

CALL ME [BRACKETS]

ISSUE 6

SPRING 2021



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Submission Guidelines: Submissions are accepted year round, but read September through December, and Janurary through April. (callmebrackets.net/submissions)

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By: Thaddeus Rutkowski

I'm waiting for a sunset, a big one. I know it will be big because I've seen it before, and it will happen again. The sun already seems to be getting larger. Somehow, I can see it, though I can't look directly at it. I have a memory of what it looks like: the light turns from yellow to orange to red, floods the sky, then fades. I have that sequence in my mind, but it does not happen. I don't know why. The sky is clear, so the sun should be visible all the way down to the horizon. But I can't check, because I can't look directly at the sun, and anyway there is something blocking my view: a wall or a window frame. I might have to wait for another day, when I can position myself exactly right.

Maybe it's a good thing I can't see the sunset. Why should I be so interested in the fading of the light? Shouldn't I be waiting for the sunrise, scanning for a trace of light in the night sky? The sunrise seems more hopeful than the sunset. Anyway, when I'm inside, I can't see to the west because of the placement of windows. I can see only to the east. I'm frequently up before sunrise because I can't sleep. I could position myself in front of a window and wait for a sign of light. I could sit there for a half hour or more as the sky turns to gray, then to orange if there are clouds, then to blinding blue-white. But I usually—always—have something more important to do than sit and stare out the window.

If the sunrise happened not every day but only once in a while, I would definitely watch it. I would make plans in advance, and I would tell the

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people around me of the upcoming occurrence.

"The sun is going to rise," I'll say, "and we should be there to see it!"

"But it happens every morning," the people around me might say. "What's so special about that?"

"How many times have we really appreciated it?" I'll ask. "How often have we watched for every second, even if we can't look directly at the source? We should worship the sun!"

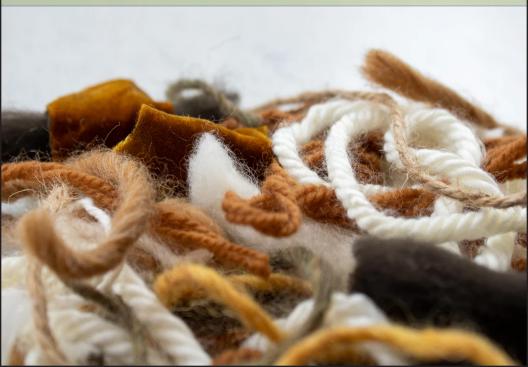
I'll think I have a point, but I might not be able to get anyone to watch with me. Sitting there, watching, might seem unnecessary; most people want to do what they need to do. So I'll sit in my desk chair and swivel it toward the east. I will ignore what is on my desk. I will look out the window at the six-lane street, at the complicated intersection with its confusing traffic signals, at the closed restaurants and bars and the mid-rise apartment buildings, and I will see, where the street ends at the river, a slice of yellow-orange sky, illuminated by the rising sun under a canopy of gray clouds. Against the clouds, right outside my window, a swarm of pigeons might be circling, never falling out of formation, never touching one another.

And I will know that these details accompany the sunrise, make it somehow complete. The birds respond to the coming of the light. People appear on foot and in cars. And as the process continues and I witness it, I can go about what I have to do. I can turn away from the world outside. Later, at the end of the day, I can return to watching the sunset—if there is nothing obstructing my view—

and I can focus on what I remember. But I don't want to rely on my memory; I want to see the actual event. I want to see the sun in real life.



U N S P O O L E D Carla Sameth



Sometimes I feel as if I'm undone, a big spool of yarn rolling down a steep hill and out into the street, down the garbage-gathered drain.

Other times, I'm standing in front of Ramon's apartment building in D.F. Remember when I broke that bottle of Tequila Herradura. It shattered in big shards and little slivers. *iHijole, y fue uno de los Buenos!* the doorman lamented watching the smooth white liquid spill onto the sidewalk. Lost. I wonder would they say that about me as I fall and crash to smithereens?

I want to laugh out loud when I see
I'm as solid as a snow cone.
As if I could be slurped up, tossed out or simply melt away
As if I could be a sweetness craved, a crying child's
dream on steaming summer days.

Prescription: Wrap arms tightly around chest, imagine freshly baked challah, imagine a Friday night when you allow yourself to rest your shredded senses, and put on that white lace Brazilian dress. Do not think of shards, think instead of strong vigas, high ceilings, an unobstructed view of the Big Dipper, Leonard Cohen carrying your darkness in his secret chords Sing Hallelujah. Sing Heneni
I am here.



to a Burning World

Carla Sameth

Love Letter to a Burning World (fire season, summer 2020, California)

Praise the dark that covers us with ashes and with a son's tears, reminds us why we cherish the not-burning, the baby cry of awake, not heartbreak.

Mom, I need a hug, please, wet around his racoon eyes, Mom, I just can't seem to do anything right.

Raphael, the angel name, should we have found a warrior name instead, to help you fight the demons?

Mom, I can't say for sure I'm an addict but I'm doing too much. He tells me he gets up, then decides he'd rather smoke not feeling ok, right now. I am twisted up, could feel the same way, tell him: No son, you are feeling what the world is holding right now—singed embers after six months of shut down, broken glass. Murder after murder of men and women the color of my son.

Praise the path that brought you here today, a boomerang, after you called earlier to say, *Mom*, *I can't make it today, at the car repair*, *I need to keep looking for someone who can fix this*. And I feel it—the drop like we hear in music, I hear it in his soul.

Face wet as I write this down, he leaves in a gust: I have to meet my friends at the demonstration, I'll feel better. More purpose.

Yes son, you will. But promise you'll call to talk.

Make an appointment... yes I'll call to bug you.

Ashes, ashes keep falling down as he runs out the door.

T S Doesn't he know this is an emergency? Like the blare of fire warning *prepare for evacuation!*

Pack your bags we hear last night. Today your voice searing into my chest. Praise your tears for falling near. I want to run out after him, Praise the seat that holds me fast.

A mother never knows if you kill them by holding or letting go.



I did not know what it might feel like when you were ready to go out on your own.
I don't mean to the recovery house, or that place in Torrance or Koreatown with the boys from The House, or your place in Silver Lake where we climbed the stairways and they left out free lemons for the taking if you weren't afraid of coronavirus.

What we know. What we don't know.

You didn't tell me you were going, so I could not say goodbye the way I'd planned: Son, I know you'll have adventures, plant seeds, I know you dream of studying in Berlin. Beware of leftover Nazis, new right wing white supremacists, Jew-haters though we know they treat Black people better there than they do here. They don't know you are an Afro-Jew so you'll hear all the tobacco-stained spit words. Ignore this. Keep taking photos of underpasses like you always have, throw out old losses (I wish I could).

This is how I learned, when I was 21, living in Mexico City: Don't trust bad men in places you can't escape after you've drank too much Brandy Presidente, it will be too late to run away down the mountain. You might end up on the floor, carpet engraving your head, and you'll never forget the tacos al Pastor he made you eat before it happened. I could not escape that time.

I didn't call my mom, but this is how I learned that when your kid stops calling for a while it means you have to find them, save them, help them—it might be too late, but I would have to find, save, comfort, rescue, hug, feed you. It wouldn't be throwing it all in one pot Jewish chicken soup.

O

G

R E S

You'd get Filipino Chicken soup with bok choy, chayote squash, ginger, pork, jalapeno (what I learned to cook from my ex in Seattle, the one who got away, the one who said, If we had stayed together we'd have had a bunch of children.)

What I wanted was to go with you when you set out in your new old SUV up the coast towards my northwest birthplace. You called halfway there and said *Mom I don't tell anyone where I go now*.

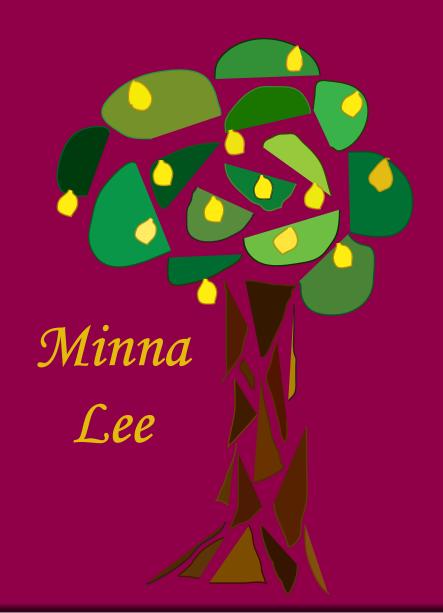
Bravado, son, I know you had to push away, what felt like a light shove to you scared the shit out of me because the call dropped when you were driving. I imagined car crashes, the unidentified body of the sweetest boy that ever lived, the one with the long lashes my sister said I curled.

