his/her water glass? How did she manage to swallow the wretched stuff herself?

\*Whose job was it to monitor the baking of the brown and serve rolls? Was it the same person who forgot to replace the batteries in the smoke alarm?

\*How did Gramps find out Mother regularly disguised margarine in a Darigold butter wrapper? What did he mean when he said she was an abhorrent disgrace to all former Washington State dairy farmers like himself?

\*Where did everyone except Mother disappear to immediately after eating? Was there a Bermuda Triangle between the dining room and the kitchen sink? And how did these people reappear, ready for dessert, the precise minute the dishes were done?

But the most intriguing puzzle of all is one in which I played co-conspirator. Hours before the Macy's Parade, Dad and I chopped onions and celery, melted butter, and measured spices. The steam in the kitchen smelled heavily of sage. Condensation rolled down the inside of our kitchen windows.

Together we wrestled the 24-pound bird, stuffed him with dressing-to-die-for, stitched the ends closed with forest green yarn, and sealed him securely inside a roll and a half of heavy-duty aluminum foil. This turkey would not be leaking juices! Dad hoisted the main course into the oven and went to the sink to wash his hands.

"Oh no..." he muttered. "It's gone."

"What's gone?" I asked, handing him a dishtowel.

He held up his left index finger. "My band-aid."

It took a few seconds for the In keeping with the historical significance of the holiday, and with emphasis on our constitution's second amendment, we refer to this tradition as



'the right to bare arms.' implications to sink in. Then we simultaneously turned to stare at the foil-wrapped globe visible through the oven window.

"Uh-oh," we said in unison.

I don't recall whose idea it was to keep this to ourselves. I do remember that I spent the entire meal holding my breath while I watched every mouthful of stuffing being eaten.

We lucked out. The band-aid was never found, and no one present at dinner died within 48 hours.

Hard to believe, but that incident was over a half century ago. And it began a family ritual that remains to this day—you must remove all watches, rings, and false fingernails before helping prepare the turkey.



Allen Goodman - *Untitled*  
Photography

*Stephen Pearce*

## DISHES

I stand wet-waisted at our kitchen sink  
and watch the starlings bully weaker birds.  
They pick at ants the way I pick at words  
whose seeming must suffice for what I think.  
My hands are in the water, hot as I can stand,  
feeling their way over the slender necks  
of dirty bottles as each bird cruelly pecks,  
subtracting cells from a collective mind.

What future had that mind foreseen  
for those it sent this morning after food?  
What memory of the past is swallowed whole  
when starlings leave the driveway clean?  
Perhaps I'll rap the window to intrude  
with godly mercy for our collective soul.



Vivienne Popperl

## LUNCH ON THE ROAD

-after Louise Gluck's "The Sensual World"

Rushing through the Karoo in the blue Buick  
piloted by Dad, we sat shoulder to shoulder in the back seat.

We did not stop for lunch. Mom reached for the foil-wrapped  
roast chicken from the Coca-Cola cooler at her feet,

and carefully pulled it apart, handing each of us our portion.  
No chicken ever tasted as good. The salty, fatty flavor, our

slick fingers, all five of us savoring this informal feast together,  
felt safe. Almost invincible. Dad only stopped to buy gas

or if we pleaded a call of nature. We had to get to the Wagontire motel  
before dusk. We raced onward in our charmed capsule.

The shadows reaching across the Karoo felt benign. What made us  
so sure of ourselves? Everything was carefully planned.

We watched the Swartberg mountains loom on the horizon  
as we drove steadily toward them. We did not look back.

And yet, as we drove home four weeks later along the same road  
one of our tires burst and the car turned on its side and slid

down the embankment. We were not prepared. We were never  
cautioned. We were not ready. But everything was carefully planned.



Ruby Murray

## DINNER CONVERSATION

Truth is made of a woman shouting,  
is insistent, maybe hard of hearing.

Truth flies  
over riced potatoes,  
broccoli, Swiss steak,  
gray-green peppers,  
thinks of running, gives  
no chance to get away—

Truth lives somewhere else,  
the red-head cousins, Colorado  
or Japan, with the 2nd lieutenant on the golf course,  
important to corral before it runs away.

I woke wondering why her, why now, this dream?  
Certainly I know where I presently work and,  
there was no night in the school gymnasium.

What seed had my brain nourished last night?

If it's true the dead live whenever we think of them,  
what happens when they, out there someplace,  
think of us?



*Reba Owen*

## MEAD

Nectar from every meadow,  
sipped and stored, fanned by a thousand wings.  
The color of clear water slipping over yellow sandstone  
or sunlight flashing off orioles.  
Taste and scent as one.

Now at sunset, I raise my glass  
till the new moon is miniaturized through the goblet.  
In there, see them.....  
Wounded hulks carrying the dead  
and their bloody body pieces  
into the Greathall, its floor lit with strewn gold.  
Oaken tables laden with spitted roasts of deer and elk,  
flagons over flowing.

As the mead revives the slain, erases splintered bone  
and smooths gaping skin, the din becomes a roar,  
praising the nectar of every heath and fen,  
which can make poets out of sows ears  
and even a scholar, out of Grendel,  
the Eater of Men.



*Calandra Frederick*

## A BOWL OF COMFORT

Her fingers softly turned the pages looking for the recipe. The red cookbook had been in her family for generations. A gift passed on from mothers to daughters. It held recipes of fair-contest cookies and famous pies, roasts for holidays and sympathy casseroles. But Cece was searching for the recipe that mattered now. Turkey barley soup. Every year, once the weather turned cold, she made this soup with her mother. Once when she had been little, she had asked what they were making. Smiling, body swaying while stirring the yellow liquid, her mother had replied, "A bowl of comfort." Something Cece desperately needed now.

Cece's hand gently flipped through the pages before stopping. It lingered just for a moment, trying to feel the memories. Faint glimpses through time of other kitchens. Ripples of conversations shared over the large metal pot. Its pages held more than just meals that had been prepared and cooked for generations. It held moments. It held souls pressed and saved like dried flowers between the hard covers. A page with a half-smeared chocolate fingerprint from a great-grandmother. Another with discolored brown stains over the ingredients from a grandmother's spilled tea. And here on her soup page was a drop of red wine. A treasured memory of a late night that her mother and she had shared years ago, laughing and cooking.

"That was a fun night," Cece heard her mother whisper.

Carefully, Cece set the open cookbook on the wooden stand. She pulled out her silver pot from under the cabinet and filled it halfway with water. Unwrapping the turkey carcass, she set it into the water. She turned the burner to high and let the heat boil the bones into a savory broth. As the aroma spread throughout her small kitchen, Cece saw her mother smiling as she leaned against the counter by the window.

"Don't forget to add the vegetables to the broth," her mother said smiling.

"I didn't forget," Cece said. She turned to the fridge. Opening the bin, she grabbed the carrots, onion, celery, and rutabaga. Placing them on her wooden cutting board, she began chopping. She took each whole vegetable and cut it down into small pieces. Piles of plant hearts that would never be made whole again. But dumping them into the pot, stirring the small pieces into the warmth, now they could become something new.

Cece placed the lid on top. The boiling broth steamed the glass lid, clouding the contents inside. She turned the egg timer and smiled at her mother. "Time for wine."

"Perfect," her mother replied. "It's the only reason I ever cooked. Julia Childs taught me drinking wine, and lots of it, is always socially acceptable as long as you've got a spoon in your hand."



"And you taught that lesson to me," Cece said uncorking a ten-year vintage and pouring the ruddy liquid into two glasses. She set one glass next to her mother on the counter. Her own she swirled, placed her nose deep in the glass, and breathed in. The floral aroma made a small smile form across her lips. "Remember that year," she asked, "when we drank too much and boiled the broth down to all most nothing?"

"That's why I like soup," her mom laughed. "You can salvage it from almost any mishap. Not like turkeys."

"Spoken from experience?" Cece laughed before taking another sip.

"Do you remember that time I burned the turkey? You were still pretty little. Ruined it completely. It was dry and only a few spots deep under the charred skin were any good. Here I had spent all this money on the dumb bird, and I was going to have to throw it all away. But, before I chucked it in the bin, I remembered what my mother, your grandmother, always did with ruined meats. Make soup."

Cece placed her wine glass on the counter by the stove. She lifted the lid and stirred. The earthy garden aromas rising around her.

"Is it ready for the barley?" her mother asked.

"Almost." Cece removed the carcass. Then she placed the lid back on the pot, recapping the smells and steam once again. "So you made soup..." Cece prompted. She had heard this story before. It wasn't the story she liked so much per say, just her mother's voice filling the void.

"But of course," her mother winked. "I took that turkey carcass and boiled it. Soup is funny like that. It turns what was supposed to be, into what can be. Not better, not worse. Just something different."

Cece raised the glass to her lips and drank deeply. She held the pressed grapes in her mouth, her tongue pressing the wine into the palate before letting it drain down her throat. The liquid spread like embers behind her cheeks. They flushed and her eyes glistened.

Her mother watched her. "Tough year, huh?"

Cece almost choked. "Yeah you could say that." Her hand shook slightly, wine swirling until a few drops sloshed over the rim. They fell on the counter like red tears. Cece put the glass down and grabbed a paper towel. Quickly, she wiped them away.

"Spilling your wine," her mom said with a hint of amusement. "Julia Childs would be disappointed."

"Julia Childs probably spilt a lot of wine in her day," Cece smiled. "So, I'm in good company." She lifted the lid and poured the barley into the soup. Her wooden spoon swirled the edible pearls through the broth. Then she placed the lid back over the soup. "Twenty minutes and it should be ready to eat."

"So, this year," her mother said gently again.

"This year," Cece repeated sipping from her wine glass.

"It's been tough?"

"So tough," Cece agreed.

"Want to talk about it?" he mother said sadly.



"No," Cece shook her head. "I've talked about it with a lot of people. And a lot of people gave all kinds of advice. But really, I just wished I could have just asked you for yours."

"And I wish I was still here to give it to you now," her mother said. "But I probably would have told you the same advice I did those years ago when we spilled the wine in our cookbook. Life is like that Cabernet your drinking now. There're years with good growth, and years the grapes are ruined. But you keep picking, and pressing, and bottling up all your hard work because you know life gives you a great buzz once in a while. And that makes it worth it."

Cece nodded, tears pooling. She gave a short laugh, "and I probably would have told you to stop trying to be a philosopher."

"And I would have said you're right. Getting drunk and making soup are much healthier ways to deal with disappointment than therapy," her mother laughed.

"Cheaper, at least," Cece smiled. She placed her empty wine glass on the counter. Opening the cabinet, she grabbed a bowl. She lifted the lid off the pot, and grabbing the ladle, scooped several spoonful's of the soup into her bowl. "I miss you, Mom."

"I know, baby." The undrunk wine glass sat alone on the kitchen counter.

Cece grabbed a spoon from the drawer and walked with her soup to the window. Silently, she breathed in the aroma and the comforting memories it unlocked. Looking out the window, at the world that was alive around her, she ate alone.



**Joshua Martin-Schlichting - *The Fall of Desire***  
Photography

*Deborah Akers*

## **BERRIES IN AUGUST**

don't leave us!  
sweet planets of summer

constellations  
heaped into bowls

blues far beyond sky  
and stone-hearted  
    deep red rounds

sacraments that ease  
the coming season

jammed and dried preserves  
    dim echoes

of this ripe handful  
of days      taut

in our greedy fingers  
    nails stained  
crescents of moon

*James A. Tweedie*

## OENOPHILE

Our Rescue Mission's food is offered free  
To those we know and those who wander in;  
A gift of love to our community  
To help out those whose resources are thin.

