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**Melissa Allen**

Madison, Wisconsin, USA

**The Rainbow Cafe**

We like to visit a co-op cafe in our Moscow neighborhood, one of the new private enterprises that Gorbachev has encouraged; they have more and better food than most of the state restaurants, and are never “Closed for Repairs” when the employees feel like taking a day off, never display “No Vacancy” signs when the place is empty. The staff are solicitous and polite, and apologetic if something on the menu doesn’t happen to be available, instead of incredulous that you might ever have expected it would be.

*winter flea market—*

*a wind-up doll*

*that’s already broken*

It drives the staff crazy if I order for myself instead of letting my boyfriend do it for me. For this reason, I make a point of always ordering for myself, and always before he does. They stare ferociously at him while I speak, and only after he gives a slight nod do they write down my order. Even after I’ve been doing this for months, they don’t yield on their principles. No one there ever asks me what I want.

I eat my chicken Kiev watching them as they bustle from table to table with worried lines in their foreheads, as if they’re calculating profit margins in their heads. Butter drips down my chin. My boyfriend reaches over and wipes it off with a napkin.

*meteor shower*

*the wishes I make*

*in another language*

**Belinda Broughton**

Lobethal, South Australia, Australia

**Corellas**

*dust trails*

*from a tractor*

*turning circles*

From his freshly seeded paddocks, corellas rise into the air in a single panic. Several thousand, screeching, confused, confusing parrots. They settle their destruction into dark trees, fold their neat white wings and raise the question-mark of their crests.

The Farmer says, “When I was a kid, they were that rare! Once I rode my push bike twenty miles just to see a flock of twenty. Thousands now. Do a bit of damage. But look at ‘em in those trees; they look just like huge white flowers.”

*under his hat*

*the blue calm*

*of the sky*

**Matthew Caretti**

Mercersburg, Pennsylvania, USA

**First Waters**

I retched the first waters. A puddle. A pond. Turbid. Reflecting a formative glow. There in the bile, life. Up from the depths. Silently into the light.

*catfish*

*in the shallows—*

*spring morn*

**Matthew Caretti**

Mercersburg, Pennsylvania, USA

**Intention**

The next life depends upon this life.

Next year will depend upon this one.

And so it is with months, weeks and days.

So, too, with the next moment.

*mirror*

*wiped clean—*

*morning*

**Steven Carter**

Tucson, Arizona, USA

**Montana**

Robert S., rancher-husband of Patty, an old friend of my wife, contracted Alzheimer’s when still in his forties (he died of a heart attack a few years ago). One afternoon, lying in bed after he and Patty had made love, Robert kept looking nervously at his watch.

“What’s the matter, honey?” Patty asked.

“It’s five o’clock,” Robert said, putting on his jeans. “I’d better go; my wife will be suspicious.”

*fallow field*

*up on blocks*

*a faded gray pickup*

**Marcyn Clements**

Claremont, California, USA

**Taboose Creek Campground**

The sky has darkened, clouds lowering over the Sierras. It’s too early to cook, the sun still high, westering. You say, lets look for the road to the Baxter Pass trailhead. After we set up the stove and utility box, stuff our ten bucks into the auto-pay envelope and that into the pipe at the campground gate, we motor up a rotten dirt road and decide this can't be right. Sagebrush scratches the sides of our SUV. A covey of quail flushes and scatters in the dust. We find a place to turn around and crumble south to Aberdeen, look for the little restaurant we remember. It's closed, open only for lunch. We turn back up the highway, and here is the road we sought. It’s a good one, paved, running east down to the Owens River, where Barn swallows seine the air above the bridge; and then west, straight toward an alluvial fan below the pass. How could we have missed it?

*golden flowers*

*downstream*

*rainbow trout*

Beans, steak and wheat bread are slated for dinner. Locust trees in bloom leave their petals across the table. The little creek foams around the cottonwoods. You crack open a beer. The storm passes over us without event, south and east of here.