OK, so you are fine. You're reading Ta-Nehisi Coates Between the World and Me (the one I gave you last week). You told me, Portland is the whitest city, but I found a Black barber from Arkansas. He said the people are kind here, only harassed him four or five times over the years.

Still you tell me you'll probably head to New Orleans when productions open up again. You'll find the work with Black costume designers in a Black city. And you'll make money, buy a house with three or four bedrooms. One for me (I know, son, you're not inviting me to live with you).

I dream of grandchildren, dream of you being small in my arms again, dream of warm milky breath. What I want sometimes is to go back. What I wish for you is to go forward. What I wonder is where we'll all land.

Lemon House



The lemon tree outside of our house sulked in the shape of a question mark. "Why am I a lemon tree? Why lemons? Why doesn't anyone water me?" were probably some of the things that it was asking itself, but no one could hear because everyone was inside.

"I think our lemon tree is dying," I said as I turned away from the cracked window. Daphne, the only other person inside the house, heard me from her bedroom upstairs and ran down our nearly broken staircase to see for herself.

"Damn," she whispered. We surrendered, and each returned to what we were doing before the discovery- I to my stationary bike workout and Daphne to her crying. You're probably wondering why we're so cruel to our trees and probably think we hate lemons, but you'd be wrong to think that. We're lemon people; we love lemons! If you were to walk into our house right now, I'd say, "What on earth are you doing here in my house!?" and as I'd march you out the unhinged front door, you'd notice a coffee table with a bowl of fake vellow fruit lemons! So, then what is the problem? The problem is that we hate this house, and we want our old house back. The house we love with the lemon trees we cherished! While it is common for people to leave houses behind, our house left us.

It was the longest day of summer, and I was sitting on the porch with Daphne in our matching dresses. The two of us were staring proudly at our five lemon trees: Logan, Lexi, Lola, Lilian, and Lance when suddenly their roots shot up from the

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ground, and they began to walk away.

"Wait! Come back! Don't go!" I screamed as I held onto the last tree, Lola. Lola shed one last lemon beside my foot, then kicked me off onto our brick walkway, which also began to slither off the property.

"What is happening?" Daphne yelled after the house lifted itself off the foundation. I made eye contact with the tallest window (it was probably the eyes of the house), and I understood- the house was abandoning us.

The chandelier swung itself as far as it could from our plot and shattered onto the pavement. Before I could rush over to it, the pieces rolled away to follow the trees, the brick walkway, the tulip beds, the lampposts, and the mailbox! The house hung over me as I turned around, and I felt cold under its shadow. Daphne pulled me out of the way, and together, we watched our yellow house stomp over the horizon.

"Goodbye," Daphne whispered.

The only things that leave you are the things you love. I wrote that repeatedly in my journal the night our house had moved away. And then I had it made into a poster to hang in front of my stationary bike so that I could pedal straight into the words every morning during my workout. We had been crying for two weeks straight when the new house (our current house) had approached our property, seeking to make itself our new home. It planted itself in the same spot that our yellow house once did and tried to impress us with its two-door garage and bidet toilets. Without ever having to make an

actual agreement, Daphne and I agreed that we would hate this house and express our hatred by trashing the house.

We let the weeds grow, we punched a hole through the screen door, we punched a hole through the wall, and we punched a hole into the ceiling. Then we had to go to the hospital because I broke my arm, so we started kicking the glass out of the shower door and kicked the fridge into a Dada sculpture. With every strike, we hoped that the house would get up and leave, so that our old house would return, but here it stayed.

While Daphne and I had been busy destroying our home, Lola's final lemon had rotted in the garden, and one of its seeds managed to nurture itself into a tree without us noticing. The tree was smaller than our old ones, and it hadn't grown a lemon yet. It was dying now, and I watched it from my stationary bike as I continued my workout and Daphne continued her crying upstairs. I found it impossible to focus on the customized poster in front of me because I started to imagine the lemon tree screaming. Then I realized it was actually Daphne screaming as she fell from the second story onto the grass beside the tree.

"Daphne! Are you alright?" I screamed as I hopped off the bike. I sprinted outside to hold her in my arms.

"Yes, I fell out the window because I leaned on it and forgot that we had pushed the glass out of it yesterday!" she cried. I checked her body for any injuries, and luckily, there were none. I held her tighter and buried my head into her shoulder. A wind blew the dying lemon tree so that it leaned its branches against my back. A strange voice whispered Lydia- I guess that was the tree's name. We were like this for hours until the mailman approached us to ask where our mailbox was. "It's, um, it's right here, under our lemon tree. We'll take our mail here", Daphne said to him. We watched him carefully set a pile of mail beside Lydia then return to his truck.

"You should really water that," he said before driving off. I picked up the mail and noticed a yellow postcard. Daphne read it aloud:

You're probably wondering where I am. I cannot tell you that. You're probably wondering if I will ever come back. I will not. You're probably wondering if I miss you. I miss you terribly and will carry our memories forever inside each of my rooms. Thank you for repairing the kitchen sink and filling the space with your love.

 $-Y.\mathcal{H}$

We read it three more times. I had so much to say. "Good handwriting for a house," I said. And that was all I said. Daphne took the postcard from me.

"Can we hang this on the fridge...and then fix the fridge, so we can use it again?" she asked. I nodded, and we held hands as we walked into the house.

"Oh, don't forget to remind me to water Lydia later," I said as I closed the door behind us.



They like us pliant, willing, isolated, ignorant, comatose, practically dead under a spell only a hero could break.

They forget we know these forests because they are ours.

We can survive anywhere, drink from streams, shelter under stars.
We don't need their love hemming us in, heavy with expectations.

We were born with wilderness in our hearts. We trust our mothers. We know there are more than three types of women (virgin, mother, crone) and that powerful is not evil.

By firelight, candlelight, starlight we know the most important stories are our own. You are part of the carbon cycle

Rosalie Hendon

Meteors and comets splashed into our continents, leaving craters like gaping mouths. Volcanoes rained ash, leaked lava. Ancient lifeforms succumbed to layers and layers of mud.

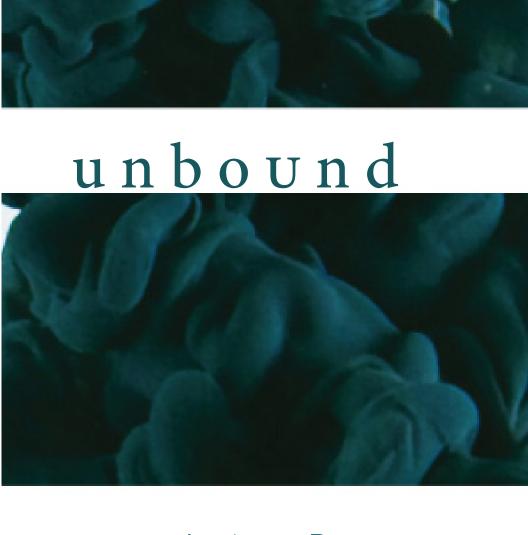
Atmosphere and rain dissolve rocks. Rivers carry the charged molecules to the ocean.

To form the coral, feed the plankton, become limestone and marble.

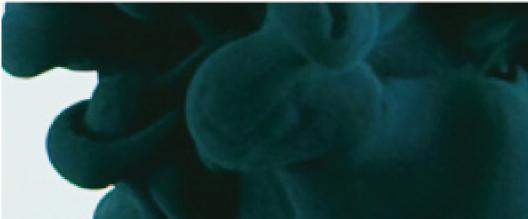
It's a dance.
Swapping partners,
we are a small link in the chain.
Carbon and
hydrogen and
oxygen and
nitrogen
(96% of our human bodies)
comes from the rain
and the soil
and the growing things.
The ocean and its clouds,
the plankton and the coral,
the damp ferns and the rampant moss,
the towering redwoods and tiny minnows.