A hundred people come to eat each night  
And often many more at the month's end  
When money's short and budgets can be tight.  
Both single folks and families attend.

Each night a man comes in and eats alone,  
Unkempt, unshaven, old, and weary worn;  
His voice a softly-whispered baritone  
With accents hinting he was foreign-born.

One night I sat with him to talk and eat,  
Assuming he was poor and indigent,  
The sort who lives his life out on the street  
And sleeps wrapped up inside a cardboard tent.

At first, he didn't even look at me,  
And only spoke while chewing on his food.  
He said he didn't want my company  
And only came because the food was good.

But when I asked him if he had a name  
He paused and raised his eyes to lock on mine.  
“Just call me John or Jim, it’s all the same.  
I only wish I had a glass of wine.”

He didn’t seem the sort who had a nose  
For anything with Grand Cru on its tag.  
I pictured him with Wild Irish Rose  
Wrapped neatly in a small brown paper bag.

To my surprise he said, “A Zinfandel—  
A hearty, fruity one that’s not too light—  
If slightly chilled would go extremely well  
With the spaghetti that you served tonight.”

“You seem to know your wine,” I said. “How so?”  
And he replied, “I am a oenophile  
Who recommends spring lamb with a Merlot  
When braised and seasoned in a Grecian style.

“And if your kitchen had been more advanced  
The chicken salad you served yesterday  
Could well have been exquisitely enhanced  
By a Barossa Valley Chardonnay.”

“Although,” he said, “I may look like a bum,  
When I was young and living in Beauvais,  
I learned all that was needed to become  
A trained and certified sommelier.



"Well-known for my esprit de corps  
Within the Beauvais culinary scene,  
I served a famous café noted for  
Its one-star listed Michelin cuisine."

"And now?" I asked. "What happened after that?"  
"It is," he answered, "time for me to go."  
He stood and, after he was gone, I sat  
And dreamed of sipping a Chateau Margaux.

I doubted what he told me had been true,  
But later, drunk and face down in the sand,  
I couldn't help but see that, in plain view,  
A vintage Haut-Brion was in his hand.



Kris Reid - *Blessings and Tea*  
Photography



**Laura Ross Paul** - *Happy Harvest*  
Ink/Flash Acrylics on Terraskin

Kama O'Connor

## WHEN A BEAR COMES FOR A VISIT

The bear moseys up to the cabin, his empty stomach leading the charge. He sees the trail of smoke rising like it's in a hurry, and his nose perks up. *Rabbit. Maybe cabbage.* He smiles, showing his large bear teeth, canines and bicuspids that will frighten the man called *Bob*, the owner of the cabin, if he happens to be looking out of the paisley drapes the female called *Barb* left behind when she sped off in the vehicle that growled as loud as the bear when he was hungry.

Bob is not looking out his window.

In fact, Bob is in the shower, is singing loudly to the radio, is singing *badly* to the radio. Therefore, Bob doesn't hear the bear open the door that Bob didn't think to lock, because who would be wandering the woods this late at night?

"Somethin'got ahold of me lately..." Bob croons. The bear covers his tiny ears with his enormous paws.

Bob *cannot sing*, the bear decides. *Poor Barb. No wonder she never came back for Bob or the drapes.*

Mercifully, the house becomes quiet. Only the bear's stomach still talks.

Bob is, for now, unaware of the fully grown brown bear who waits for him to come out of the bathroom and feed the bear. The bear's stomach howls, groans, hisses and for a moment the bear worries for Bob's safety. He isn't the friendliest bear when he is hungry and he is ravenous now.

He sniffs, scratches, searches, ripping cabinet doors off the hinges, because the cans and boxes and bags are easier to get to without those troublesome obstructions that only hide what is behind them. Bob will thank him for making the cabinets easier to get into, the bear is sure of it.

He smells wonderful things coming from the stove, the stove that makes the sweet-smelling smoke coming from the chimney, but when the bear touches the pot over the flame, the black metal singes his fur and he roars.

"What the...?!" Bob yells, throwing open his bathroom door. He shrieks the way the bear imagines only the females of the species are able. The way Barb would shriek if she was still here. The bear cocks his head to the side, nursing his wounded paw, and Bob mimics him, mouth agape. Hasn't Bob ever seen a bear before? He lives in the woods, after all. And the bear is always nearby. Ask Barb, who almost hit him with the ferocious truck.

"What the hell?" Bob asks. He backs up a step, then another, reaching behind him for something the bear can't see. The bear worries for a moment that maybe he doesn't know Bob very well after all these years. That perhaps Bob is one of those humans who carries those large metal hunting sticks and uses them on unsuspecting guests. Those sticks that

spat metal and fire had killed old bear Potter and his brother and so, naturally, this bear is wary.

“Don’t shoot,” the bear instructs, “I am only in search of food, of which it seems like you have plenty, as you can tell by my recent renovations to your cabinets. See? Isn’t it better to peer into your food receptacles without having to move those cumbersome doors first?” The bear sweeps his arm back to indicate the work he has done to help Bob.

But all that comes out is, “Arrrrrr! Grrrrrrrrr! Arrrrrggggggg! Rooooooooaaaaarrrr!” So the bear points back to all the havoc he has wreaked. Can’t Bob see?

Bob must think the bear is angry, which he is not—right now he is just hungry, starving, hollow. And so Bob panics. He fumbles behind him, grabs a stick, but not the hunting kind. When Bob pushes a button on the stick, it brings a device behind Bob to life.

The bear exhales, but it sounds a bit like the roar of Barb’s truck. The bear is relieved; Bob is not one of those humans with a hunting stick.

(In fact, were the bear more calm, Bob might show him the certificate hanging in the bedroom, the one that speaks of congratulations for taking an animal safety course and passing with honors. Bob has solemnly sworn not to harm another being, human or otherwise. *Ever*. Even when a large brown bear enters his home without being invited in.

But the bear is not calm, he is *empty*. Also, the bear cannot read. So the certificate goes unnoticed by him and all other bears who pass through, unharmed by Bob.

Bob turns toward the device showing a small, grainy picture, scenes from nature that are similar to the real nature right outside the door. He points toward it.

“Look at this,” Bob says as if he’s talking to the youngest kind of human. “It’s a television. Want to watch?”

Does the *television* produce food? If not, then no, the bear does not want to watch it. And yet... as soon as the television is in focus, the bear is momentarily distracted in his search for food. He vaguely notices Bob duck into another space, one which the bear saw on his way in, one which could use a good scrubbing, he decided. It smells like the part of nature the bear defecates in. The bear hears a click when the wood slab shuts Bob out of view. The bear doesn’t notice his absence and won’t go searching for him, even though he is hungry and Bob has parts that look big enough to make a meal out of.

And Bob’s question—does the bear want to watch the *television*—works. The bear is distracted. He sits on the man’s threadbare couch and with an elbow to his knee, a fist under his chin, watches the end of the program that is on. He catches something of a worm and of his magnificent transformation into a butterfly. He’s ingested worms and he’s swatted at butterflies, but he’s never known they were the same, just in different *phases*. *Phases* is a new word he learns.

Oh what he would give to be able to *phase*, to transform into something so light, so nimble and effervescent as a butterfly. He is aware of his gracelessness and it is his



least favorite attribute. His wife never complains, but then she is quite the lumbering oaf as well. She isn't like Barb, a female with no meat and no backside.

*What the bear doesn't know?* Bob cheers quietly in his bedroom before coming to the sad realization that his half-hatched plan has worked. Now what will he do? Will the bear remain indefinitely? Bob does not have a back up plan to remove the bear from his cabin and he worries. Bob also left his cell phone in the kitchen—likely because a piece of his cabinet is covering it. Bob is hungry, too and in his haste to not become dinner, he forgot his own. He will just have to wait it out, hope the bear gets bored with the nature channel, the only channel the small cabin can receive this high in altitude.

But back to the bear...

The bear watches with frustration as an ad for tuna fish comes on. His anger is two-fold. He is hungry and the tuna fish dancing on the screen, looking ridiculous in glasses, reminds him of that hunger.

Also, where is the butterfly and what happened to her? Are there more phases to come?

He roars at the screen, ambles into the kitchen again. He's been distracted, but his purpose is clear again. The bear came to find food. Though he keeps his ears perked for mention of the butterfly's return. He finds a can with the same idiot fish in glasses on the side and pierces it with his middle claw, tearing off the metal lid with ease. He sticks his leathery tongue into the can and in one swipe devours the fish, throwing the can on the floor so Bob will notice he is down a can of tuna next time he goes to the *market*. Through watching humans, he knows this is their "nature" that provides them nourishment.

The bear does the same with three more cans until the sound of his program returns. Groaning with pleasure—the tuna has done the trick—he sits back down on the couch that now slopes in the middle under the bear's weight. He thinks to go ask Bob to join him, that maybe he would like to share in some light *watching* and conversation, but before he can get up, a large brown bear fills the screen.

The bear smiles.

He would know that golden, honey-colored pelt anywhere. He'd fallen for the way the light in the meadow shimmered off the coarse hairs, the way that supple bottom—that is now framed in the black plastic of the television set—sways back and forth. A rumble forms in the pit of his belly and he sits back, aroused. No need to invite the man for this, he thinks.

*When was my wife close enough to humans to be filmed*, he wonders next. *No bother, she is there now.* And he misses her. He hates foraging for food so far away, but this is a welcome surprise. Until the camera pans back, across the grassy field his wife walks through.

He sees the look on his wife's face, sees her teeth exposed in a way most find menacing, but what he knows is not menacing at all. It is a look of matched arousal.

But not for the bear



She is heading toward the bear's brother, a larger, tougher bear than most others in the area. He has the same look the bear had on his face before the camera lens had widened. *The look of mating.* The bear sits up straight, furrows his brow, and if Bob is unlucky enough to be peering out his door right now, he will be frightened enough to wet himself.

Bob isn't though, and in fact, the bear does not know Bob is trying to jimmy the lock on the window in his bedroom in a meager attempt at escaping the bear in his living room. How can Bob know the bear is otherwise wholly distracted?

And he is. The bear paces, unaware of anything except the growing tension on the screen. His wife sashaying towards his brother—*his brother!*—right on television for anyone to see!

When they reach each other, the music slows and the two bears embrace, begin the mating ritual that the bear himself had performed with his wife not months before. The bear is mad. Furious. No longer hollow, but filled with venom.

He tears out of the house just as Bob topples from his window at the bear's feet, looking up with surprise to see the bear looming above him, looking more deadly than he ever imagined an animal could look.

*What the bear doesn't know?* Bob wishes he didn't have that damned certificate hanging on the wall in his bedroom. Wishes he had a rifle instead.

The bear roars, leaps over Bob and careens off into the woods at a pace that astounds Bob.

Bob picks himself up, realizes he has indeed wet himself, and goes into the cabin to change, glad his plan to send the bear home has worked.