**Glenn G. Coats**

Prospect, Virginia, USA

**Beginners**

*pastures of May*

*visible along the lane*

*half a boy*

Wind is parting the tall grass like hair. Sometimes it rolls across it and the field looks like sea. We settle in a place near the middle where only our heads are noticeable. Both of us strike matches, cup our hands, and bow down to light the cigars. It is too breezy for smoke rings so we practice inhaling and exhaling. “Tastes like vanilla,” I say with a cough.

We do not hear him coming. He is just there when we look up. Father Henry is above us with shoulders wide against the sky. “Good day boys,” he says as we snuff our cigars into the ground. “Looks like a glorious day for sailing.”

*Where did he come from? How did he find us?*

The next day is Sunday and we are there at Father Henry’s church just as we promised. Both of our heads wet with water. Both of our ties a bit crooked. “You know how things work in a Catholic church,” Chris whispers as we look around for familiar faces. Neither of us has any idea. We follow along as best we can. Kneel when we should kneel. Sing when the singing starts. Even get in line for communion where Father Henry gives us the evil eye.

*morning mass*

*he studies chord changes*

*in the hymnal*

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\* “pastures of May” first appeared in *White Lotus* (spring 2008)

**Glenn G. Coats**

Prospect, Virginia, USA

**Expectations**

He never read “Once upon a time” to his daughters, never filled out a form or an application, never checked the newspaper for sales, never followed a map to a place he had never been. Never heard the sound of his reading voice.

*years of silence*

*I give the geraniums*

*a full glass*

His reading voice stayed underground, dormant like a root deep in frozen earth. Says he waited a lifetime for this and he holds each book as if it is sacred.

Charles is reading now and his voice rumbles like a freight train. It is a big voice, crosses the room and you hear it outside the door. Each word chimes alone like he is calling role: the names of every doubter, every teacher, and every tutor shaking in his voice. You get what you expect and nobody expected much.

I’m not about to stop him and say, “You need to read the words smoothly like someone who is talking” or “You have to read the words all together.” No, I am letting him go, letting him open all the windows, all at once. He deserves that much.

*empty classroom*

*desks still warm*

*from the hands*

**Katherine Cudney**

Tucson, Arizona, USA

**this world of dew**

Numbed by tumbler number three of vodka, no ice, in a room dimmed by power shortage and existential angst, the question “What the hell time is it?” rolls around on my tongue, along with the pimento olive

*afternoon deluge*

*the dog exhumes*

*a one-arm doll*

**Cherie Hunter Day**

Cupertino, California, USA

**American Primitive**

Indian mounds were common in the fertile Hudson River valley. Every once in a while he would find a projectile point lying on top of plowed ground after a hard rain. Made of black obsidian or fine chert, some were only an inch or two long, their edges delicately refined by successive blows from a hammerstone or antler, serrated and still sharp to the touch. These became his favorites. Several points measured four to six inches long, too broad and heavy for arrow tips. These spearheads probably tipped darts or atlatls. Once he and his brother Jack tried to flint knap their own arrowheads, but all they got were bruised hands and bloody fingers. No, these points were the real deal. He stashed them in an old ammunition box at the back of his closet.

*sorting his belongings . . .*

*the canine tooth*

*in a rusted tin of snuff*

**Eduardo del Valle**

Newark, New Jersey, USA

**Labor Weekend**

Driving north on what never was the hurricane’s wake, sunlight splashes on the rust-spotted blue hood, tree shadows glide on the convex metal windward, through the windshield. Moving at unlawful speed, no longer against friction or flow, drifting unmeasured to our destination—just as slowly as it now seems (hadn’t it been so all this summer, come to think, all others before as well?)—through all that space to this waning moment, to the inevitable juncture.