Endless loops interlacing atoms

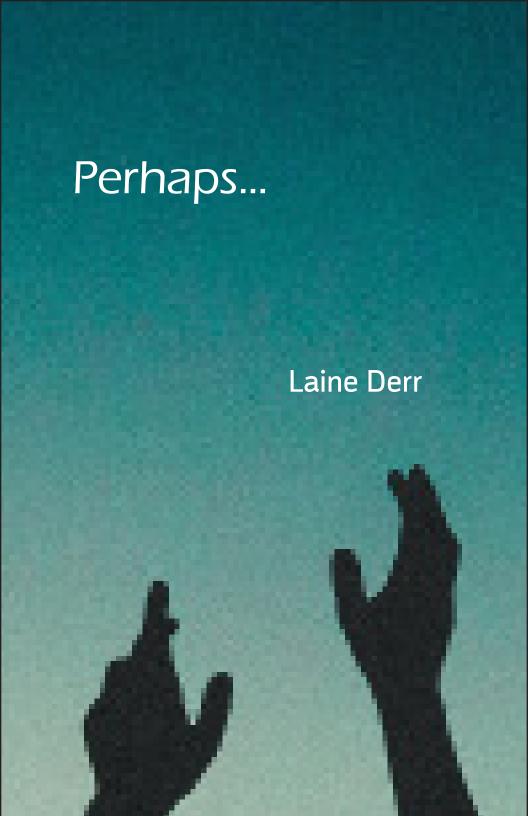
We are stardust, Joni sang We are golden



Laine Derr



She pulls a bell from her heart and hangs it on a winter daphne. Her touch gathers rain, moves from sky to petal with thoughts of life leavings. Unbound, she leaves the day aside like a stream gently warmed by coho.



Perhaps it burnt a hole and fell to the ground

Perhaps she dreams in French, tangled in sheep with fine breeding

Perhaps a low dose of a little pill can turn things around

Perhaps you will not see me looking

Perhaps she's read more than most

Perhaps you deserve clean sheets, my dear, made of bunting wings

Perhaps in the middle of a poem, she stopped

Perhaps her throat hurts

Perhaps as I read, sounds of labor continue

Perhaps my daughter will not remember

Perhaps a grapefruit sits on our counter waiting praise

Perhaps some choices change a man

Perhaps I've burnt no oil, let midnights be

Perhaps under a person lives a person who shaves every two weeks

Perhaps they spoke in whispers about sleeping bodies

Perhaps puzzled, she started with clouds

Perhaps she walked a room, except for one

Perhaps not youthful time in Vietnam, not a country road, a barn owl

Perhaps he breaks his body for her

Perhaps she reminds me

Perhaps you understand shadows on living room walls

Perhaps she feels his pulse, irregular, a-heart going, a heart-going

Perhaps a bat hangs from a playroom ceiling

Perhaps he ran straight ahead

Perhaps our technologies are in love, can we blame them?



Petra F. Bagnardí

The Window

She makes herself a safe haven.

A mind of tall bookshelves lined with stories.

A soul filled with perennial roses.

A strong heart thrumming with soft tones.

Then, she meets him and becomes foolish with want.

He violates her simple desire and her trustful body.

The frail crimson leaves fade into the bite of a wintry wind, and cut to the scented rains of spring.

Her will fights back.

Her mind seeks help.

Still, the violent imprint of him lingers within.

She wanders the city to find a shelter untouched;

a modest coffee place dotted with colourful tables and chairs.

She steps into the strange kaleidoscope and claims a seat and a window.

An espresso and a notebook live unremembered before her,

while she stares beyond the ghost of her reflection.

Through the glass pristine, she glimpses reality unravelling –

a man stumbles and lets go of all his possessions,

a mother loses her child amid a surging crowd;

a broken woman rushes out of a house.

Then, a triumph of life - a boy helps his father stand,

a girl grabs the hand of her lost mother –

AA 127, Dallas, January 10, 2021 KUO ZHANG

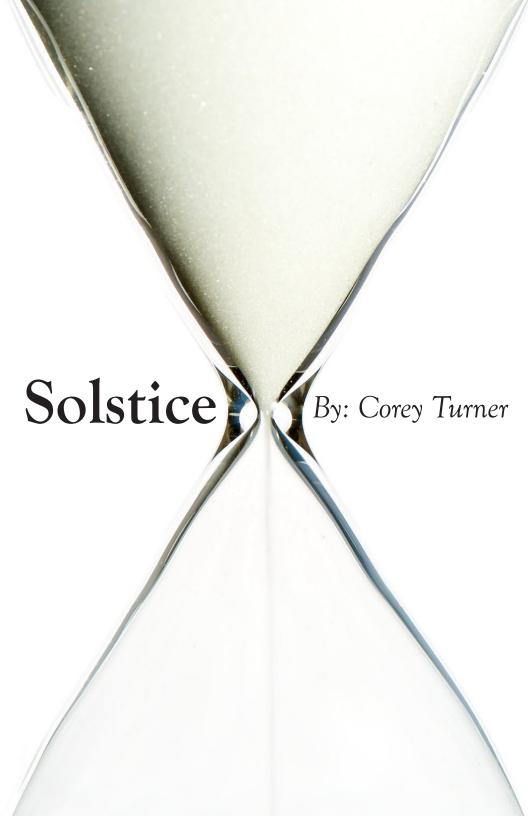
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"I need help!!! We can't stay here!!!"
A Chinese woman screamed at the check-in counter.
Her 6-year-old daughter in a light pink down coat standing a few steps away.

The Chinese Embassy granted Mom a green code—
The final-step travel pass to China.
After they
changed their flight twice,
paid \$11,000,
drove 14 hours,
got COVID tests twice
within 48 hours of boarding,
uploaded the negative results
to the embassy website.

But the daughter got a red code. The official message says: "Not Urgent. Not Necessary. No traveling."

They also reded 47 other passengers on the same plane.



The annunciation is not a story without gore—waiting can be ugly, vulnerable, faithless, it feels darker this winter than ever before.

Expecting us to reach our full potential (horror!) prevents it—leaves us nameless.

The annunciation is not a story without gore.

Aren't we just celebrating more waiting? Seconds added each day, months before we feel the change. It is darker this winter than ever before.

Remember the day the sun never rose in California? The burnt orange sky darkened in place of dawn and found stasis.

The annunciation is not a story without gore.

I think the lesson is to not delay gratification too far—laugh in the middle, take a breath, then wait some more. It is darker this winter than ever before.

In a long period of waiting, desire waxes and wanes, sometimes we are stuck in the lull, faithless, and still the earth turns in its gore.

Through the darkness of winter we've made it before.



Izabella Santana

We can never go back, can never retrace the bloodline with our fingers. It all used to be clear cut- but I am remapping our history. Reasignando mi historia. A blueprint marking the damage done to her soft skin innocence.

Where does the shattering end?

Here in the silent corners of our home, hands roam. But this memory has been stretched across chests, cut and pressed into valleys in our skin. A story molded by our mouths, two languages pulling pieces until it no longer fits inside our bodies- because this is our secret. This is our shame and we do not know where to begin.

On summer afternoons, the sun high in the sky, my other half and I would find refuge in the garage. A sanctuary of gym machines, boxes of memories, and soda pop fizzing to the brim of our glasses. No air conditioning, our shirts would stick to our skin, sweat beads collecting on our foreheads. Find a comfortable spot on her dad's machines and pop in a movie into the VCR. Find happiness in the pockets of bad memories. The movie would play and we would laugh at the ridiculousness of Superstar or Napoleon Dynamite. No one but us. Our hands tangled together. We have each other, prima. The smell of sopa de fideo would sneak under the garage door. Come to my comfort. Find refuge with me in this place.