•••



# HONEST FOOD REVIEWS BY WALTER



HD

Heather Douglas- An Honest Food Review

Digital Render

*Ann Farley*

## **BAHMI**

It was Mieke's recipe, told the way recipes were told  
the old way, the way you learn  
standing side by side

*pork cut in pieces*  
some of this, a little of that  
more if you like more, if you like spicy

Mieke was born in Batavia, Dutch East Indies, of Dutch parents  
she was loud, waved her arms about, quick with a hug

*garlic powder*  
*ginger powder*  
we tinkered with the recipe  
powders gave way to fresh chopped  
*celery*

when she was 21, Mieke and her family  
were imprisoned by the Japanese during WWII  
while in the camp, she kept a journal  
painted watercolors of camp life

one Thanksgiving she sat on our couch  
rolled back the sleeve of her dress, bared her number tattoo  
cried her story  
*onions*

in 1946 she and her family returned to the Netherlands  
she met and married her husband  
they moved first to Canada, then the US  
had three sons, settled in New Jersey  
Mieke rediscovered art and watercolor painting  
took up ceramics

*boemboe nasi goreng*



she would travel, now and then, to Holland  
return with jars of pungent spices, thick and sticky pastes  
parcel out small tubs with tight fitting lids for my mother  
be careful, she'd say, this batch, so fresh, very spicy

*soy sauce*

*brown sugar*

she couldn't bring back everything  
adaptations were made  
soy sauce and brown sugar replaced kecap manis  
Indonesian sweet soy sauce

*green peas*

in the early 1970s, her youngest son died  
two years later, her husband

art sustained her  
she taught ceramics at the local psychiatric hospital  
and in her basement studio  
there were rows of molds, glazes, underglazes  
tables covered with newspaper, jars of brushes and sponges  
kiln in the corner, stacks of greenware, dust

*mix with pasta*

*should be dry to serve*

I still have the recipe on an oil-stained slip of paper  
my mother's handwriting bleeding through  
a simple list  
and my annotations

*let this marinade for an hour more or less*

*cook over low heat*

*2 stalks, chopped*

*1 Tbs*

*(Chinese)*

*broken into 4ths*

*serve with a beer*



*Dayle Olson*

## A HUNGRY SEASON

Somewhere on a highway, a redtail hawk  
in the early days of a hungry season  
lands on a broken center line

to claim a thick-furred thing, sprawling  
lifeless on cold pavement.  
It tears open the soft belly

where undigested grain  
mixes with blood. Are you  
the same redtail I watched

fledge years ago, flapping awkwardly  
from tree to power pole, following  
your capable parents into

the sky, chasing the rodent  
they dropped from one-hundred feet  
for you to retrieve?

Am I the same woman I was then,  
accepting free loaves of bread,  
restless beneath a faded comforter

at three in the morning, counting  
unpaid bills instead of sheep,  
wondering, will I ever

stop wanting to hold another,  
to kiss someone for no reason?



My parents taught me  
what they could, as much as they  
thought I needed to know.  
When hunger rules, sometimes  
crouching on a broken center line  
is the only option.



Jessica Bahl- *Do More.*  
Digital Render



**Jamie Swick - Cabbage**  
Polaroid



**Jamie Swick - Pear**  
Polaroid

*Gretchen Keefer*

## THE TABLE

The neighborhood is divided by two commercial streets perpendicular to each other, generating an eight-block business district. At the north and east ends of the commercial district are churches. At the west end is the library and at the south end is the community center. In between are the grocers, the all-purpose markets, the dry cleaners, a watchmaker, a couple of dress shops and a laundromat, among other neighborhood necessities. Above the shops are offices and occasionally apartments for the shop owners. In between the shops are cafes and restaurants, some of which place tables and chairs outside in fine weather. The center restaurant, Gino's, situated a half-block west of the main intersection, has a large picture window where passersby can view happy people eating good food. Inside, placed at an angle in front of the window, is a square table with four chairs.

Early in the morning a server prepares the table by putting the four chairs back on the floor, checking the salt, pepper, ketchup and napkin dispenser, and wiping the table clean. It is now ready to work for the day.

Soon two men in working clothes, ready for a construction site, enter, sit across from each other at the table and order breakfast. One punctuates his speech with his fork, while the other pushes his over-easy egg onto his toast and starts to cut it up. When the first man stops talking to chew his eggs and gulp his coffee, the second man lays his

fork down to speak earnestly to the first man. He nods his head in agreement as he swallows his bite of scrambled eggs. He glances at his watch. The two men clean their plates, swallow their coffee and rush out the door, leaving payment on the table.

Shortly afterwards a single woman in a gray suit arrives. The restaurant is crowded; the only free table is the one with four chairs. She takes a seat on the left and orders coffee and a sweet roll. A tall young man in a cheap business suit, carrying a newspaper sees a vacant chair at the table. With a glance he asks if the seat is available; she nods acceptance of his presence. He reads his paper over eggs, juice and coffee; she wipes her fingers carefully after the sweet roll, nods to the man and leaves. Reading the paper slows the man's eating. By the time he is finished, the restaurant is beginning to empty.

Midmorning three women dressed in office appropriate outfits enter chattering cheerfully. Two of the women order coffee and croissants. One orders yogurt and fruit. Their coffee break time is limited, so they eat quickly, the yogurt eater often stopping with her spoon in her mouth to listen attentively to the others.

Before the table is totally cleared, two men in shirtsleeves enter and order coffee and pie. One has a pale-yellow shirt with a suitable tie; the other is wearing a blue shirt, with an open collar. As they talk their voices are often raised and they gesture widely. Yellow Shirt stands up and jabs his finger at Blue Shirt. In the heat of the discussion, the coffee is forgotten and left cold on the table when the men return to work.

Four women arrive at the beginning of



the lunch hour. They appear to be good friends, hugging one another and chatting amiably. One orders a Reuben sandwich and beer, the others order salads – a cobb, a chef's and a taco salad - with soda or water. Their conversation is lively. Reuben Sandwich sometimes interrupts the others, while Chef's Salad speaks up less often. At one point the other three appear to be offering Cob Salad advice. She looks from one to another as each speaks, nodding understanding. Tears well up in her eyes and both Chef's Salad and Taco Salad, seated next to her, stand up to give her hugs. The conversation resumes.

Suddenly Reuben Sandwich looks at her phone and exclaims about the time. The four friends have overstayed the lunch hour and the restaurant is beginning to empty again. In a flurry of activity, the four women search through their wallets and purses. Chef's Salad puts her hand on Cob Salad's arm, stopping her from



**Nancy Cook**  
*Once in a Blue Moon I Bake Bread*  
Mixed Media



pulling out cash. She hugs her friend again. The four scatter a flurry of bills onto the table and leave, still chatting. Reuben hurries across the street to her car, waving good-by to the others. Taco Salad pauses to hug and wave before turning left for her car, the other two Salads turn right, arm in arm, and disappear around the corner.

A single man, in a shabby business suit and dingy white shirt with no tie, sits at the table. He does not appear to be pleased with anything in his day. He orders coffee and a tuna sandwich and reads the morning paper while he is eating. He marks places on the page, scanning for specific information. Sighing heavily, he folds the paper and lays it aside. He carefully counts out the price of his meal and a small tip. As he leaves, he picks up the paper again, glances at a page or two, then throws it back on the table in disgust.

Two men and a woman from the lawyer's office across the street sit at the table. The woman orders iced tea, the men coffee. The younger man stretches luxuriously while the older heavy-set man slowly stirs Sweet-N-Lo into his coffee. The woman squeezes lemon juice into her drink, sets her long iced-tea spoon on the table and asks her companions a serious question. The heavy-set man, still stirring, takes time to answer, the other two looking attentively at him. After his slow and careful answer, the younger man shrugs, the woman looks down at the table. Then she raises her head and shrugs as well. She brings a sheaf of papers from her satchel and lays them on the table. The men look over the pages and ask the woman questions. Twenty minutes later,

the men leave the restaurant. The woman carefully retrieves the papers, pays the bill and leaves.

A man and a woman wearing the green vests and name tags from the variety store in the next block sit at the table. She orders coffee; he orders soda and pie. They chat companionably. The man tells a funny story and the woman laughs loudly. She takes her turn telling a story, making the man laugh. His pie finished, the man plays with his fork and his demeanor becomes more serious. She responds slowly, equally serious. Both are silent, staring at the table for a few minutes. She raises her head and nods. His grin splits his face as he takes her hand in his. Both smile with pleasure and leave the restaurant hand in hand.

Later in the afternoon a mother and two children sit at the table. The children are dressed in the navy-blue uniforms of a nearby private school. Their mother is wearing a conservative outfit of navy slacks and pale pink blouse with a small patterned scarf in navy. The children order ice cream - the boy wants chocolate and the girl asks for fudge ripple. The mother just has coffee which she sips slowly while listening to the children chatter. She looks at her phone often and encourages them to eat their ice cream before it melts. When the children are finished, she takes them by the hand and goes to the restrooms in the back of the restaurant.

Two men dressed in coveralls with the city logo emblazoned on the left breast pocket enter. It's early for dinner, but they appear to have just finished an extra long shift. Their coveralls are dirty and they are hungry. They sit in the front



**Nancy Cook**

*Otherwise I Buy Blue Scorch*  
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and right-hand chairs. Both men roll up their sleeves, exposing an eagle tattoo on their right forearm. They order burgers and fries with beer. While they are eating the cook joins them at the table. His shift has just started, so his apron is nearly clean. He also has an eagle tattoo on his right forearm. Apparently the three men are well acquainted. Their talk is friendly and spirited. When the cook returns to the kitchen, he casually pats the man closest to him on the back. The two remaining diners are quiet until the cook is out of sight. One makes a comment and the other shakes his head. They finish their dinner in silence.

As soon as the table is cleared a family of five arrive. The waiter brings a high chair to the table for the little girl to sit in, while the two boys take their places with a parent on each side. There are crayons for the boys to color on the children's menu, which keeps them busy for a few minutes. One can see they are restless and eager for their dinner to arrive. Both boys ordered the macaroni and cheese dish while the

mother prepares chicken nuggets and apple slices for the little girl. Dad looks happily at his plate of meatloaf swimming in gravy. Mom has fried chicken and fries with cole slaw. She alternates between feeding the little girl and eating her own food. The boys are finished before the parents and wiggle in their chairs. Dad cautions them to sit quietly and eat more food. He puts a hand on one boy's drink before the boy spills it; the other boy blows at his brother through his straw. A few drops of soda spray the second boy, which nearly starts a ruckus. Mom and Dad hurriedly finish eating. Dad pays the bill while Mom takes the children to the restroom to clean up. It is difficult to determine if the family truly enjoyed their dinner out.

Now that the workday is over, two young women in office attire come in for dinner. One is wearing a skirt and brightly patterned green and white blouse. The other has a scoop-necked blue dress with flounces at the hem. While they are perusing the menu, two young men rush in and sit in the vacant chairs, each determining which woman he wants to sit next to. The young men are in casual business – neat slacks and pastel shirts. If they had ties on earlier, they have removed them now. One of the men brings out his phone to look up information the group needs. It appears they are going to a movie together and need to confirm the start times. Oops! They are running late and rush their meal, ordering the quick special or soup. The waiter is informed and meets their needs. One of the young men offers to augment the tip as a thank you for keeping the group on time.