*striped maples—*

*bleeding 10K gold*

*so soon on the hills*

“Roll up the window,” she whispers, “it’s getting cold.” The wind bays as the glass glides up into its rubber cleft. “She’d be okay,” as my grip on the wheel tightens to bone-white balls, “she’s—” “She’s just a baby.” By the time we arrive a brush-stroked sky to the east, overhead a marble-strewn white, puffs of platinum-grey, flaring to foaming ripples of ginger plum cerise, across Champlain.

Seventeen: not as long a labor when you look back.

*katydids wing on*

*summer’s*

*last wind*

**Eduardo del Valle**

Newark, New Jersey, USA

**6:49 p.m.**

*. . . ambiguous stars of Tiflis!*

*Forgive me*

*this useless parabola.*

*Cold, thin shoulders und—\** the tunnel’s darkness suddenly floods the train, or at least the car I’m in, all but two lights, not enough to plug the torrent; the hands on my wristwatch stand still, frozen at a moment of boomerang-likeness. Page dog-eared, I put Voznesensky away, close my eyes.

*cloudland*

*twilight, the moon again*

*distant*

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\*From Andrei Voznesensky’s “Ballad of the Parabola,” translated by Anselm Hollo.

**Terri L. French**

Huntsville, Alabama, USA

**Taxi**

We are riding in the back seat of a broken down Ford Falcon in Belize City with two men whom we have never met; one has long dreadlocks and the other a nervous stammer. Twenty bucks is all it costs to have them taxi us around the city for an hour. Dreadlocks drives and the stammerer is our guide.

*schoolyard*

*a child in uniform*

*sweeps dirt*

We pass semi-dilapidated structures which have not been rebuilt since Hurricane Hattie nearly destroyed the city in 1961. The two young men argue over dates and facts, peppering rasta-flavored English with their native Kriol. “Cheese ‘n Rice! Dat da lone rass!” says the driver to his buddy, who sighs and gazes out the passenger's side window.

*a virgin mary*

*on the dashboard—*

*city squalor*

As we drive past the cemetery dreadlocks tells us it is full of their young people, victims of gang violence and drug wars.

*Lord’s Ridge*

*with her hem*

*the mother dusts his grave*

We stop for beers and things loosen up. Their names are Earl and Edwin and they’ve been friends since childhood. Earl says he has a computer and a girlfriend in New York City. Edwin has four children. He doesn’t mention a wife. They drive us back to our port where lines of flip-flopped tourists wait to reboard. My husband shakes their hands and Edwin stammers his thanks.

*poolside*

*the waiter offers*

*another mojito*

**Brieanna Hall**

Kitchener, Ontario, Canada

**Betrayal**

We waited, my siblings and I, neatly folded and stacked on top of each other. Pristine and wrinkle free we displayed our colourful labels that listed our vital statistics and expounded our virtues. The first to leave went home with a soccer dad, the next one with a golfer, the third, sadly, left with a couch potato doomed to do nothing more exciting than balance a mug of beer on his right thigh. I was the lucky one; I went home with You.

It’s an exciting life, full of adventure, travel and many challenges, protecting You. I battle willow branches and ward off cactus thorns and some, sorry not all, poison ivy attacks. I protect your knees from debris while You take photographs of wildflowers. I sacrifice my fibers to protect your backside as we slide down dry sandstone waterfalls. I cushion your napping body from sharp, rock-covered ridges, and together we provide a pillow for that dog who travels with us.

Whenever I become embarrassingly thread bare and torn You take me to our little Chinese goddess. With surgical precision and loving hands she cuts away my wounds, replaces my gossamer fabrics and sutures me back to health. I return, ready to continue my life’s work, protecting You.

*spring sun—*

*the mating song*

*of a wood thrush*

*renewal—*

*a stitch here*

*a patch there*

But this year, the new one, she, arrives and keeps taking me off of You. When hiking, she undoes me and kicks me into the corner of our tent and then lays her body over Yours. Left in a heap on a gravel bar, I watch as she entices You to cavort with her in a mountain stream.

Then today, she scrutinized my fraying seams, fingered my layers of patches, and shook her head, scorning the very fabric of my being. I hear her whisper unthinkable things about my future.