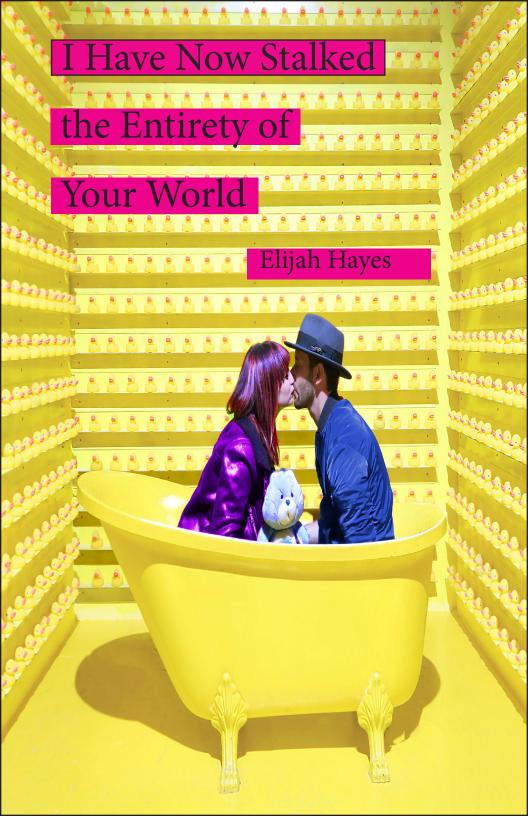
our hands still find each other across phone receivers and secrets we cannot bear alone, i am inured to the violence, we are, accustomed to, numb to the bone shattering screams across dining room tables and fingers slipping. where does the cycle end? with you. Fingers finding familiar. you are. warmth. love. goodness reminding me body parts still exist untainted. i want to hold onto you- the goodness that makes me change. i want to be more. like you. obsessed with smiles and laughter. i want to feel whole- no longer a hole scraped out of my chest to make room for someone who will push their hand through before leaving. they always leave. us. me. no one owes you. open yourself. let people walk through the debris. what is control if you can't say all the terrible things that poison your tongue. scorpions tapping against your throat before stabbing. break every vertebrate until you cave over the map. can you pinpoint where the ships changed directionwhere the world flattened. falling over the edge, where do you go from here?

to the beginning again.

В R Т S

Behind the green door, we sat and whispered sins into mason jars. Spilled the darkest parts of ourselves until they overflowed. I wish I learned to carve love into my wrist before hate. I wish I knew what it meant to miss someone. The Artist said she had to learn how to Miss. Some emotions do not register- forgotten and twisted, tattered in her hands. Emotions are lost to trauma. This is the side effect of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. I used to believe only men who went to war knew what that meant. I did not understand that this body was a battlefield- a war raging on every time I was reminded of him. Did not understand that the phrase "trigger warning" was more than just an ironic joke thrown around to tell people 'stop being so sensitive'. Because this skin is thicker than iron, can take a beating from drunk strangers and harsh words. But the moment fingers touch flesh at the small of my back, the world goes quiet. The sound of his breathing fills my head and I am no longer on the ground. I wish it was louder. I wish I could hear more than his breathing. Hear someone walk in before childhood happiness shattered- listen to someone yell his name so that I knew he really was there and I wasn't imagining it.

In order to remap the history, I've pulled down the pictures from my wall. Placed them in a line across my carpet, vignettes of memories. How do you make sense of a lifetime lived in compressed images. Photographs with burned eyes. Behind shut eyes a film reel of each one plays, memories I've tried to destroy but could never quite get the job done. They say we suppress trauma to make moving on easier- survivable. And sometimes I wonder who I'd be without it. Who I will be after it. It is easier to live in chaos and suffering when it's all you've known. Your body is accustomed to the pressure. The remapping of my history is getting easier. No longer needing to fill in the blanks with guesses, I always remember. The farther I move towards a future, take new pictures, collect new frames and candles to decorate my body with, the less familiar I become. I've carved out the damage. The home that was burned the moment innocence was taken- how do you redecorate a body that's never known gentle. It's scary to let go of trauma and think there is a possibility of happiness, to think life exists outside of it. Because even when I make way to break from it, hands reach out and pull me back in. I am pulled back into the pictures, forced to relive them in silence. And when I come out of it, no one is there. I am alone. And I wonder how strong someone needs to be to rebuild a life in ruins. A foundation of broken bones and razors. Who will I be after?



The continent of You in A Black Dress grew delicious bananas. I swam in those lakes longer than I should have. I came out with yellow hair and seaweed slivers in my toenails. A weird rasp in my throat. Horny.

You with Him is another place filled with ruins and masks. I slid down a ladder and found a dark hole. No snakes in there. No nothing. Just dark, and his ghost voice whispering, *Did you make coffee?*

The inhabitants of When You Were Blonde were avid smilers. I archeologized them out of their graves and set them round a dining room table. They reacted as normal skeletons, which surprised me. They were smiling. I figured they had to be alive.

Those of The Pot Head State were city dwellers and filled with love. They spent time on the beach but mostly stayed in bed. Traversing their state didn't take long. It was the size of a studio apartment.

At the end of my travels, I found you eating a peach, hugging a branch at the peak of a large oak. I told you about my travels, but you weren't impressed. I had fallen in love with mountains that were yours. I saved bits of dirt, bits of bone in my pockets. Grave digger, body snatcher, illusions, that is all.

THE DOGS AND THE LOVERS



The space previously occupied by a lover is taken up by a dog. I see more of the moon-light but the night is rent by barking, and anguish at the source of his vocal cues tramples my sleep.

I am afraid sometimes the howls are his way of calling her back, or worse, my way.

And there's that constant shoveling at the soil with his paw, not the loose stuff where he might have buried a bone but the hard, almost concrete patches that haven't been turned over in years.

And the hell of it is he's making progress, a crack here, a divot there. The earth trembles, opens up, a whole history thrives on my curiosity, rushes towards me.

T S And here I am, getting more of the light sure, but not enough to quash the real darkness. Oh I can see his canine form. I can see all the forms. But what does he have in his mouth I ask you? What has he killed to reward me?



John Grey

Writing as Therapy

Instead of a half hour on the couch, it's three at the computer. No sympathetic ear at fifty bucks an hour but the non-billing indifference of screen and keyboard and mouse.

It's still the dark days of childhood, still the shattered psyche posing as old war stories, still the claws of affairs and family ripping at the heart and head.

But the psychiatrist tells you you're making progress even when you're not.
A poem may only be words on paper but it doesn't lie to you.



When Tigers Appear







Dan A. Cardoza

he'd been named after Joan Jett.

Jett had found herself back at a childhood circus. It was her and her father. She'd barely turned four. The wonderful chaos at the three-ring circus was a birthday gift. There had been marvelous and magical tigers in transit.

One tiger, in particular, appeared before her and her father. His eyes were not his own. Perhaps they'd been born somewhere deep in the earth, in a mythical kingdom of dirt. Could it be that his amber eyes had been made by an unworldly province, Madras, Bengal, and Kashmir?

The tiger had crouched on the floor of the ornate, gilded cage. The beautiful enclosure had been fastened to the slow-moving art nouveau carriage, the kind with black wooden spokes.

As the team drew the Aurelian cage and the tiger closer, the beautiful tiger had made eye contact with Jett. It's not recommended, causes aggression. However, on the day, it was the intent of the tiger to connect.

As if in the king's parade, the elegant Lusitano and Lipizzan Liechtenstein horses performed their perfect dressage. Each smartly dressed in their lacquered hooves. As the awesome stallions pulled the tiger's entourage ever forward, Jett positioned herself next to the safety rope.

It's then, each horse with a ribbon braided mane strode alongside Jett. Jett imagined herself part of an amalgam of something extraordinary. She was correct. And so, she'd let go of her father's hand and pressed closer, remaining transfixed, patiently waiting. Ever slowly, the ethereal horses pranced and shuffled away from her in the direction of darkness, so prevalent that particular evening, just outside the parted canvas door flaps of the main tent.

As quickly as they'd appeared, the horses and tigers had disappeared, smoothly folding themselves into the blackened, creased silk sheets of night.

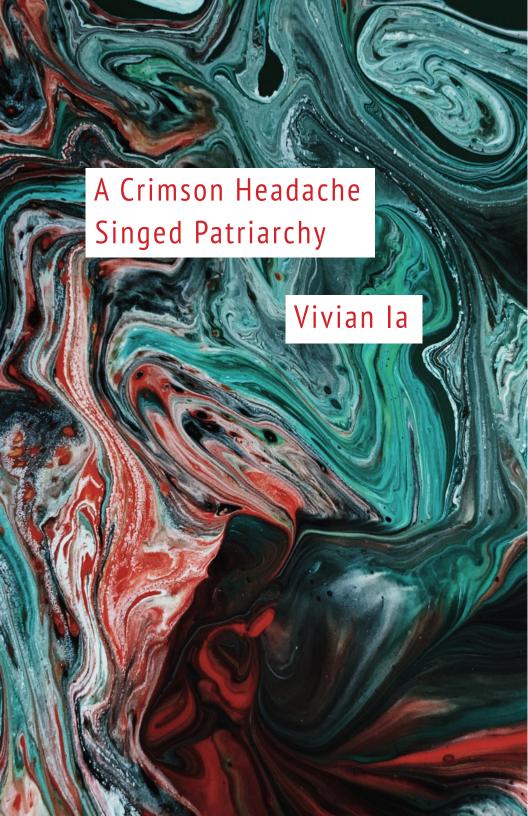
Jett knew for certain that the horses and tigers had joined the calamity that occurs at starlight's beginnings. Oh, what a special day that had been, part awaking, part dreaming. That was the last time Jett saw her beloved father, held his rough, gentle outstretched hand.