A short time later an older couple sits next to one another at the table. He

is dressed in a conservative business suit with an electric blue tie. Her attire is also conservative business, a navy suit with an emerald green silk blouse and a small gold chain necklace. They both smile fondly at each other, while waiting for their order and hold hands. He has a steak with mashed potatoes, seasonal vegetables and a salad. She opts for the spaghetti with a salad. The man speaks quietly to the waiter and gets a nod of acknowledgement in reply. The couple enjoys their dinner, filling the time with quiet conversation. They are comfortable with each other, allowing the conversation to lapse occasionally. When the plates are cleared away, the waiter returns with several of his co-workers and a small cake. As the cake is placed in front of the woman, the servers sing a chorus of a birthday celebration song and applaud her. She beams at the singers and especially at her dinner companion. After the servers are gone, he brings a small gift from his pocket for her. The diamonds in the brooch sparkle in the lamplight, and the couple leaves the restaurant hand in hand.

The restaurant is becoming quieter. The servers start checking the empty tables, preparing them for the next day. A man and woman come in, chatting cheerfully together. They are very casually dressed; both are wearing jeans and light sweaters. They sit next to each other and order coffee and pie for dessert.

It's late. The restaurant is closed. The evening server cleans up the table, checks the condiments and the napkin dispenser and puts the chairs up on the table so the floor can be cleaned. The table has finished its work for today.



*Nick Mack*

**AFFECTIONATELY,**

**THE ANCHOVY APOLOGIST**

Keep casting stones,  
what do you know  
about sacrifice  
in a supermarket:  
shelling out my  
hard-earned pay  
for flat fillets,  
five dollars a fix—  
scaly, pink-gray,  
brined and oiled,  
bones and all.

Overlooked  
and underloved,  
in a row just out  
of reach on the  
highest shelf, yet  
justly perched,  
preserved, presiding  
o'er sardines, salmon,  
oysters and tuna.  
Here lies the  
Lord of the Seas.

Twist the cap.  
Pull the tab.  
Jarred or canned,

can't contain  
the torrent of  
prickles and  
full-body tingles  
'til tongue meets  
tang, and then  
the ecstasy.



Kris Reid - Demonic War - Photography

*Oh mama!  
Umami!*

It's not the taste  
that scares you.  
It's the stigma,  
perhaps the breath.  
You play it safe,  
saving paychecks,  
chasing dreams just  
out of reach while  
I give all I have  
to jazz up a salad,  
sea stink and all.

*Ivan Smason*

## OUT OF THE OVEN

Out of the oven the air a thrill  
With whiffs of cloves and cannabin,  
Nutmeg spice, and cinnamon.  
The pumpkin pies, cool upon the sill  
Someone pours an apple toddy  
To complement the atmosphere  
The wafting pies are almost here  
Thinly crusted, abrim with buttered body  
Cranberry sauce, a turkey roasted  
Hearty yams aglaze with honey  
The outdoor cool is crisp but sunny  
This is the finest fete we will have hosted  
Celebration and compassion  
Cheer and kinship mark the day  
In brilliant Bagdad by the Bay  
Thanksgiving ala San Francisco fashion

*Florence Sage*

## CHRISTMAS PACKAGES

Her hair rolled up like a long thin sausage at the back of her neck, the tiny lenses of her steel-rimmed glasses glinting, our babcia Anna rushed to the hallway from her oven-warm kitchen to greet us for the Christmas holiday. She smooshed our small faces to the embroidered apron safety-pinned to the chest of her printed cotton dress, dusting our hair and coats with flour or caraway seeds, and piped with delight, “zapraszamy tutaj, you are welcome here.”

Her eldest son and his wife and we three kids were indeed welcome company in the small brick house on Balmoral Ave. that she shared with our dziadek Bazylia and sometimes a boarder – grandma Anna a little shy and lonely with just her Polish in the Anglo part of industrial Hamilton in Canada where I grew up. She counted on grandad Basil or our proficient mom and dad to translate for us kids, who'd lost our Polish along the way and rarely saw her. She beckoned us on holidays with her abundant cooking and excitement.

When we arrived on Christmas Day, stamping snow from our overshoes at the mullioned door, her kitchen smelled of pungent boiled cabbage, the leaves par-boiled to wrap softly around spoonfuls of rice and fat ground pork cooked with onions. She laid the filling, spoon by spoon, on leaf by leaf, for her cabbage rolls – golumpki, meaning little pigeons or doves (they once contained doves for the Polish aristocracy). She set her pigeons in tight rows to roast in her spare turkey pan with tomato and caraway over top. Oh, she was fast, making up many such pans for weddings and funerals at the Polish Hall on Barton Street, where she could unburden her heart in Polish with the other ladies from St Stanislaus Church.

Bowls of sour cream were waiting for the golumpki with the rest of the dishes on the white lace cloth on the heavy mahogany table in the quiet dining room, with holiday service laid out by grandad for twelve. Anna served alone and beamed, nodding at the compliments, never sitting down. We cousins liked to swing our feet at the straw that grandad had laid under the table “for the cattle” and to watch our mother choke down the biting celebratory pre-dinner shot from a bottle with Polish script that he took from the cupboard, maybe Bison grass vodka for luck.

On Christmas Eve in our own kitchen, we made the fragile sweet-dough knots we called simply chrust, like crust. Mom mixed and rolled the dough, and I cut and knotted the long strips and fried them in deep oil in bread pans on our stovetop,



powdered them and my apron and slippers with soft sugar like snow, laid them in a careful pile on a big oval plate or in a carry box, and ate up the broken ones.

For various Christmas Eves both grandmas and my mom produced the dumplings called pierogi, my mother most adept at rolling out the eggy dough, cutting the pieces out with a glass, folding the soft circles into triangles around the filling and pinching the edges of the packets tight to not burst open in the boiling pot. Inside each pierog went the rustic mix of mashed potato, onion and dry cottage cheese that came in blocks from Barton Street, where dad also got our kielbasa for Christmas morning. Or sauerkraut with mushrooms from the farm down the road, or just

mashed sweet prunes inside the savory dough, sprinkled, if for dessert, with powdered sugar after the boil.

Labor-intensive, those golumpki and pierogi. I've never had the patient hands, and have other pursuits anyway outside of my West Coast kitchen. I own the aprons, but not the temperament for the fuss. So, when holidays are on, I buy cabbage rolls with similar history and soul from our town's Bosnian or Romanian cafés to reheat at home, sarma and sarmale, and call them golumpki. Pierogi even come frozen now. I accept the tougher dough and puzzling cheddar, and eat them by tradition with diced sauteed onions and a mighty scoop of sour cream – leaving off the fried pork fat that my parents added – times change.

In the '90s I first heard the expression "a new relationship with food" – to eat for the health and happiness of your body, not just for your taste buds. Like a watchful mother, I try to be mindful and treat my system kindly. But at holidays my mouth misses the old comfort of those cabbage pigeons and potato dumplings on my plate, each one packaged like a gentle little poem, the iconic heart of Polish cooking and the proud culture itself, and the memories rush in as I scoop on the sour cream. And that's got to be good for my heart.



*Kim Stafford*

## TWO BUMS WITH BEER

I was nineteen—no map, just rucksack,  
sleeping bag and wood flute hitching  
north, and hungry. In a shop I bought  
bread and cheese, two bottles, slunk  
up a hill, found a space inside the thicket,  
arrayed my precious delights—then he  
stepped ragged from shadows  
to grin at my bottles, then at me.  
Opening both, I held one out, we  
clinked our bitter bubbles, and drank.

How much have I hoarded since,  
hard miser of joys, as if I would be less  
by sharing my bounty with a stranger  
as I did that day in Sweden.



*Roberta Lindbeck*

## FAMILY DINNER DELIGHT

Places are set at the large family table.  
Fresh lemon has been quartered for tea.  
We've all arrived with contributions,  
And my toddler grandson squeals with glee.

The table fills with family favorites -  
from Grandma's cookies and chocolate cake,  
to seven-layer lasagna and buttery crusty bread.  
My grandson reaches out his hand, ready for the take.

His mama deftly settles him with books and toys,  
wisely removing him from delicious temptation.  
Once he seems engaged with trucks and cars  
she rejoins the adult conversation.

At last, the final delectable dish is set on the table,  
and the toddler has been anchored in his chair.  
The lasagna is plated, and the other food passed,  
as laughter and compliments fill the air.

The toddler's tray of fruit and bread had his full attention.  
So fully engrossed in food was he  
that he didn't seem to notice  
when his mother was passed the pitcher of tea.

He and I, alone, however, seemed acutely aware  
that the saucer of lemons had been placed by his mother's plate.  
So pretty and yellow. He knew what he wanted,  
and he didn't hesitate.

Perhaps I gasped, or said, "Oh, no!"  
His mama turned to him and made a face  
as she reached to take the lemon away.  
"Give it to me; you won't like the way it tastes."

He leaned back - that juicy lemon clutched tightly in his little fist.  
Looking around, he smiled and grinned,  
playing this moment for all it was worth.  
That little guy knew our attention was fully on him.

Before his mama could grab it away -  
(he must have had a toddler's hunch) -  
he stuffed that lemon, peel and all, into his mouth.  
We painfully watched as his lemon glands pulled his face into a scrunch.

We studied him closely, expectantly,  
waiting for an outraged roar.  
But when he saw us watching him, he grinned,  
and with watering eyes, he just said, "More!"



*James A. Tweedie*

## BREAKING POTS

**N**o, Lauren," Brenda began, "You don't get it. Comedy is all about *me*."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

Brenda and I were having lunch together like we do every Wednesday, unless one of us is sick or out of town or has some sort of scheduling conflict that comes up where we can't change it.

Otherwise, we keep 12:30 p.m. Wednesdays as a sacred space for us to gripe and complain about how pathetic our lives are while laughing our heads off and always feeling better about things when we're done eating. Which has to be on the clock because we both have to be back at our repressive/depressive desk jobs by 1:30.

We justify the expense of dining out by figuring that the cost of lunch—no matter what or where we eat—is always less than we'd pay for an hour of therapy where there would be griping and complaining but without the laughing and that would be pointless because the best part about Wednesdays—and the part we most look forward to—is the laughing.

The reason I like Brenda so much is because she makes me laugh and the reason Brenda likes me is because she makes me laugh so, I suppose, that makes Wednesdays win-win for both of us.

Brenda, you see, has this alter-ego that compels her to stand up in front of complete strangers at comedy clubs and try to make them laugh. This is sometimes a win-win thing for Brenda and sometimes it isn't because, as she puts it, there are weeks when the only audience that laughs at her jokes is the one she has lunch with on Wednesdays.

I tell her this puts an undue burden on me where I might feel my laughter is expected to be mandatory rather than voluntary, but Brenda says she's okay with that because, as far as she's concerned, forced laughter is better than no laughter at all and sometimes she offers to pay for my lunch just to underscore the point by trying to make me feel obligated to laugh at her jokes.

This week she mentioned her latest improv schtick is to break pots while she's on stage. She says she sometimes drops one on the floor while she's talking about something serious and sometimes she throws one across the stage when she's acting angry and, at least once in each fifteen-minute riff, she breaks one over her head to let everyone know she's part of the gag.

"I don't get it," I said. "What's funny about breaking pots?"

"Because it's unexpected," she says. "And because it makes people nervous and people are more likely to laugh when they're feeling nervous, plus most of them can relate to having wanted to break something for some reason but didn't do it and



watching me do it on stage sort of gives them permission both to laugh at themselves for not having the courage to do it and empowers them to go home and break something for no reason at all.”

“Does it work?” I asked. “I mean, does it make them laugh?”