*winter—*

*the darkness*

*in a ragbag*

**Michele L. Harvey**

Hamilton, New York, USA

**Least Expected**

She was a dry New Englander, not the kind given to fantasy, and talked easily about the house she had owned and loved for the past thirty years. It was an old farmhouse with a wraparound porch, set into the southern side of a hill overlooking a broad river valley. On late autumn afternoons, the wind teased leaves across the aged porch boards or sang in its upper eaves. It was at that time and place that she saw him most.

*bonfire sparks—*

*sharing the shiver*

*of a ghost tale*

**Ruth Holzer**

Herndon, Virginia, USA

**The Golden Arrow**

She’s off to Paris for the first time, on the boat train from Victoria, clattering with excitement through the yellow fields of Kent. On the Dover ferry she watches the cliffs vanish in the twilight and wonders with a pang if she’ll ever see them again. She falls asleep on the French train in an empty compartment, her head nestled against her pack.

*over the river*

*and through the woods . . .*

*home for Thanksgiving*

She’s startled awake by a stout man sliding the door open. He sits across from her and at once begins talking. He’s a Cypriot in the import-export business. Before that, he was somewhat of a war hero, but he’s too modest to go into details. He comes to Paris often, knows a nice hotel near the station, clean, very reasonable rates. Would she like to go there with him? Tomorrow he’ll show her all around the city, he promises, as the train pulls in to the Gare du Nord.

*cathedral gloom—*

*seeing a gargoyle*

*the first time*

**Ken Jones**

Aberystwyth, Wales

**Laughing Gas**

*Pastel colours and faint smiles*

*from face to face*

*we size each other up*

Thankfully all turn out to be “people like us.” Gathered here in the Small Function Room we are welcomed to the Graceful Exit workshop. Tea and biscuits thaw us out.

*Trainee suicide*

*her sweet smile*

*“Just one lump, please”*

The Instructor comes breezing in, bearing a reused IKEA packing case, across which some wag has scribbled “Pluto” with a black marker. “I’ve just got to settle up with the hotel,” he says. “See if you can put this together. But don’t try it out to see if it works. We’re not insured, and I don’t want any of you to hear the trumpets sounding on the other side. Not yet, anyway.”

The blokes fall upon the box with all their usual competitive banter, to which the women are resigned. All, that is, except Gerald—an earnest and rather anxious young man.

*In shaky italic*

*on ruled faint*

*how to kill himself*

*properly*

In no time the plastic bags and hoses, the cylinder and all the smaller bits and pieces have been assembled into an elegant helium gas suicide machine. All but fifty brightly coloured party balloons which are supposed to be inflated with the cylinder. For some celebratory occasion.

The women amuse themselves by blowing up the balloons. Diana gets a gulp of the heady helium and breaks into falsetto mirth. Ignoring all this brittle playfulness the Instructor delivers a lucid talk, with a bit of black comedy here and there. Clearly he could take his own life umpteen times without a single false move.

*On the cylinder*

*the feeble flutter*

*of a winter butterfly*

Finally, he draws our attention to a recent news item. In a hotel bedroom a German businessman—*vorsprung durch technik*—had efficiently done away with himself using only a modest amount of helium. This anecdote is intended to reassure us. But for the first time that day the Small Function Room falls silent.

*The person* **gone**

*what remains*

*in a well pressed suit*

At the farewells I congratulate the Instructor on his mastery of DiY extinction. There’s only one thing missing. Ourselves.

*Through a shower of yellow leaves*

*my veined hands*

*tight on the wheel*

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*Pluto—*Lord of the Underworld*.*

*Vorsprung durch technik—*Progress through technology*.*

**Gary LeBel**

Cumming, Georgia, USA

**they fell down**

out of a sky of ice invading the orchard fruit of the wing exploding a hinge of bone in saurian blood the beating quills spread wide the soul on tiptoe says *be gone be gone my blackbirds*

*smoothed again*

*a dent*

*in twilight*

**Chen-ou Liu**

Ajax, Ontario, Canada

**The Length of Longing**

I ran to the end of the Go Train and watched as her figure shrank on the sunlit platform . . . . Tonight I watch the wind-whipped snow pile up.