Two weeks removed from the spectacle and excitement, her father was sadly killed by an I.E.D. in the Helmand Province, nearly two-hundred kilometers from the ancient city of Kandahar. Jett had remained angry with herself for missing him so much.

She is still angry.

The impossible evening Jett had met with William Blake and Tyger. She'd been reminded of that terrible and fearful day she'd attempted to bury away so long ago. Jett had never quit asking herself, what if? Where had all the sorrow come from? Where had her tigers and remarkable horses gone?

Jett was certain that all the gold, and storms, and tigers, and pain would never appear so lovely again.



R E S

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dry field, monoculture to table
       such a can-do
       death drive
      from the dark spark
world orders have always been fraternal
brackish explication
epidemic of father
can't keep hands off so many obediences
      beasts gathered for the managing,
      hardly an inaction hero to rummage through
      heed the femme, the fall
      spin doctor sycophant bromance
any guy
go long
ventures to invoke
a new demiurge, the singularity
       momentum frenulum
       stress-ridden
      flaccid insight
      trauma makes the world go 'round
cowardice mourns muses
enterprising men doing right by daddy.
what if they stopped doing right by daddy
picked a hide, picked a shame
      boon boon askance
      poison gussies up the joy
      loose connections, many corrective facilities
      the coffers revolt
i have no more radar
only rocking breath
numb pelvis
the eight hundred years of colonies in me
```

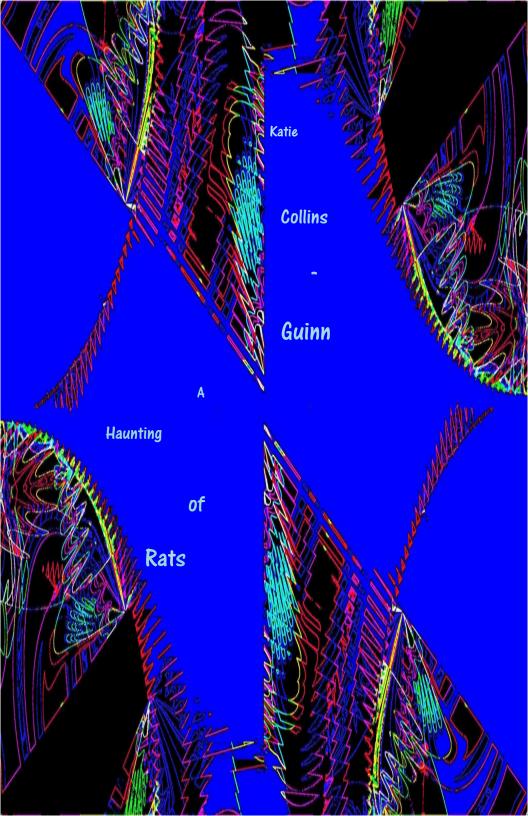
their hankering for shackles warm pink violation in the sallow sky of a poisoned life-like life

like life

::pornography::

::the divulgence::

& just around the corner from hatred the thirsty feet of androgynes mend tatters, and god god is at rest. god is rest.



S

he first time I witnessed a rat,

I was walking down the street to my best friend Lakisha's house to play barbies.

I carried my Teresa and Barbie that sometimes were traded for her beloved Christie and black Barbies. I loved going to her house because her Mom reminded me of my own:

kind, soft,

generous.

She made me feel at home easily, *Call me Auntie Renada*,

unlike at my other friends' houses, where I usually felt like I was doing something wrong, just *being* there. At their houses we didn't get after school snacks like at my house, and if I asked, I'd receive a slight mother glare. I felt a sadness in their homes that seeped its way into my bones as a form of disappointment.

* *

Rats were a thing that were said to only thrive in downtown Portland with the cockroaches and the skinheads—definitely not around our pristine, middle class, family houses in St. Johns.

The rat lay there on the parking strip in front of the house between my friend's and mine.

Its guts spilled out and deflated like the innards of a bean burrito, only deep and dark like kidney beans.

I couldn't stop looking even though I could feel my after-school snack riling into my esophagus. *Poor Nicodemus*, I whispered. Its yellow teeth, long rectangles protruded from its jaw like the end of a miniaturized, rusty crowbar.

* *

All of Barbie's teeth were white. Stark white. No cavities, naturally straight, free of spots, white.

I painted teeny off-white spots on my favorite Barbie. She acquired them while suffering some kind of fever she had when she was a baby, only, her mother wasn't around to tell her that like mine was.

Lakisha painted green eyes on one of her Barbies, like her auntie's she told me. They stood out because she'd painted even the white parts green. Lakisha wished her Barbie's hair was more like her own, instead of just black "Barbie."

* *

A girl at school called Lakisha a troll doll. I pulled the girls' hair as hard as I could, until she cried like she made my best friend cry. The principal, Mr. Brandon was disappointed in me. Told me I don't want to be a girl who fights. that I needed to get along with my peers and focus on my school work. I told him why I did it.

"She called Lakisha a troll because her hair stands straight up. What was I supposed to do? She's my best friend."

"Talking it out is always better. I'm always here for that."

"I tried to talk to her but she didn't care! She thought she was being so funny, but she's mean!"

I saw his own sparkly, brown eyes twitch, and then smile a bit.

"Just go back to class, and no more fighting." After what seemed like forever of him sitting there thinking.

That was the beginning of my fighting career. It felt good to reprimand those

I thought were being unjust.

*

There was always a rat trap in our fourth-grade classroom. It had fresh peanut butter and cheese whiz on it, like someone replaced it daily. I wondered if any were caught while we were asleep in our flowery bedspread beds.

I always figured mice and rats are smart enough to avoid traps.

The Secret of Nimh was my favorite cartoon. I fell in love with the crow Jeremy, the wise old owl, Mrs. Brisbee and her children, the rat Nicodemus, and the glowing red jeweled necklace that badass mother mouse wore around her neck.

Nicomdemus was my favorite rat when I still loved rats. He knew how to avoid traps.
Mrs. Brisbee was able to escape hers.

* * *

My parents told me that Lakisha would probably be sad that day. Her Dad had gone to prison.

My Dad's friend said it was drugs. He sold them.

That scared me, but Lakisha's Dad didn't scare me.

He was kind and warm just like her mother.

She brought it up while we played Barbies. "Christie's boyfriend went to prison because he was caught doing something bad" she said. She didn't have a black Ken doll to be Christie's boyfriend. They were hard to find.

"OK. What did he do?" I asked while holding my Barbie up, as if she were the one asking. "He was selling drugs. It was to help us pay the bills. He would never DO drugs, but since some people already do, he made sure they didn't get screwed." "Well, that's nice of him. . . . "

I was so sad for Lakisha. And then I remembered something.

"My uncle has been to jail a few times for drugs. He sells and snorts them. He always gets out pretty quick, so I bet Christie's boyfriend will be home soon too. I mean, your Dad."
I looked Lakisha in her eyes.

"Damn rats put him there." She pulled her Christie's hair tight like she wished to pull it all out.
"I hate rats!" I said passionately, knowing just what she meant.

I imagined the worst for her Dad. That he'd have to sit in a cold jail cell for a week, eating disgusting meals that weren't his wife's, missing his family like crazy. I never imagined that the actual truth was worse,

that her Dad wasn't as lucky as my uncle, my uncle who always went *back* to jail because they let him out, but he wouldn't stop taking and selling drugs. Her Dad was in prison. He was staying there for a long time.

She knew the difference. I wish I would have known. I wish I hadn't been protected from grief by my ignorant privilege. I could have been a better friend.

She knew I could never understand her pain. She stopped wanting to hang out with me after that day. She wasn't mean to me, she just avoided me. I tried

to hang out after school but she was always busy. She played with Alicia instead, a girl whose hair was like her own, but curly.

I sat on my flowery bedspread bed and cried. I wanted to know why. I didn't understand. Her mom would say over the phone, "I'm sorry sweetie, maybe next time." I wondered if she was just embarrassed about her Dad. I didn't care! I didn't think he was a bad man.

But now I know, I think,

it was because I'd naively rubbed my family's luck of being white in her face.

The differences between her Dad and my uncle was hoards. If anyone deserved a long lock up it wasn't her Dad. I stopped trying after a while.

* * *

That can't be a nice rat,

I thought,

when I began hearing the scratching inside the wall by my bed at night.

It was trying to reach me.

I dream of rats and get caught in dreams within dreams with them.

I awake to the rats chewing on my ears, my legs,

my neck

and arms.

I awake again to their shadows scurrying across the

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dark ceiling.

I awake to the screams they make when something scares them.

The one who jumped out of the portable dishwasher when we took off the top of it.