“Every time . . . at least so far,” she said. “In fact, I’ve gotten call-backs from both clubs where I tried it out.”

“I still don’t get it,” I mumbled as I took the first bite of my half-serving of chicken alfredo,

And that’s when Brenda said, “Comedy is all about ‘me’” and I said, “What do you mean?”

At this point the conversation hit a dead zone while Brenda picked the croutons off her Caesar salad and shoved two hurried forkfuls of seasoned Romaine lettuce into her mouth.

Since the clock was ticking, we talked with our mouths full for the rest of the meal.

“First of all,” Brenda answered when she had swallowed enough to chew, breathe and talk at the same time, “comedy is about letting people inside *my* head and giving them a chance to walk around and see how serious I am about ridiculous things.”

“And the second thing?” I asked.

“The second thing is about letting me into *their* heads so I can walk around and point out how serious they are about ridiculous things.”

“What if you pointed out how ridiculous they are about serious things?” I countered, without really caring all that much about the question or how Brenda might answer it.”

“That would be sarcasm,” she explained, “not to mention snarky, which can generate too many bad vibes, unless, of course, you’re roasting someone who knows it’s coming, and knows it’s coming from a friend.”

“Now, you’re taking *me* too seriously,” I said, “and that’s not funny.”

“Maybe not,” Brenda answered, “but that’s the way it is in the comedy biz. If you try to hit a snarky grand slam that insults people or puts them down, you’ll usually fly out short of the warning track.”

“I can’t stand those huge burritos everybody’s serving these days,” I interrupted. “They’re all rice and beans and you get a lump in your stomach that doesn’t go away for three hours and you end up with acid reflux on top and passing gas at the other end.”

I said this just to change the subject and to get my share of griping out on the table before the hour was up, but Brenda must have thought it was funny because she started laughing so hard she almost coughed up the last piece of chicken she had just picked out from what was left of her salad.

When she finished gagging, she took several deep breaths and flashed me the biggest smile I’ve ever seen on her face apart from when she’s laughing at her own jokes.

“Burritos!” she laughed as she wiped her face with a napkin. “Do you mind if I use



it? I mean, do you mind if I use it on stage this week?"

"You mean, can you steal my joke?" I said with a smile of my own. "Sure, why not? But don't blame me if it falls flat."

"If it does," Brenda said, "I'll just throw a pot on the floor and move on to something else."

We sat in silence for a few moments as our waitress dropped our bills on the table.

"I'm sorry about Stan," Brenda added as we stood to leave. "You know, about . . ."

Instead of finishing her sentence, Brenda wrapped her arms around me like a tortilla embracing a giant burrito.

"Thanks," I said as tears welled up in my eyes. "Next week would have been our second anniversary. I don't know what I'm going to do."

Brenda released the hug and took a step back as if she needed space to breathe as much as I did.

With pleading eyes, I added, "You'll come to the service on Saturday, won't you? I really need you there."

"Sure," Brenda answered. "That's what friends are for, right?"

"And afterwards," I said, "maybe we could go back to my place and break a few pots, you know, just . . . you know . . . because."

"For the laughs?" Brenda asked.

"No," I said. "For no reason at all."

As we stepped out of the diner but before we turned to head off in opposite directions, I absentmindedly said, "I'll see you next Wednesday."

"No," Brenda corrected me. "I'll see you on Saturday."



Fawn DeViney - *Untitled*  
Photography

Dawn Shepard

## BOYS SWIM TEAM POTLUCK

Rectangular folding tables lined up nose to butt.  
A feast train parked in the high school cafeteria  
for the annual potluck.

Buckets of grocery-store fried chicken  
next to home-made rhubarb pie,  
stabbed with a spatula branded with a last name.  
A label to protect ownership of the utensil  
but also to shout, “Bitches, I’m, hand, made.”

A ghost food competition of  
career mom's store-bought food  
vs.  
housewife's from-scratch delights.  
Even though we were celebrating swimmers' wins.

My brother set a record in a team relay race  
and, at our taco haunt,  
could down a six-pack of tacos and a pound of potato oles.  
And digest it before my last bite.

I piled freshly baked brownies next to warm lasagna.  
Pea salad hugged deli chocolate fluff.  
Probably made by a student during an after-school shift.

My brother got a metal and his name on the record board.  
I scored a mass-produced poppy seed muffin from its plastic-fitted home  
that a hurried mother purchased on her way to celebrate a son.

I was an invisible otter.  
Lapping the buffet, tallying my favorite dishes  
and eyeing the last piece of Carla’s famous chocolate cake.



Jennifer Nightingale

## RAZOR CLAMS IN HEAVEN

*-For my sister who loved clams*

Tell me - do you dig razor clams in heaven?  
And does the briny seawater fill the holes,  
You made with your heavenly shovel?  
Do you blindly feel for your prize, in the soupy sea water?  
Leaving your hands sticky and the tips of your fingers cold?  
Do your knees still get wet and sandy?  
And do you grin when you get a bucketful of bivalves,  
for your heavenly breakfast?

Was our mother there to clean the clams,  
Pour boiling water on their shells to remove the slippery meat?  
Did she have a cast iron skillet sizzling with foaming brown butter?  
And did she drag the clam meat through a bath,  
Of flour, cornmeal, sea salt and pepper?

Of course, she cooked red potatoes with lemons and fresh oregano.  
But who else was there sitting 'round your heavenly table to enjoy?  
Were there aunts and uncles, cousins, and devoted dogs?

Tell me who chopped the wood and lit the fire?  
Were our once loved dogs resting by your wood stove?  
Weary from the celestial waves?

After you feasted from a heavenly sea?  
Did you stop and wonder about all of those you left so suddenly?  
Or was it enough to have old dogs by your feet and our mother in your presence?

How can there be a heaven without tired dogs and razor clams?



*Nancy Cook*

## **THE RICE WOMAN OF NAM SONG RIVER FROM THE BEERLAO STALL AT VANG VIENG**

Supposing truth is a woman  
who wades to her waist  
through the blood-life-river  
of this Laos-green, lumpy land  
of a limestone body. Truth,

a woman, with husband longside  
and loadless, his skin the color  
of ghost and his hunger—infinite  
hunger—for that noodle soup cut  
by her scissors, those morsels of  
wild alley pork, plate of green  
onions, basil, and cress, and  
of course, the clear, carried water.

Truth, this grandmother of women, crossing  
at half past dawn to the sticky-rice patty,  
to the sun, working all day and crossing  
again at dusk—basket of grain strapped cross  
the strong line of an ancient forehead.

What if truth is this woman,  
making her way through the peach dusk,  
through the river, for maybe eight minutes now  
making her way around the blue bus,  
water over its wheels, onto its steel belly.  
Truth, cautious now, making her way round  
the brown chests of grown boys, their buckets  
upon cold laughing buckets thrown  
to bathe their bus beast of burden



then thrown to bathe themselves.

Truth, this woman, skirt drenched, basket dry,  
Arrived now, home-side, with no hint  
of grimace, no smile of quiet victory,  
only the quick check for her man, and then

the continuum of plodding  
up the red, clay hardness of road.

*Martha Clarkson*  
**THE BLUEBERRY**

rolled off the table  
onto the deck slats  
straddling a crack  
the blueberry waited  
for me to pick it up  
and I ate the blueberry  
it had been longer  
than five seconds  
but the blueberry  
and I  
didn't care

*Reba Owen*

## **DISAPPEARING BROWNIE BLUES**

I went to the cupboard, the brownies were gone  
don't know how much weight I've put on.  
I've got the blues, I've got the blues  
I've got the disappearing brownies, disappearing brownie blues.  
This pandemic is getting me low,  
don't know how much longer I can go,  
I got the blues, I got the blues,  
I've got the disappearing brownie, the disappearing brownie blues.  
The pan was empty, the pan was bare,  
Got more inches on my derriere.  
I got the blues. I've got the blues  
I've got the disappearing brownie, the disappearing brownie blues.  
Woke up this morning, went to the store

*All*

*my*  
*clothes* don't fit anymore.

I got the blues, I got the blues  
I got the disappearing brownie, the disappearing brownie blues.

*Donna Mendelson*

## **SMALL POTATOES**

At the farm last fall I asked why some crates  
held washed potatoes, some dirty,  
and the woman beside me at the dirty bin said,  
'The dirty ones keep better.'



It was October, and we were there  
for last vegetables to store for winter; last looks  
at disked fields, barns against snowy mountains,  
harrows, tractors, muddy road;

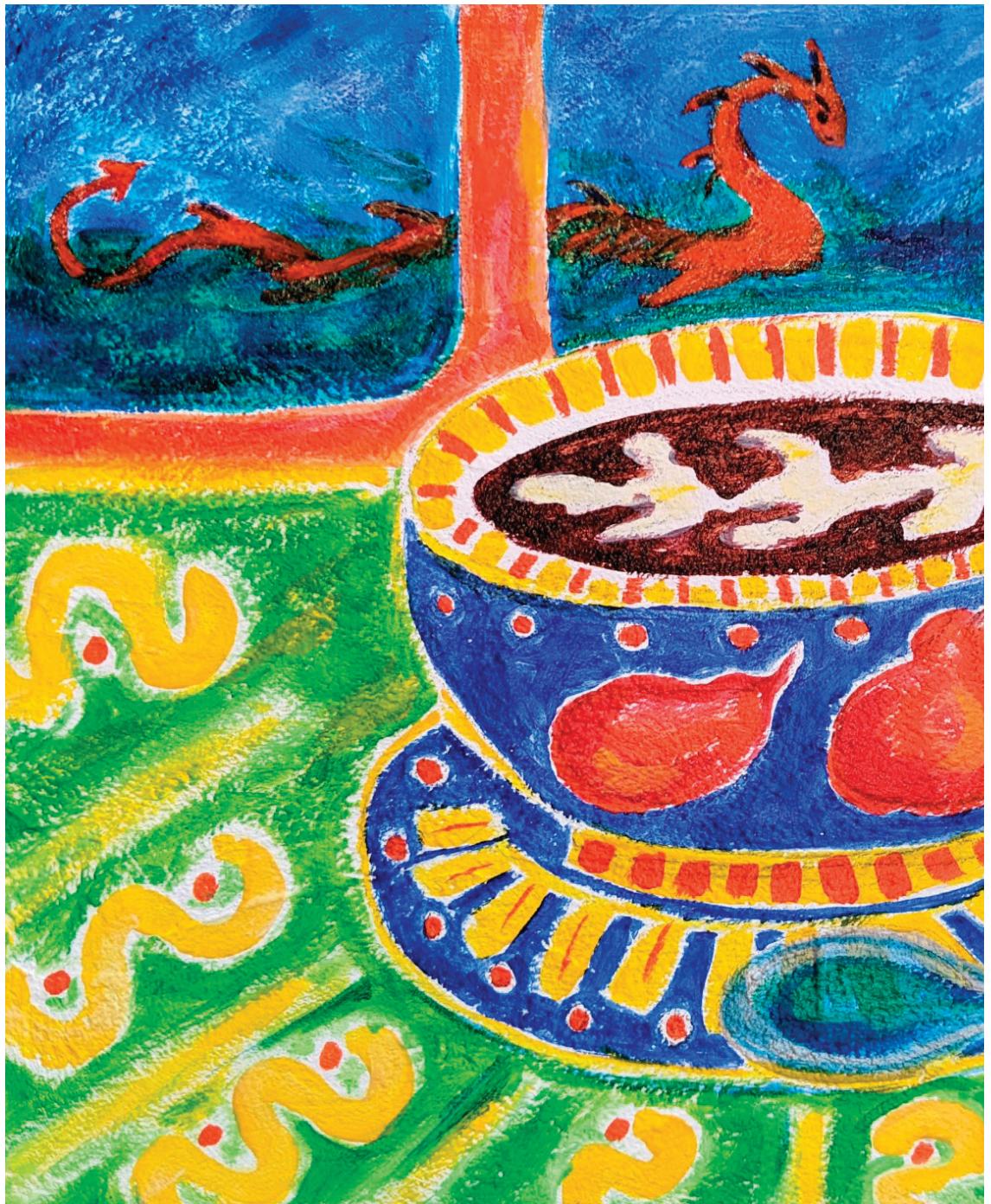
and last fare-very-wells to farmers who all summer  
worked the fields, drove the two-lane from,  
brought shares of each week's harvests  
to the park at the creek near our house:

kale and lettuce at the beginning,  
snap peas and cilantro later,  
onions and winter squash at the end.  
They came every Wednesday

from finger-freezing graupel  
to choking wildfire smoke—farmer-cooks,  
who gave us recipes; one ingredient list asks,  
How much do you like garlic?