*birthday morning*

*the last photo of her*

*holding pink roses*

*twilight…*

*finding another patch*

*of gray hair*

**Bob Lucky**

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

**Butter-less in Ethiopia**

*dusty sunrise*

*water trickles*

*into the tank*

I decide to make pancakes for breakfast. But there’s no butter. There’s not enough maple syrup in the world that can compensate for butter-less pancakes. I spend the morning going store to store, coming out empty-handed and full of frustration before I remember it’s Lent and Ethiopian Christians are fasting. Rumors are there’ll be no butter in the stores until after Easter.

*empty parking lot*

*the glare of the dent*

*in my car*

I’ve bought something at every store—a bag of Kenyan cashews, a jar of peanuts, Turkish cherry juice, two cans of Heineken, a frozen halal chicken, a bottle of South African Pinotage, and a mop. I scrounge in my pocket to see if I have enough change for a macchiato.

*broken ATM*

*the dozing guard*

*hugs his rifle*

**Bob Lucky**

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

**I Should Have Gone to Law School and Made My Mother Proud**

*winter storm*

*stirring sour cream*

*into my borscht*

I’ve read somewhere Pythagoras was a homicidal vegetarian. That’s about as much sense as math makes to me. I can envision someone beating a fellow human being to death with a rutabaga more than I can *a2 + b2 = c2*. I haven’t been asked to teach math, yet.

*doctor’s orders*

*just a little salt—*

*no mention of ham*

I have to give the old theorem monger and maniacal prophet a bit of envious respect for getting his students to come up with the proofs while he took the credit. Education has changed since then. There’s still a lot of prophecy, but it’s buried in the paperwork.

*school holiday*

*staring at coffee grounds*

*in my cup*

**Victor Maddalena**

St. John’s, Newfoundland, Canada

**Father**

I look at his frail body lying beneath the covers and listen to his laboured breathing. I hold his hand and darkness slowly closes the space between us.

*song sparrow*

*herald of*

*a new day*

**Victor Maddalena**

St. John’s, Newfoundland, Canada

**Ripples in the Pond**

I expect to see my father emerge from the cottage, or from the shed, or from the woods with a basket of chanterelles. Instead, I am struck by the silence. His bench beside the pond is empty now. I feed the fish and watch their silver green backs slide along the surface before they disappear in the dark waters.

Inside the cottage the air is cold and still. Bluebottles, stunned by the cold, walk aimlessly along the window ledges. An empty plate and cup rest on the table, as if waiting for his return, or a visitor. I read his last journal entry. His shaky handwriting describes the day the deer and fawn ate from his apple tree.

*In the garden,*

*weeds*

**Giselle Maya**

Saint Martin de Castillon, Provence, France

**On the ‘Neophyte’**

long ago we crossed the Pacific five of us in a 45-foot ketch looking back I don’t know how we did it, leaving from Sausalito, California, sighting Molokai Island thirty days later after two storms, seawashed, a broken spreader but our sails intact, guided by dolphins and flying fish

*long silver wake*

*swans and their young*

**Andrew Shattuck McBride**

Bellingham, Washington, USA

**Folding Paper Cranes**

*Hiroshima, Japan ~ August 6, 1945 and aftermath*

*a day with two suns—*

*shadows burned*

*into concrete*

In the Sasaki household, within a kilometer of what would become known as Ground Zero, the toddler Sadako and her mother were *hibakusha*— survivors. A significant portion of the city was incinerated by the atomic bomb blast and firestorm which followed.

In 1955, in her 13th year, Sadako suffered from strange ailments. Sadako was admitted to the hospital and was diagnosed with leukemia. She would never leave.