The one who lies in the backyard with its face mauled, only its yellowed crowbar teeth hanging by the tiniest ligaments left behind.

The one that was cuddled by tiny, black mushrooms—how they carefully crawled into the grass around it, as if someone had painted them there. The delicate death of it all.

The one who's tail was tangled and bloodied, its belly torn open, as if it had been attempting to mess with an opossums' dear spawn.

The one who mummified in my grandparents' cellar for many decades and I tried to take home but my husband wouldn't let me.

The one who ran under my feet mid-day in front of my house, while walking with my daughter just this past fall. It screeched and jumped as I'd stomped on its tail unknowingly. The skin slid off and exposed the flesh, stuck to my brand-new waffle soles.

The one who hobbled its way into the largest rose root system, that announces itself both above and below ground, in our yard. I felt bad for that rat.

С

Every time I have an encounter with rats, I think of that day I walked to my dear friend Lakisha's house. That last time.

I fucking hate rats.

Smart and cunning and vile and will scream at their clan to come attack you so they can run away, free.

I dream of rats.

Of black mushrooms.

Of spotted teeth, and beautiful black barbies, and mice.

I dream of my friend Lakisha a lot.

Even during the day.

Destroy All The Maps

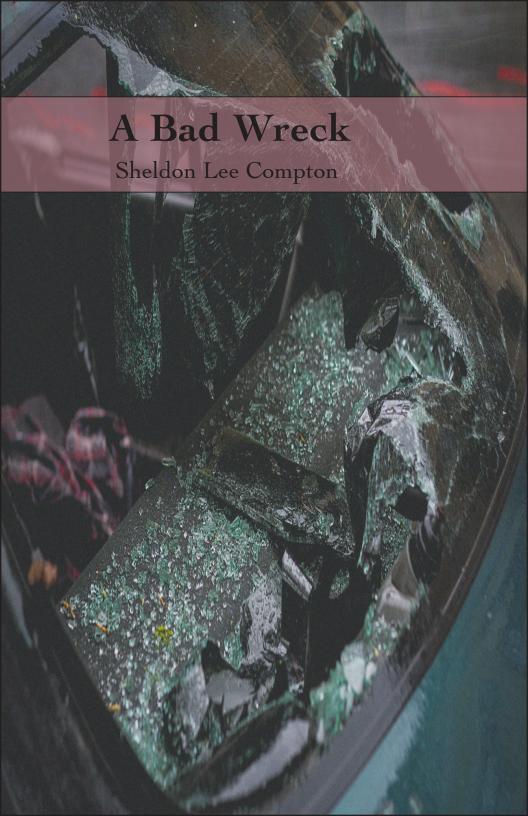
Justin Holliday

I dream of pushing my index finger inside the bathroom drain, searching for stray hairs, pieces of me that have escaped but live with me still. I could've become an oceanographer, Looking for monsters, as if no one had gazed upon the grime under my nails. If I plumb the depths, how long will it take before I lose myself? Feel the finest sand, susurrating beneath my feet or feel as though the drain were just another hole I could've avoided. Narrowly, almost too thin to collapse under oceanic pressure, I want to put more of myself inside this history and believe in gelatinous creatures waiting to graze my thumb with an eyestalk. Is walking the plank like admitting that I always find a crush when I am already in love? Leave my body to the sea, if you must, but it will not be my tomb. I will unbury myself from every drain and shake off the sediment to rise again like some piratical treasure reversal, breaking the locks on every box to reclaim my ship.

The Uproar, The Scream



I want to penetrate a parallel universe with my arm and shake hands with a lesser version of myself. I need to know I've made the right choices as my hand searches for some skin both foreign and too familiar to my own. I dare anyone, even myself, to pull me through this, tearing my collar, adumbrating that we must all divide ourselves where good and evil meet until we lose all meaning. Where werewolves clamber over brick walls, I imagine red dust dirtying their fur. They know I am the one on the attack, resolved to destroy every safe space. What they hold dear is what I howl into oblivion, my mouth stretching, straining my teeth until I swear I've grown fangs. Until all stones crumble like overcooked bacon, I wish to meet myself elsewhere as though for the first time I wanted to believe the world didn't revolve around me, didn't regurgitate my own monsters back in my face.



The day of the heart attack was only the second time I had been in a hospital. The first had been years and years before. A car accident is all I can remember, nothing else, including everything that had come before the accident. Even the memory of the accident was likely planted, a mental health counselor told me later. The doctor's first words to me were that I had been in a bad wreck, sustained massive head injuries. However, I would be okay. It would be four or five days before I realized I had no memories before waking and talking to the doctor. I lived on. I met a kind woman with dark eyes and a lonesome smile. She always said she knew my past in her heart, that her knowing was enough for both of us. We married, had children, made a life. Not remembering my life before her and the children mattered less and less over the years. And then it began.

Triumph

of the

Young Man

Against a

Pagar

God

Sheldon Lee Compton

The young man dog paddles and then stretches onto his back. He has been doing this for a long time. In the water beside him are two others. The others are alive. He can hear them panting. They speak but the young man can't hear. The words disappear entirely unless he stops paddling to rest. This part of the Pacific is home to oceanic whitetip sharks. The sharks appeared in large numbers within an hour of the accident, called by the sound of oak and ash wood sinking into the flat darkness of the ocean and then, finally, to the young man and the others thrashing and bleeding. Each of the dozens and dozens of sharks felt the presence of the young man and the others by using lateral lines, receptors along their sleek sides capable of detecting movement and pressure. Whitetips circle the others and one by one they are pulled under. Even underwater he can hear the snap of bones. The tearing away of skin and muscle. The screaming. He imagines Poseidon somewhere below, the god-brother, conducting this horror, and a heat works its way into the young man's heart. He begins to curl into a ball, pulling his legs up close to him and wrapping his arms around his knees. In this way, he sinks. But then something unexpected happens. His sinking becomes rising. The young man pulls in a deep breath when he hits air. It's nearly dark but he can see water sliding off his knees, his fingers, and his hair dripping away from him. He can float this way for as long as he needs, fractured into millions of small reflections across the surface of the sea.



If you saw it, you'd agree: It's the gem of our town. Not as big as the one in Vellum Heights, but clean, well-designed, with paved walking paths, a pond full of vibrant, speckled koi, and a climbing apparatus built just for the kids. Its half-mile circumference holds five hundred trees—towering oaks and regal sycamores, luscious magnolias that flower in spring, beeches with smooth grey elephant skin, papery birches and prickly ash.

Some of us are old enough to remember those trees—not those trees of course, but ones like them, that grew in our yards and in the neighborhood park, a mute green watercolor backdrop to our lives. We remember the smells of fresh-cut grass, and rain, and mud, and the breeze on our face. Indescribable now, like the sky when it was blue.

Now we all wear the mask. For the sake of our kids, we pretend not to hate it as much as we do, but it makes no difference; our kids refuse to put it on. From the moment they exit their sleeping pods, after every meal and every bath, we are reduced to chasing them around the house like ogres out of some macabre fairy tale. We hold them down as they kick and scream, force the nozzle over their nose and mouth, tighten the straps at their temples and jaw. It's not pretty. It's not what we imagined for them. They claw at their heads and call us terrible names. They say they can't breathe, which of course isn't true.

We pine for what the big cities have: renovated,

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airtight, oxygenated schools and offices and condos, amenities we can't afford. The arboretum, though—we lobbied for a year, went door to door, convinced the mayor to sign on. We spoke at town hall meetings to unanimous applause, though some high schoolers gave us a run for our money. Julia Meyers, sixteen at the time, stormed up to the podium, flanked by four of her friends. "People are dying and you want to build a park?" As if we'd asked those people to come to our town, with their makeshift tents and sprawling filth. Yes, we knew their children had died. Of course it was sad. And we'd let them stay. Occasionally we saw them roaming our streets, dirty rags tied around their noses and mouths. Some rattled cans, and we gave them change.

We told the youth, some problems are too big to fix.

From afar, the arboretum's domed-glass roof resembles a snow-globe embedded in the ground, an alluring green planet in the center of our town. The earth's bounty shrunk to a fraction of its size. We love it. Without it, we'd lose our minds.