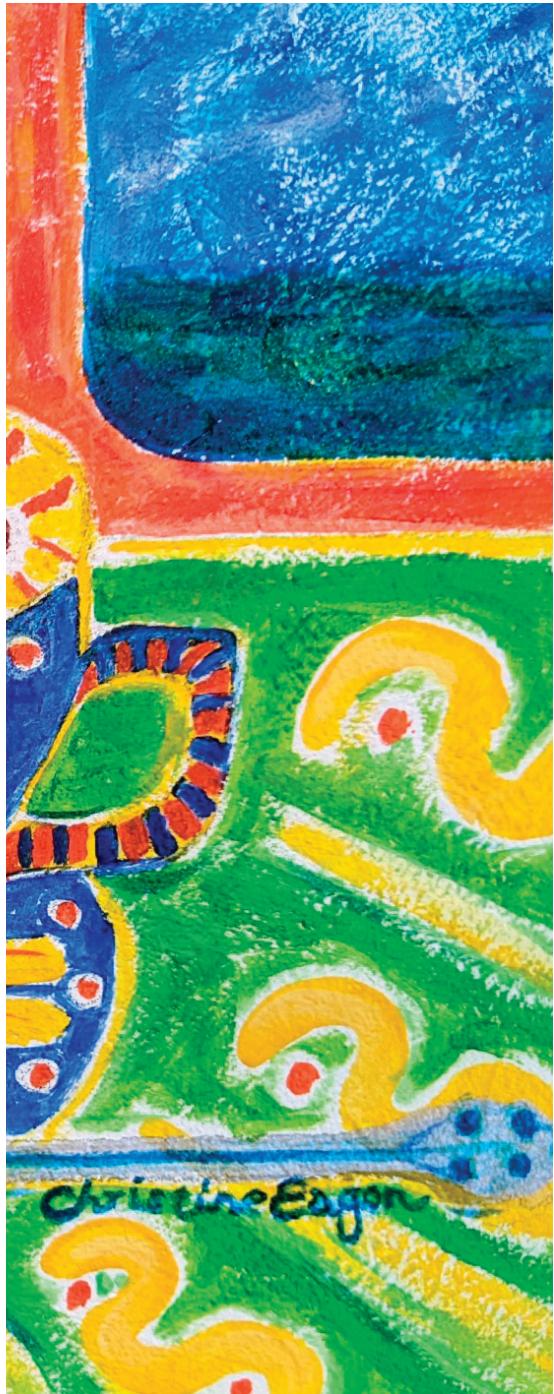
Now March snow blows in clumps from the pines.  
I scrub off a sheen of dirt, then halve and roast  
in oil, salt, pepper, and uncounted garlic slices  
red and golden, perfect, small potatoes

that kept and will keep in their fine  
dirt until this fall's potato time.  
By leaves we live, wrote Patrick Geddes,  
and by these small potatoes.



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**Christine Eagon** - *Don't Look Out the Window* - Acrylic on Panel



RAIN

Gregory E. Zschomler

## THE DAY RENNY SKARAOSTEN SAVED THE NORTH COAST

FOOD EDITION

Sven Skäraosten, sometimes called Ren-Sven, sometimes simply Ren or Renny, occasionally Rennet, but rarely Sven, was a Swede. His family sailed from the old country generations ago and first settled near Astoria, Oregon at the mouth of the Columbia River years before Lewis and Clark set out to discover a western passage. The Skäraosten's sea journey had been a long one and in order to survive the arduous voyage his family brought along several farm animals—mainly cows—aboard their ship. The bovines were kept in a special hold in the belly of the vessel and, as you might imagine, the enclosed pen could become quite aromatic. But I digress.

To make a long story shorter Ren's ancestors were cheesemakers. They were of European descent and, therefore, prone to lactose intolerance which is rather ironic when you think about it considering their trade. Ren, too, practiced the culturing craft; eighth generation at that. A few generations back his family moved from Astoria down to the Tillamook area (which is known as Oregon's cheese capitol) to work for (you guessed it) the cheese factory. There he was in charge of the application of rennet (thus his nickname) into the culturing process.

Now here's the deal: Ren absolutely loved cheese. Not just making it, but eating it. Which was the problem, you see. Being lactose intolerant, it gave him gas and gas made him flatulent. Give him a mere bite of cheese and he could toot his trousers for half the afternoon. The only



thing that affected him more than cheese was ice cream, and if cheese was a weakness then ice cream was his kryptonite. Ren practically worshipped ice cream.

As you might imagine, if you've ever been to Tillamook, steering clear of cheese and ice cream could be a serious challenge—especially if you work at the Tillamook Cheese Factory. But, since these foods caused some major gastric disturbances in Ren—especially if he consumed larger quantities—he generally ate them only in small amounts, on special occasions, and rarely in public to avoid blowing people over with his super-charged cheek cheesers.

Still, after a long shift working with cheese, the texture, aroma, and sight of it was more than tempting and Ren would, more often than not, take home a small sampling of end cuts at the end of the day. In addition, he was known to grab an ice cream cone from the factory outlet's in-house parlor on the way out the door. (Which was, by the way, the reason why no-one would carpool with him, if you get my drift. If you don't, well, let's say that if you rode with him you'd get *his* drift. It didn't take much—only a few good licks—before his tummy would rumble and the pressure would build and he'd let out some insane methane.)

By the time he'd consumed a cone and started in on the chunks of cheese, the car's interior smelled a lot like the dairy air (of a cow's derriere) outside—only a hundred times more concentrated. Ren didn't mind, he was used to it (and partially deaf) so, when alone, he just let 'em rip. (Again, this is why he had few friends and no carpool mates.)

Talk about cutting the cheese—it was Ren's gift. And it was this gift that kept him in a state of perpetual bachelorhood to boot. This fact alone concerned Ren. He could certainly fend for himself, but he longed for the companionship of a woman, and at nearly forty years of age, the prospect wasn't looking good for him. And that caused him to worry about it and worry drove him to his only solace: ice cream (which, as you may imagine, created a vicious cycle). But life went on day in and day out. Though he sometimes felt lonely and unchallenged in his work he was by no means depressed. Life was what you made it after all and Ren was generally happy, but not overly exuberant on the outside. That happened inside, especially when he ate cheese and ice cream.

Well, as it happened, one particularly worrisome day, Ren was on his lunch break at work and just couldn't resist the ice cream case. A new flavor, Malted Moo, had been added and he got to thinking, "Why not?" It began with a single scoop, but "lordy-mama!" it was so good he ordered up a second dish—a triple scooper—and his gut was soon churning around like butter being made by a Quaker on caffeine. But it was a sunny day so Ren was outside where he *thought* he could relieve the pressure as he saw fit. Except that there were an inordinate number of tourists visiting the factory that day and he had to hold the noxious fumes within. Which wasn't pleasant...for Ren; for everyone else it was, for the time being, quite good (believe me).

The force continued to mount and this began to worry him all the more which caused him to crave even more ice cream. All the while his bowels were flipping around like the entire entourage from Cirque du Soleil and his abdomen swelled all the more.



He was growing quite uncomfortable, so he quickly ran into the factory—not as you might expect to use the restroom (for the last time this happened he blew the pipes loose from the plumbing system)—but to excuse himself for the rest of the day.

After a hasty meeting with his boss and receiving permission for the remainder of the day off, he bought the entire tub of the new ice cream flavor and dashed to his car where he immediately removed a bottle of Lactaid® capsules from his glove compartment and swallowed a handful of the digestive aid. He put the key into the ignition, gave it a turn, put the car into gear and tore out of the parking lot heading north on Hwy 101 toward home at Twin Rocks in Rockaway Beach, small seat steamers seeping with sizeable, squeaking hisses from his nether-end.

The Lactaid® did give him some temporary relief, but he was worried the rumble tumblly might return and he was now out of the supplement—which made him worry all the more, so he dipped into the melting, industrial-sized tub of ice cream as he drove up the highway.

Twenty minutes later he turned toward Twin Rocks and drove down to the edge of the seashore, parked his car, wrapped his arm around the container of still semi-frozen goodness and walked to the beach where he sat down on his favorite pondering log. He began to eat. Ice cream. Soon he was lost in the comfort of it all, blissfully consuming spoonful after spoonful of the dairy delight. His gastronomical system quaked with epic proportions; his growling gut seemed to move the very ground itself (so he thought).

Only the ocean roared above the growing protests of his digestive tract and, being (as I mentioned earlier) somewhat deaf, he heard neither his stomach nor the sounding of the tsunami alarm that wailed from the city center to the north and across 101. Less than fifteen minutes later he was nearly through eating the entire two and a half gallon tub of Malted Moo and, quite bloated, gazing out over the ocean, where he saw the approach of the giant wave. He panicked, jumped to his feet, turned to run to his car and then IT happened. Ren, now on his feet and moving quickly away from the shoreline, suddenly let loose with the fattest, foulest, unfathomably fuming fanny frog he'd ever released.

You've read about the Mount St. Helens eruption that wiped out miles of forests like a nuclear explosion? That was nothing. Ren's booty blast created such a back draft that it could be heard all the way to Portland even though the audacious air biscuit was aimed out over the ocean. Perhaps it was even faintly heard in Japan.

But it wasn't the mere anal audio of the heinie-honker that was special—nor was it the savory scent of the seam-splitter—it was the breaking wind it produced. Such was the resonate concussion of the thunder from down under that the detonatous discharge slammed against the wall of water and sent it back out to sea from whence it came.

And that, my friends, is the story of the day that Renny Skäraosten saved the north coast, for surly the tsunami, they say, would have devastated all the seaside cities of Oregon. To this day Ren, or Rippin' Renny as he is now known, is a world-renown legend. All the ladies love him, the men buy him drink and he always has a large tub of his favorite Tillamook ice cream on hand, just in case.