One day Sadako’s best friend Chizuko visited. Chizuko began folding a piece of gold paper. While Chizuko folded a paper crane, she told Sadako the Japanese legend that a person who folded one thousand paper cranes would be granted one wish.

After Chizuko’s visit, Sadako began folding paper cranes. Paper was very scarce. Sadako would visit other parts of the hospital and even other patients to ask for paper. She folded paper cranes continuously.

Accounts vary as to how many cranes she folded—under a thousand or over a thousand—before her death. Ultimately, Sadako and paper cranes came to symbolize peace, in Japan and around the world.

*her spring—*

*leukemia, paper cranes*

*and, finally, peace*

**Carol Pearce-Worthington**

New York City, New York, USA

**first performance**

A friend talks me into attending a musical comedy class. For weeks I climb the creaky wooden stairs on the west side of Manhattan to be intimidated by Broadway belters and lyric sopranos, red-haired showgirls carrying special musical arrangements, baritones wearing platform shoes. A Brooklyn woman collects fees while Mervyn the guru moves about smoking cigarettes and hugging people: *so happy to and where have you and oh my god and wouldn’t you know and darling I would have to be and look who’s here . . .* After many weeks, I finally decide I am too scared to sing; I will instead recite a poem. *OK*, my friend says, *if that’s all you think you can do. Do that.* I feel like throwing up. As I get onstage, I hear noisy chatter over coffee: names of agents, who’s casting, open call, let me write that down, yeah she’s on tour, but did you hear. Somebody laughs, the door slams, Mervyn shouts *OK everyone quiet down*, and strikes a match for another cigarette as I begin.

*\*For a long time now*

*I have not been able to write you…*

The room is listening. I go on.

*The attendants here*

*Steal words . . .*

The match burns down in Mervyn’s hand.

*falling rain*

*my view*

*through this window*

**Ray Rasmussen**

Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

**A Glimpse of the Moon**

Every three months, Hannah and I leave our different cities and journey together to a new destination. We’ve just arrived at a small inn on the Oregon Coast to enjoy the ocean and wildflowers.

While she showers, I lay in bed browsing a collection of Japanese art. One of Yoshitoshi’s woodblocks, *A Glimpse of the Moon*, shows a man, his face masked by a fan, peeking over a wicker fence at a geisha slipping off a pink-floral kimono.

*wildrose petals—*

*a tiny dark spider*

*waiting underneath*

When Hannah comes into the room, I peek over the top of my book to watch as she sits by the window and brushes her hair and then undresses. Her silhouette surrounded by moonlight, she slowly walks the distance that separates us.

In the morning, I show her the woodblock and confess that I enjoy watching her undress. “And I enjoy you watching,” she says while slowly pulling back the covers.

*pushing up*

*through winter’s crust*

*a lavender crocus*

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“A Glimpse of the Moon,” by the late ukiyo-e master Tsukioka Yoshitoshi (1839 – 1892), is number 37 of his woodblock print series, *One Hundred Aspects of the Moon*.

**Mark Ritchie**

Hollingbourne, Kent, United Kingdom

**Beyond the woodshed**

First sunny afternoon of February. Leaving the village behind I head out along narrow winding roads, between sheep-grazed fells, following his half-remembered instructions. “You’ll know if you take the wrong road—it ends in a cliff.” I look anxiously for the weathered finger-post marking the junction that will signal the final six miles of track winding up along the glen that he’d warned would feel more like fifteen. Finally spotting the white house with its four dormers, I park alongside the seldom-used front door and amble around the back, absorbing the silence of the deserted valley.

My host is in the outhouse, intent on fixing the primitive plumbing. “While I sort this out, there’s something you must see—beyond the woodshed. Go quietly through that gate and along the side of the barn: you need to creep up on them.” Obediently, I follow his instructions. As I reach the far end of the grey iron barn, the length of the shallow reed-fringed dam comes slowly into view and through eyelids watering with the cold blow, I am just able to make them out, first one, then another—and then dozens upon dozens.