Today we have come for the Live Butterflies, and the line extends around the block. Our kids fidget, shift from foot to foot, bounce on their toes as we wait to get in. Connor Watson pokes his little sister in the back, tugs the end of her sash, undoing the bow. "Stop it!" she wails, her hands grasping at the crimped, dangling ribbons of her dress. Her eyes narrow through the porthole lenses of her mask. She kicks him hard in the shin. He slaps her arm. "Cut it out," their father says, "or we're going straight home." In our masks, we all look like giant anthropods with oversized black heads and elongated snouts. Bug-eyed creatures, an alien race. The line inches forward, in shuffling steps. We move as a herd, bovine with exhaustion, the kids like puppies straining their leashes.

From behind the entrance window, the security guard—Jeremy Knowles, the mayor's son, slumped, unshaven, bored out of his mind, as if his mask-free job were not coveted by all—waves us through the first checkpoint. We pass into a wide vestibule, a large steel box with hydraulic doors. The floor vibrates through the soles of our shoes as the air is sucked out, hermetically sealing us in. Then through a smaller set of glass doors, into the crystal-cool chamber of the dome.

It's like stepping into the great outdoors, a green so lush it hums in our teeth. The kids are now beside themselves. We fumble with the child-safety locks on their masks, an impossible array of buckles and clasps. So close to freedom, they wriggle and whine. We try not to curse. "Would you just hold still?"

Their masks come off. We let them run—bare-faced and wild, ferocious with glee, torpedoing towards the center of the dome where the jungle gym looms like a skeleton god. Beams and bars and tunnels and slides, they lose themselves in its vertiginous maze. They move in a charged and zealous blur,

and something inside us moves with them.

The relief, as we loosen the straps of our mask, breaking suction, peeling the rubber from our face. Our pores exhale, our sweat evaporates. We gulp the cool air. It's a thirst, and we drink. The humid, heavenly scent of leaves and loamy earth and linden blooms. Sawdust and pine and soft damp moss. Each breath we take returns us to ourselves.

Here we are: sallow and prematurely grey, defying extinction for better or worse. We sit on the benches and watch our kids play. At least our kids still know how to play. They are making do, like the bonsai in its pot—stunted, pruned, inhabiting tiny truncated lives. We water them, we clip their leaves. We don't tell them how many of us there once were. Their screams and laughter echo through the dome. More families stream in—our neighbors, our friends—our din pulsating like the chambers of a heart. There are strollers everywhere. Our masks are scattered like empty chrysalides. Lina Hernandez, a mother of two, is squinting worriedly into the crowd.

The crowd, as if by magnetic force, is moving, rippling, parting to make way for a scarecrow of a man who is lurching down the path.

He reeks of sour, festering rot. His face is raw and stippled with a rash. His eyes are bloodshot, his hair a greasy pelt. He could be thirty or sixty-five. He weaves tipsily among the trees, approaching the teeming mob of our kids. They don't see him, not until they hear our shouts.

They scatter in confusion, into our arms. Because we are frightened, so are they. We pull them close and give the man a wide berth. He lies down on a bench and closes his eyes. Our children stare, at the labored rise and fall of his thin chest, the dirty sweat on his brow. Two park staff approach—Ravi Price and Jeff Sanchez, young men, acned, visibly sheepish. "Sir?" The stranger opens one eye and mumbles, annoyed, like they've come to him in his private backyard, woken him up from his afternoon nap. When they try to help him up, he turns over on his side, his back to us, and wraps his arms around himself. Like Liza, our beloved childhood dog, when she crawled under a porch and wouldn't come out. Refusing food, growling at whoever came near. We didn't understand that she'd gone there to die.

Two security guards appear, masked, wearing protective gloves. We flinch as they pull the man to his feet. He splutters in protest, then begins to cough, a croupy bark that wracks his frame. They hold him up by the armpits as he spasms, retches, his vomit splashing at their feet. We hold our kids tighter, try to cover their eyes. Spellbound, they push our hands away. Pink spittle dangles like a worm from his mouth. His head lolls, feet dragging as they take him away.

[&]quot;Izzy!"

[&]quot;Jackson!"

[&]quot;Get over here, Taij!"

Already, the kids are wriggling out of our grip. Jeff and Ravi start to clean up the mess, and the kids gather around to watch the spectacle. "Stand back," we warn. They are like dogs, drawn to the most revolting things. We are glad when the job is finally done, our eyes watering from the sting of disinfectant in the air. Gladder still when Elsie Cho's four-year-old daughter points down the path and shouts, "the butterflies are here!"

Another staffer—Julia Meyers, all grown up now, having abandoned her needling adolescent righteousness—has appeared with a small mesh cage full of them. They are Holly Blues, lab-hatched upstate. The kids surge around her like a bubbling tide. She releases the swarm, an azure whirlwind. The children shriek. The butterflies rise, a cloud of glitter dispersing in the air, the kids leaping, spinning, chasing after them.

At least we have managed to give them this. Pigtailed Jenny Ames beatific on her father's shoulders, the butterflies grazing her outstretched fingertips. Little Elroy Carter toddling about, flapping his arms and squealing with joy.

Within an hour, the butterflies carpet the ground like fallen leaves, having lived their entire lifespan before our eyes. The kids pick them up, study them in dismay—the paper-thin wings and half-crushed legs, the powdery dust coming off on their hands. "Next week," we say, ushering them back to the

benches, where our masks—and the inevitable tantrums—await. "There'll be more next week." It is closing time. When we leave, wings stick to the bottom of our shoes.

Can	I	Still		See	the Poem
		Can	I	SEILL	See The
		Can	I	SEILL	See
		Can	I	SEILL	
		Can	I		
		Can		DS Maolali	

Can I Still See the Poem?

that trouble which comes in a newly found apartment: can I still see the poem? like a farmer searching fields for fallow, I walk about, distracted and probing earth.

here: a rock. here: a twist of treeroot.

I carry my laptop; looking for places which feel more right than others. trees hang over this place. I run to fetch the axe. misery falls somewhere after comfort. a sofa and a bed and a kitchen in different rooms.

I poke about them, digging the seeds from my bag.

Getting

Out

Of

Bed.

DS Maololai

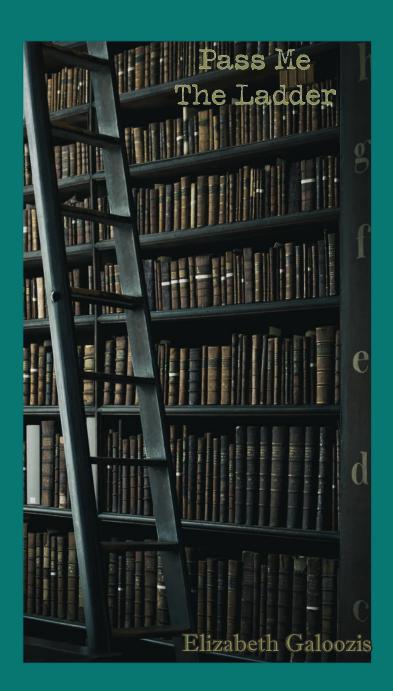
Getting out of bed.

making the decision like getting out of bed late at night to a fire alarm from an unput out cigarette in someone else's kitchen – yes, I know that do I want to marry her, but it's a wrench when you must tell someone you do.



S

Pedaling, the cliché is true: the body knows the way still, the inner, weightless skill of balancing on the steel seat, dry fingers taut and light on the handlebars, like reading the brakes' quick pulse. The thing, simpler than recalled—moving, but with almost no effort lifts the pressure you exert: what yoga promises, not in lengthened salutation, but from the heart leaping, lissome, from the body (toward the sun) and ahead of its rest and motion. The easing of sorrow. Ahead, the path narrows to a point closer and closer. Streaking down the greenergold tunnel, lit from either side, the thought appears, collides as if tossed from a tree, skyed like a stone into the bike: the less painful, swifter flight through this space is movement through time, too. The minutes pass you now like the trees, and you see how in the future, at the route's end, approaching always, stands the person missed, beloved, and reunion at hand, nearer every cycle and each push, coming into reach.



"Feminism further calls for a transformation of our concepts of power: compassion and support rather than aggression and dominance."

-Kathleen Weibel, Library Journal, 1976

Can I help you? I'm sorry the man in charge is unavailable. He is always unavailable in some form or another.

You will find the books about you under "sexual minorities."
I can help you.