# CONTRIBUTORS

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## **KIM ROSE ADAMS**

I am an outdoor photographer, illustrator, and product designer living in Astoria, Oregon. My passion is shooting mainly coastal oceanic scenes and near-coastal forest while hiking, as well as maritime subjects, wildflowers, and wildlife. I have a special love of the Pacific Northwest coast for its wonderful basalt rock formations and dramatic cliffs, as well as its tide pools, wetlands, and geological history. Find my work at Notyoureverydaydreamer.rocks

## **DEBORAH AKERS**

Deborah Akers is the author of two poetry collections: Partly Fallen (Airlie Press, 2015) and Backward Pilgrim (I-Beam Books, 2013). She makes her living as an educational editor. Deborah observes the world from her home in Astoria, Oregon.

## **QUINN ALLAN**

Quinn Allan is an actor, writer, musician, and hobby/gaming enthusiast. He's appeared in NBC's Grimm, Netflix's Trinkets, and dozens of commercials, web shows, and advertisements. He lives in Astoria OR with his beloved wife and son, where he volunteers working with local wildlife.

## **OLIVE ASAY**

Olive Asay is a twelve-year-old middle schooler in Portland, OR. She has been writing ever since she could talk and cares deeply for the environment. This is her first publication.

## **JESSICA BAHL**

Jessica Bahl is a versatile creative who thrives on exploring the intersection of various art forms. She enjoys blending the realms of digital artistry, poetry, music, and creative writing. She is currently pursuing a BA in Digital Arts.

## **JAN BONO**

Jan Bono has written a 6-book cozy mystery series set on the SW Washington coast. She's also published

five collections of humorous personal experience, three poetry chapbooks, nine one-act plays, a collection of 12 "murderous" short stories, and one serious novel. Jan is in the top 5 contributors, worldwide, to Chicken Soup for the Soul, with 57 acceptances, to date. [www.JanBonoBooks.com](http://www.JanBonoBooks.com)

## **MASON K BROWN**

Mason K Brown lives in Forest Grove, Oregon. An author, speaker and storyteller, she writes primarily inspirational non-fiction and humor with a smattering of fiction keyed in. She is widely published in anthologies and devotionals. Mason was a winner of the 2020 Media Associates International August writing contest and runner-up in the Cascade Awards published devotional category, 2015. Mason travels the world collecting water and fodder for her stories. She can be reached at [masonkbrown@frontier.com](mailto:masonkbrown@frontier.com)

## **JO LUMPKIN BROWN**

Boy, time flies! Family raised, 30-year career ended, and now I find myself "playing" and having fun in Astoria! No retirement here. Compelled to create, make, and do "art"... until I can't.

## **VICKI CARTER**

I grew up in Longview Washington and have lived also in Texas and Colorado. I've always been interested in writing and poetry, but it's taken a back seat to my painting and needlework. It's an inspiration living here on the Long Beach peninsula for both myself and my husband, a musician/songwriter. I can't imagine a better place for inspiring an artist.

## **JOHN CIMINELLO**

John Ciminello has appeared in various publications including The SUN, Mentor, ANALOG, Salal Reader, and Rain. He is the author of Shrine Above High Tide (2009) and the founder of Uncle John's Books in Naselle, Washington.



**MARTHA CLARKSON**

Martha Clarkson's writing can be found in The Seattle Times, Clackamas Literary Review, Seattle Review, Portland Review, The Sun magazine, Mothering magazine, Feminine Rising, Quarter Past Eight, and Nimrod. She is the winner of the Anderbo Fiction Prize for the story "Her Voices, Her Room," which has been produced as a podcast by PenDust Radio. She has two notable short stories in Best American Short Stories. Martha was a former poetry editor for Word Riot. Find her here: [www.marthaclarkson.com](http://www.marthaclarkson.com)

**DAPHNE CLIFTON**

Daphne Clifton lives near Portland, Oregon, where making art, writing poetry, and music-making with friends feels just about right. Her poems have appeared in Avocet, Ekphrastic Review, Homing Pigeon, Paper Mountains, Poetry Moves, Pointed Circle, Rain, and Voices from the Mill Pond.

**NANCY COOK**

Nancy Cook lives in a yellow house in Astoria.

**ALLISON DEFREESE**

Allison deFreese teaches Spanish GED® classes at Clatsop Community College. Her translations of Luciana Jazmín Coronado's poetry appear in Gulf Coast, Columbia Journal, Pacifica, and Crazyhorse (now Swamp Pink). Her translation of Luciana Jazmín Coronado's chapbook Dinner at Las Heras won the 2023 C&R Press Winter Soup Bowl Award for Poetry.

**FAWN DEVINEY**

Fawn DeViney is an Arizona native who has spent her adult life in Salem, MA and Astoria, OR. Departing from a 13 year career in advertising and commercial photography, Fawn's work is driven with narrative and sympathy to her own confessions of awe and desire. She has a commitment to peace within the beauty and intimacy of everyday life, with the purpose of inviting more space to breathe. She is currently working on a book of her work. Her website is [sfdeviney.com](http://sfdeviney.com)

**JAMES (JIM) DOTT**

James (Jim) Dott lives with his family in the Uppertown neighborhood of Astoria. A retired elementary teacher, he now devotes his time to writing, gardening, and travel. He is a volunteer programmer on Coast Community Radio. He has been a regular contributor to Rain. Please visit his website [jamesdott.org](http://jamesdott.org) for more on his writing.

**HEATHER DOUGLAS**

Heather Douglas is a 4-H-trained artist and a public school-trained writer. Find more of her stuff on Oscar Astoria (dot) com.

**CHRISTINE EAGON**

Christine Eagon is a painter and photographer who lives in Astoria. She studied art and photography at Portland State University, Oregon College of Art and Craft, and Clark College. She is an active member of DRAW Group, AVA Gallery, and Cloistered Crones.

**JANET EBERT**

RN, Emeritus & published author. She teaches Memoirs, Narrative (Prose) Poetry, Life Sketches, Flash Fiction, and Aging at Clatsop CC, and is a private writing coach who lives in Astoria. She is also a Board Member for Astor Friends of the Library Association and the Sr. Consultant of Rain Magazine.

**ANN FARLEY**

Ann Farley, poet and caregiver, is happiest outdoors, preferably at the beach. Her poems have appeared in Peregrine, Timberline Review, Third Wednesday, RAIN Magazine, Willawaw, VerseWeaver, KOSMOS, and others. Her chapbook, Tell Her Yes, was published in April 2022 by The Poetry Box. She lives in Beaverton, OR.

**ASHER FINCH**

Asher Finch can recite most of the Twilight Saga from memory, and there's nothing you can do about it. In between duties as an amateur bookseller, blossoming writer, and professional loiterer, Asher spends their time governing the CCC student body and occasionally sobbing over math homework.



### ***PIERRE FINCH***

Pierre is an avid outdoorsman, a loving grandfather, and an astute nature observer.

### ***CALANDRA FREDERICK***

Calandra Frederick has a B.A. in English from Oregon State University and an M. Ed. from Portland State University. She has previously had seven short stories published in, *Rain Magazine*.

### ***BUTCH FREEDMAN***

Butch Freedman, a long-time writer and teacher, lives in Cape Meares with his wife Beverly. His passions include family, surfing, and concocting new versions of cioppino.

### ***FLAX GLOR***

Flax Glor's short films and narrative music videos have won awards and been screened at prestigious venues like Cannes Independent and the Bay Area Short Film Festival. He has a Master's degree in screenwriting, is the author of *Filmmaking Simplified*, and works as a script analyst for an industry marketplace while teaching at Clatsop Community College.

### ***ALLEN GOODMAN***

Allen Goodman is a retired small business owner and research psychologist enjoying a self-indulgent life in Astoria.

### ***BILL GRIESAR***

Bill Griesar is a Teaching Assistant Professor of Interdisciplinary Neuroscience at Portland State University, co-founder of NW Noggin ([nwnoggin.org](http://nwnoggin.org)), and Affiliate Faculty at OHSU. He loves teaching – all ages, everywhere, all the time. Bill and his husband are proud dads of two extraordinary young men.

### ***CHARLES HOLBOKE***

I was born. I lived. And then, although I thought I would be the exception, I died. Wait a minute, I haven't died yet. Maybe I will be the exception.

### ***BRITTENY HOLDEN***

Britteny Holden is a student at Clatsop Community

College. Britteny lives in Washington with her three children and three dogs. Britteny is an emerging artist and is currently pursuing a degree in International Business.

### ***ETHAN JENKINS***

Ethan Jenkins is a digital artist, musician, and photographer from Long Beach, Washington. They create eccentric little cartoons on their own time, and have always dreamed of being on NBC's Survivor. With a strange passion for 90's runway, and a deep love of house music, they are the one at the party that talks to you just a little bit too loud.

### ***MARTHA ELLEN JOHNSON***

A resident of Oregon since 1972. Relocated from Chicago. Provided valuable education from CCC in the mid 70s under professors Wanlass, Garrison, Rupp and Hauser. Went on to earn an MFA from PSU. Prose and poems appear in several publications. I write to process my wild life.

### ***GRETCHEN KEEFER***

Gretchen Keefer has always played with words and scenes. Now, after teaching English to adult speakers of other languages for a long time, she writes short fiction for fun. Her work has appeared in *Chicken Soup for the Soul*, *Rain Magazine*, *Particular Passages: Decked Halls*, *CommuterLit.com*, *Ariel Chart.com*, *Academy of the Heart and Mind*, and local anthologies.

### ***FLINT LARGIN***

Flint Largin was born in California and raised in Washington state. At the time of writing, he is a student at Clatsop Community College working towards his associate's degree. He enjoys photography, writing, and being out in nature, which can be a short walk in the woods or long hiking/camping trips. Something he would like to share with all readers is that he believes it is critical that people "reconnect with their roots" by spending more time in nature.

### ***ROBERTA LINDBECK***

Roberta Lindbeck has lived in Astoria, Oregon, since the end of 2019. Prior to her move, she spent



over 25 years in Kansas City, raising her family and writing for non-profit organizations. When not writing for a cause, Roberta enjoys writing for her enjoyment and that of her family and friends. Her goals for 2024 are to be intentional and present, write with the goal of publication, and visit her family, which is spread across the northern half of the United States.

#### **NICK MACK**

Nick Mack belongs to that tired breed of out-of-staters who have escaped to the Oregon Coast to discover themselves and create art. Since moving from Montana last year, he has found direction selling books (and espresso) and teaching high school English. He lives on a hill with an impressive toilet view and a feline freeloader named Jay Gatsby.

#### **LAUREN MALLETT**

Lauren Mallett's poems appear in Poetry Northwest, Puerto del Sol, The Seventh Wave, The Night Heron Barks and other journals. She lives on Clatsop land of Oregon's north coast. [www.laurenmallett.com](http://www.laurenmallett.com)

#### **JOSHUA MARTIN-SCHLICHTING**

Joshua Martin-Schlichting is a student at Clatsop Community College where he is currently studying art and photography. He grew up in Neskowin Oregon. He has always been enamored of photography by learning from his dad and brother. He has a design piece in a mural for the college. He is the co-manager of the college's food bank.

#### **STEVEN MAYER**

Steven Mayer, PhD, MBA, started writing after he retired from the University of Oregon and an extensive business management career. Steve and his wife Linda moved to the North Oregon Coast in 2016. He has published three books, the Finding Heart series, and his writing appears in various Northwest literary journals. He enjoys being an armchair philosopher, storyteller, adventurer, sports enthusiast, and beach wanderer.

#### **DONNA MENDELSON**

Donna Mendelson worked in photographic collections at the Arizona State Museum and taught

first and second grade before going back to school to study nineteenth-century literature. Her poetry has appeared in San Pedro River Review, The Fourth River, Windfall, Cirque, and ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment.