*so many eyes*

*drowning my image*

*in peaty water*

Now their dark thrashing bodies crater the water’s surface, as a wave of fear passes through the crowd. Further on, where reedy shallows give way to clearer, deeper water, jellied clumps lie suspended. Here there are yet more of them, maybe hundreds, mating, swimming or just floating in apparent exhaustion. On the bank a heron has left one, neatly snipped in half, only the torso taken and the paunch left, guts spilling from its powerful waders. At the far end of the pond, below the seep, the wind has swept the whole surface clean, depositing a whitish strand line.

*old tarn*

*the wind-curded spume*

*of frog sperm*

**Cynthia Rowe**

Woollahra, New South Wales, Australia

**Consultation**

We sit there discussing my spine, whether I have stress fractures—normal at my age. He recommends exercises for my knee, which he claims shows signs of muscle atrophy. In such a short time! I exclaim. Our eyes stray to each other’s jewellery.

This musculoskeletal specialist sports a substantial diamond on his right hand, while I am wearing my trusty engagement ring—reset more than once over the years. He tells me to contact him if there is no improvement, if I feel the need to talk things over. As I stand to leave he steals one final glance at the sapphire on my ring finger. Under the surgery’s fluorescent lighting, the stone winks a rainbow of colours.

*anniversary . . .*

*tram tracks burnished*

*by the setting sun*

**Miriam Sagan**

Santa Fe, New Mexico, USA

**Four Untitled**

The bookstore is going out of business and you and I—eternally in search of the perfect volume of trashy suspense fiction—go in search of bargains.

*when did your hair  
turn so gray—  
my best friend.*

**\* \* \***

Hovenweep Canyon—ancient masonry towers square the circle and circle the square  
  
*watch—stars  
signal—  
fire*

**\* \* \***  
  
Like so many of his generation, my father was scarred by the Great Depression; it was so terrible, he told me, that in today’s world:  
  
*how suprising  
to see the homeless  
wearing shoes*  
  
**\* \* \***  
  
You were the first person I knew who died on purpose, and for the 40 years since our Freshman year, I’ve been haunted by your small wan ghost.  
  
*when my daughter weeps*

*I just tell her  
to come home.*

**Adelaide B. Shaw**

Millbrook, New York, USA

**The Apprentice**

He is a Neapolitan child of the streets, in short pants and skinned knees, until he is apprenticed to a tailor and learns how to handle a needle and thread, how to cut cloth, how, with wool or silk or gabardine, to take arms and legs, torso and shoulders, and reshape them into a new man.

*moldering leaves*

*spread on the forest floor*

*hidden mushrooms*

**Lucas Stensland**

Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA

**Cedar Falls**

I take the last drag of my cigarette and flick it in the puddle in front of the room. “You shouldn’t litter,” she says.

“They shoulda put an ashtray there.” The place is so outdated it still uses keys. Inside we breath its musty air and avoid eye contact. It looks as old as it probably is.

I can tell she has something on her mind, something she needs me to know. Going back to the car, I pop the trunk and grab a Styrofoam cooler full of Budweiser and bags of melting ice. After setting it in the corner and cracking open two, I find that she’s undressed, laying beneath a rough, faded-green sheet.

“This trip was a mistake, you know.”

“Shut up,” she says. “And come here.”

*the only time*

*we really speak*

*seesaw*

**Harriot West**

Eugene, Oregon, USA

**Abundant Blessings**

Mother cooked and father carved but sometimes the carving was a savage affair like that Thanksgiving when the turkey was underdone and father took the platter with the bloody bird into the kitchen where he yanked off the drumsticks with his hands and hacked off bits of flesh from the breast while the rest of us sat around the dining room table pretending we didn’t hear him swear and mother weep and when the platter returned we mumbled thanks grateful not for the food we were about to eat but for the chance to pile our plates with quivering slices of cranberry jelly and the sweetness of honey-flavored yams.

*thirty one days till Christmas*

*a wishbone*

*on the windowsill*