Let us build knowledge together.

"You will remember I was not a Sweet Girl Graduate of a Library School."* I am never allowed to forget. The men in charge call themselves information scientists, control uncontrollable ideas and feelings. Like depression. Like of wages.

Т

S

Like how we are handmaidens not only to historians but to our peers flirting with students and churning out books of their own.

Honestly, fuck right off.

You can't build monuments when you're pulling at seams.
This place
may not be of my own making
but by Jessamyn West and Audre Lorde
I can smash its walls,
lean my ladder
on your fist.

*Charles Lummis after being fired from the Los Angeles Public Library

Contributors' Notes

Petra F. Bagnardi is a TV screenwriter, a theater playwright and actress, and a poet. She was short-listed in the Enfield Poets' Twentieth Anniversary Poetry Competition, and was featured in Masque & Spectacle Literary Journal. Writing as Petra March, she won several awards and honors. She is also a Library Journal Self-e Select author.

Dan A. Cardoza's poetry, fiction, and nonfiction have appeared, or will appear in After the Pause Apricity, BlazeVOX, Bull, Call Me [Brackets] Literary Journal, Cleaver, Consequence, Entropy, Gravel, Hamilton Stone Review, In Parentheses, OJA&L, New Flash Fiction Review, Poetry Northwest, Running Wild Press Anthology, 2021, Spelk, and Your Impossible Voice. Dan was nominated for Best Micro Fiction, Tiny Molecules, 2020 and Best Poetry, Coffin Bell, 2020.

Katie Collins-Guinn is an artist, mother of blood and non-blood daughters, designer and writer, wife, flower gardener, North Portlander and lover of the beautiful, especially the kind that hides, and tells secrets. Her adult coloring book The Stoner Babes was published in 2018 with Microcosm Publishing. She's had work published in Stone Pacific Zine, Nailed Magazine, The Rumpus, Entropy and The Manifest-station. She's also spent time as a contributing freelance writer for the Portland Mercury. She's part of Lidia Yuknavitch's Corporeal Writing squad, which saves lives including her own.

She co-parents 21 roses and counting.

Sheldon Lee Compton is a short story writer and poet from Kentucky. He is the author of seven books, most recently the short story collection Sway. His work has recently appeared in Always Crashing, Best Small Fictions 2019, Everyday Quarterly, People Holding, Trnsfr, and New World Writing, among others. He teaches in the MFA program at Concordia University, St. Paul.

Laine Derr holds an MFA from Northern Arizona University and has published interviews with Carl Phillips, Ross Gay, and Ted Kooser. Recent work appears or is forthcoming from Barzakh, Santa Clara Review, North Dakota Quarterly, Prairie Schooner, and elsewhere.

Elizabeth Galoozis's poems have appeared in Sundog Lit, RHINO Poetry, Mantis, Not Very Quiet, Sinister Wisdom, and Santa Ana River Review, among others. Her scholarly work has been published in The Library Quarterly, College & Research Libraries, and ACRL Press. Elizabeth works as a librarian and lives in southern California; she can be found on Twitter and Instagram at @thisamericanliz.

John Grey is an Australian poet, US resident, recently published in Orbis, Dalhousie Review and Connecticut River Review. Latest books, "Leaves On Pages" and "Memory Outside The Head" are available through Amazon.

Elijah Hayes is a trans & queer man living in Alabama. His poetry and nonfiction have appeared in jubilat, Hayden's Ferry Review, BOOTH, Cover Lit Mag, Cosmonauts Avenue, Queen Mobs Teahouse and other various journals. He is the author of the chapbooks There is One Crow That Will Not Stop Cawing (Another New Calligraphy, 2016) and Mad Dances for Mad Kings (Factory Hollow Press, 2015). He earned his MFA at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. More can be found at www. elijahrushinghayes.com.

Rosalie Hendon is an environmental planner living in Columbus, Ohio with her new husband and many house plants. She started a virtual poetry group in April 2020 during quarantine that has collectively written over 200 poems. Her work is forthcoming in Change Seven and Planisphere Q. Rosalie is inspired by ecology, relationships, and stories passed down through generations.

Justin Holliday is an English lecturer and poet. His work has appeared in Queen Mob's Teahouse, Impossible Archetype, Fire Poetry, SCAB, Subsync's Poem of the Month, and elsewhere.

Vivian Ia lives in Berlin. Their poetry is Pushcart-nominated and has appeared or is forthcoming in Bone Bouquet, Tiny Seed, The Gravity of the Thing, Fourteen Hills, Berkeley Poetry Review, Under a Warm Green Linden and Angel City Review.

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Minna Lee (the/she) is a Hmong-Vietnamese theater artist and bedroom-pop musician living on Duwamish land. Their writing has been published in Bricolage Literary and Visual Arts Journal and You Flower/You Feast's Harry Styles Anthology. Last year, their play One Horse Town was produced as an audio drama by Annex Theatre. They are an Ensemble Member of Washington Ensemble Theatre, the Marketing Coordinator of Theatre Off Jackson, and hold a BA in Creative Writing from the University of Washington.

DS Maolalai has been nominated eight times for Best of the Net and five times for the Pushcart Prize. His poetry has been released in two collections, "Love is Breaking Plates in the Garden" (Encircle Press, 2016) and "Sad Havoc Among the Birds" (Turas Press, 2019).

Thaddeus Rutkowski is the author of seven books, most recently Tricks of Light, a poetry collection. He teaches at Medgar Evers College and received a fiction writing fellowship from the New York Foundation for the Arts.

Carla Sameth's memoir, One Day on the Gold Line, was published July 2019 and her chapbook, What Is Left is forthcoming (Oct./Nov. 2021) with dancing girl press. Her work on blended/unblended, queer, biracial and single parent families appears in a variety of literary journals and anthologies including: The Rumpus, MUTHA Magazine, Brain/Child, Narratively, Longreads, Brevity Blog,

Entropy, Angels Flight Literary West, Anti-Heroin Chic, Global Poemic, Full Grown People, and The Nervous Breakdown. Carla's essay, "Mother's Day Triptych" was selected as a notable for the 2020 Best American Essays. A Pasadena Rose Poet, a Pride Poet with West Hollywood, and a former PEN Teaching Artist, Carla teaches creative writing to high school and university students, and has taught incarcerated youth. She lives in Pasadena with her wife. https://carlasameth.com/

Izabella Santana (She/Her) is a 23 year-old college grad with a Bachelor's in English- Creative Writing and working on her last semester as an MFA candidate at SFSU. Currently residing in San Francisco, but originally from Santa Ana, California. While working on her MFA, She's interning for Omnidawn Publishing as a Marketing Assistant and Fiction Editor. Her writing appears in Anti-Heroin Chic and Cabildo Quarterly. In her spare time, she enjoys reading, perfecting her coffee-making skills, and collaborating with friends on other art projects.

Edward Michael Supranowicz has had artwork and poems published in the US and other countries. Both sides of his family worked in the coalmines and steel mills of Appalachia.

Corey Turner (she/they) is a nonbinary poet and coffee professional. She holds an MFA in poetry from Mills College and currently lives in San Francisco.

Talia Weisz is the author of two chapbooks: Sisters in Another Life (Finishing Line Press, 2017) and When Flying Over Water (Plan B Press, 2009). She lives in Brooklyn, NY with her partner and their eleven adorable houseplants.

Kuo Zhang is a faculty member at Western Colorado University. She has a bilingual book of poetry in Chinese and English, Broadleaves (Shenyang Press). Her poem "One Child Policy" was awarded second place in the 2012 Society for Humanistic Anthropology [SHA] Poetry Competition held by the American Anthropology Association. She served as poetry & arts editor for the Journal of Language & Literacy Education in 2016-2017 and also one of the judges for 2015 & 2016 SHA Poetry Competition. Her poems have appeared in numerous literary magazines, including Gyroscope Review, Coffin Bell Journal, The Roadrunner Review, Lily Poetry Review, Mom Egg Review, Bone Bouquet, K'in, North Dakota Quarterly, Rigorous, Adanna Literary Journal, Raising Mothers, and MUTHA Magazine.