#### **EMILEA MOLLOY**

I have spent my entire life in Oregon. I have always been inspired by the odd ethereality of the vast landscapes that surrounded me and I hope that all my work slips my readers into the darkness I am enamored with.

#### **PATTRIA BURNETTO MONROE**

Pattra Burnetto Monroe is excited and grateful whenever a bit of art finds her. Thank You.

#### **MARIANNE MONSON**

Marianne Monson writes on topics related to women's history from her 100 year old house in Astoria, and her most recent historical fiction novel, The Opera Sisters, came out in September. She's founder and president of The Writer's Guild, a literary nonprofit serving the lower Columbia region.

#### **RUBY MURRAY**

Ruby Hansen Murray is a columnist for the Osage News. She is a winner of The Iowa Review and Montana Prizes. A MacDowell, Ragdale and Hedgebrook fellow, her work may be found in Cascadia: A Field Guide (Tupelo Press), Ecotone, and has been nominated for Push Cart prizes and Best of the Net. She's a citizen of the Osage Nation with West Indian roots, living in the lower Columbia River estuary.

[www.rubyhansenmurray.com](http://www.rubyhansenmurray.com)

#### **JESSICA E. NEWTON**

I am a local, young author and poet based in Warrenton, Oregon. You can find some of my nonfiction writing in the North Coast Squid literary journal. I am the author of the poetry book, All In One. It is available on Amazon and can be found in bookstores along the North Coast. I hope to continue my writing as a forever career.



### **JENNIFER NIGHTINGALE**

Jennifer Nightingale lives in Astoria with her Husband Holt and spotted dog, Mickey. Jennifer Nightingale debuted her first novel, Alberta and the Spark in May of 2019. Jennifer is encouraged and inspired by the Ric's Open Poetry Mic crowd. She is nourished by their friendship and beautiful work. They meet monthly every first Tuesday evening down at WineKraft on Pier 11 in Astoria.

### **KAMA O'CONNOR**

Kama is a new Astoria implant who can't stop taking pictures of the sea, river, and elk in her yard. She teaches creative writing at Clatsop Community College and when she's not in the classroom, she can be found on local trails with her daughter and dog. In the spirit of food, she's eaten her way through the PNW and approves, wholeheartedly. Her published work can be found at HarperCollins, O-Dark-Thirty, Military Spouse Magazine, Zone 3, and others.

### **MIKE O'CONNOR**

Mike O'Connor is a retired physician who has been capturing photos of the fauna and flora encountered during his many years of travel. While topside photography has produced an assortment of interesting and beautiful land images, underwater photography is his real passion. From giant pelagic ocean dwellers to the smallest inhabitants of the coral reefs, he enjoys sharing his photos as much as he enjoys creating the images of these amazing animals.

### **DAYLE OLSON**

Dayle Olson is a poet living upriver from Astoria with her husband, David, and one opinionated cat. Her work appears in The Salal Review, RAIN Magazine (2023), Litmora Magazine, Thin Veil Press, And Other Poems, Timber Ghost Press, and North Coast Squid (2023). Dayle is active with The Writer's Guild of Astoria and Willamette Writers. Along with reading poetry at Ric's open mic (WineKraft), she hosts a quarterly poetry open mic at River Mile 38 brewpub in Cathlamet.

X (Twitter) @daylejean

### **FRANCIS OPILA**

Francis Opila is a rain-struck, sun-loving poet who lives in the Pacific Northwest. His work, recreation, and spirit have taken him into the woods, wetlands, rivers, mountains, and deserts. His poetry collection Conference of the Crows was published in 2023. He enjoys performing poetry, combining recitation, and playing North American wooden flutes. More of his creative work can be found at [francisopila.com](http://francisopila.com)

### **REBA OWEN**

Reba Owen is a north coast writer, artist, and blues ukulele performer. She is a graduate of Oregon State University with a degree in Recreation. She often uses nature to illustrate the foibles of humans in her three published poetry volumes. Reba lives in Warrenton.

### **STEPHEN PEARCE**

Stephen Pearce is a graduate of The University of Washington in Seattle (1977) and studied verse-writing there with Richard Blessing and Nelson Bentley. He is a retired carpenter and innkeeper, having spent most of his working years in Portland, Oregon. He now lives in Palouse, Washington, a town of a thousand, near Washington State University.

### **VIVIENNE POPPERL**

Vivienne Popperl lives in Portland, Oregon. Her poems have appeared in Clackamas Literary Review, Timberline Review, About Place Journal, Rain Magazine, and other publications. Her first collection, A Nest in the Heart, was published by The Poetry Box in April, 2022.

### **ROBERT MICHAEL PYLE**

Gray's River writer Bob Pyle has lived in the Willapa rain for 45 years. His book Wintergreen is considered a Northwest classic. His others include ten nonfiction titles, eight butterfly books, four poetry collections, and one novel, Magdalena Mountain, with a sequel in progress. His latest collection, The Last Man in Willapa, has just been published by Texas Tech University Press.



**KRIS REID**

I am bold in the way I hold myself and charmed by others around me. I know who I am and am not defined by my life. Even with this, my determination to thrive is driven by my children, who see me as a pillar of support as well as a positive example. My choice to come back to school as a single mom has changed their vision of what is possible.

**FLORENCE SAGE**

Florence Sage is MC and a regular reader at the monthly Ric's Poetry Mic at WineKraft in Astoria, was recently poetry columnist for HIPFiSH monthly and has been a poetry presenter for dozens of area literary events. Her full-length poem collections are: Nevertheless: Poems from the Gray Area, 2014; The Man Who Whistled, The Woman Who Wished: A Polish-Canadian Story, 2021; What to Do with Night: Poems, 2023, at local book sellers.

**SAMANTHA SALDIVAR**

Samantha Saldivar is an emerging Mexican-American artist whose work focuses on identity and intimacy. This is her first publication.

**KRISTIN SHAUCK**

Kristin Shauck is currently in her twentieth year at CCC, where she teaches design, drawing, painting, art history, and oversees the Royal Nebeker Gallery. She also serves as the founding director of the international competition Au Naturel: the Nude in the 20th Century.

**DAWN SHEPARD**

Dawn Shepard is a graphic designer, poet, and watercolor artist living in Astoria, Oregon. She often shares her poems at Ric's Open Mic night.

**ETHAN SHIN**

Born in New York City, Ethan Shin is currently a junior at the Hotchkiss School. He has immersed himself in photography for four years, and his work has been recognized by Scholastic Art & Writing Awards, GENIUS Olympiad, and his high school. Deeply interested in food waste issues, he volunteers as a food rescuer on behalf of Rescuing Leftover Cuisine, where he helps to redistribute excess food to those experiencing food insecurity.

**IVAN SMASON**

Ivan Smason is a poet and psychologist in Santa Monica, California.

**CONNIE SOPER**

Connie Soper is a poet from Portland. She likes to visit small towns, hike, and walk along Oregon's public beaches. Many of her poems are inspired by these experiences and have appeared in Ekphrastic Review, Catamaran, Cider Press Review, One Art, and elsewhere. Her first full-length book of poetry, A Story Interrupted, was issued by Airlie Press in 2022.

**KIM STAFFORD**

Kim Stafford writes, teaches, and travels to restore the human spirit. He has published a dozen books, including As the Sky Begins to Change (Red Hen Press, 2024), and has taught writing in Scotland, Italy, Mexico, and Bhutan. In 2018 he was named Oregon Poet Laureate for a two-year term.

**SCOTT T. STARBUCK**

Scott T. Starbuck's Bridge at the End of the World, New and Selected [Climate] Poems, won a 2023 Blue Light Book Award, noted on his Trees, Fish, and Dreams Climateblog at riverseek.blogspot.com. He taught ecopoetry workshops the past five years at Scripps (UCSD Masters in Climate Science and Policy), and two years ago donated the painting of his former charter boat Starfisher to Astoria Public Library.

**CHLOE STRINGER**

Chloe Stringer is a student at Clatsop Community College and of Rain Magazine. She is pursuing a career in graphic design and has an eye for the artwork of marketing. Chloe enjoys spending her free time crafting, creating, and playing with her cats Leonard, Cinnamon, and Baby Kitty.

**JAMIE SWICK**

Jamie Swick is a Polaroid photographer and writer from the Pacific Northwest. Her photographic work has been published and showcased around the globe. You can view more at jamieswick.com



***JAMES A. TWEEDIE***

James A. Tweedie lives in Long Beach, Washington. His prose has been recognized with two Silver Awards from Writers of Tomorrow and a First-Place prize in the inaugural Edinburgh Festival Flash Fiction Contest. His poetry has earned him numerous awards.

***NICKOLAI VASILIEFF***

Nickolai Vasilieff resides in a cabin along the Deschutes River in Oregon. Nickolai penned the Empath series, targeting middle-grade/young adult readers with tales influenced by his international journeys and family vacations. His fascination with youthful imagination and thirst for adventure fuels his passion for young adult novels.

***JOHN VILLADELGADO***

John is a versatile creative based on planet Earth. He combines the intricacies of coding with the vivid imagery he absorbs. He runs a local disc golf and music repair shop, fostering a community where locals gather to share their passion for the sport. Creativity serves as both a form of expression and a means of maintaining balance.

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***PETER ADAMS YOUNG***

Peter Adams Young is a native of Washington, DC. Retirement in 2017 provided the opportunity to focus on completing "One Hundred Stingers," his Vietnam-era novel about the air war over the Ho Chi Minh Trail. He and his wife Darlene retired to southwestern Washington state.

***GREGORY E. ZSCHOMLER***

Gregory E. Zschomler is an author and freelance writer living on the Pacific Northwest coast with his wife and editor Ruth, and a former bookstore cat named Dorian Gray. His work has appeared in local newspapers and magazines. He has written more than a dozen books including two humor anthologies. He is currently working on a non-fiction book titled OFF. You can find out more and get links to his books on Amazon at [gregoryezschomler.blogspot.com](http://gregoryezschomler.blogspot.com)



# 2024 PATRONS

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Photos by **David Homer**

RAIN MAGAZINE FOOD EDITION



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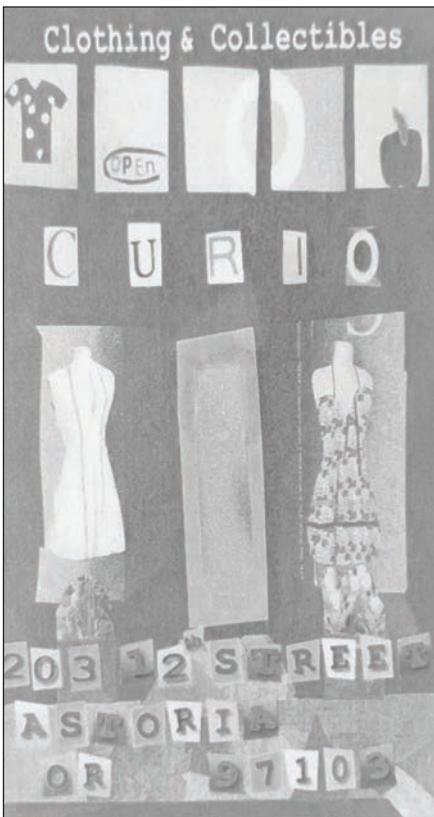
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