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Poetry



Old Man in a Rocker

JOSÉ ANGEL ARAGUZ

The fantasies of others are of little interest.
This painting where an old man in a rocker
stares into the sun from his porch

does little for my own unrest,
nor does it change the words I hear
in fantasy. Others are of little interest.

I write: *In the evening's last light, I'm lost—*
it too is less a person, more a color.
Staring into the sun from this porch,

the evening is what the painter's left for us
to guess at. In my eyes, over and over,
are fantasies of other evenings. My interest

in what may have happened stirs summers
inside me: the smell of grass, and no father
staring at the son I am. Soft peach

upon the face; not face but canvas.
Son, God has grown tired of us, I hear
again. *We're fantasies, of little interest*
except as stairs rising into the sun.

Behind a House

TARA BALLARD

there grows a red-faced poppy.
She paints

between two slabs of stone,
petals cupped around an ink-filled heart
like Odette's

outstretched feathers,
a noon-zephyr of calm
following discontent—
the aftermath

of worship, slight wonder
of haze, where a mother's pain
meets the weight of God

and the last days
of shiver find a spring
sun, where the laundry hung

on a narrow line
yearns
like the blossom and herb

the earth lifts up
as offering.

“Do You Want to Be a Burden?”

ACE BOGGESS

—R.S. Gwynn, “Looney Tunes”

I can't repair my own clothes—stitch-weary,
thread-blind. I tried, but gashes
expand as I do, dense black holes
sucking everything in. I cook,
if you don't mind charred & brittle,
all that sameness, so-so. At least,
I'm master mixologist of marinades,
although it's up to you to stalk the prey,
slaughter, skin, fillet, & drag the morsels
to the flames. Want me to paint your house?
As long as it has no lines. Otherwise,
I'm a child filling in dinosaurs,
my hands too small to hold the purple
Crayon straight. I'll mow the lawn
if you're not afraid; chop wood,
but would you trust me going
near your dainty heirlooms with an ax?
I wasn't built for practical applications.
I'm like a trap designed to snare
one specific mouse. I have my language,
a specialist's code like Cobol or Pascal.
Not good for much, I promise
to lighten your load if you ever
figure out how to make use of me:
preparing a moonlight serenade,
tasting the wine for poison,
falling asleep like a tabby in your arms.

After My Grandmother Thought to Throw Herself into a River

JOHN DUDEK

The breath of a cracked window blows
over my bare chest another October morning.
These are the days I choose to wake and live
for in them all things are animated.
Let me tell you how the tenements convey
their sadness in this white light,
paint chipped into endless baby teeth.
How the corner's silver maple shakes
like a Newfoundland dog on fire,
phone cables running through his coat
like leads. How the cold river twitches,
one of many tails of a riddling dragon.
All autumn—all Fall beasts were familiars
to me. I fed apple cores to their rootstock
and tributaries. When this was not enough,
I shaved slices of my rage like deli meat
till I was thin and weak. I offered it
to the fantastic menagerie before they donned
and shed their gaudy coats. If you need metaphor,
take my knuckles as they were
between heavy bag and the boy I was.
If you want to know the balance
after this attempt, that's hard. We're barefoot
at both stages—dispossessed, distrustful
of Spring's pastel complexion. But I guess,
when the mud smears the hillocks and snowmelt
froths at our banks, I am colder. The maples
hide their breath from me because, after all,
there's simply less of it to go around.

June(ing)

ALEJANDRO ESCUDÉ

We notice it happening, or as a friend simply said,
“No one takes care of each other anymore.”

We were walking as the sun set in beach fog, bicycles
and homeless men exchanging clothes; let’s just say,
our laughter was noticed. Later, at the restaurant bar,
I ordered an Aberlauer 12, a big rock in it, a polar bear
asleep in shy gold, and I watched as the other patrons
receded into the universe that wasn’t yet made;
we talked about *his* boss, the fifty-something workaholic
with the twenty-something girlfriend. I told him
I believed everyone in America was a workaholic,
thinking how offended I get when people ask me
what a teacher does over the summer months.

Well, for the first couple of weeks, you stare down
at your black, buckled shoes and berate yourself
for not getting a seasonal job; you face down questions
like: “So, you’re just going to watch your kids?”

That finally stops. And you go out to watch the birds
when you have time. You smoke too many cigars,
and you read about philosophers like Edmund Burke,
who believed property and class would save us all.

An Autumn Prayer

BRIAN FANELLI

Trees make a tunnel,
red and orange foliage,
branches arched over roads.

Headlights cut haze,
fog that crawls across streets
as leaves give themselves to wind,

dance and tumble in decay.
This warmth reminds me
of mid-May, when crocuses

reach up like tiny fingers.
I study the sky, the widening
blue canvas pushing out gray.

I want to raise my hands, reach
towards sunlight. Foolish, maybe,
to whisper a prayer to prolong

the warmth, and stretch these days
before winter's howls and gusts,
when I will wake and clench bed sheets,

the way I squeeze the steering wheel now,
driving through mid-morning fog.

Zeus

ANNA HARRIS-PARKER

For your 90th birthday, I won't write
a poem to exploit the man you were
before I grew up. You drank Ancient Age,
goddamned this and that. You fought

in World War II, loaded first
the Bofors on the deck of your ship
named for the capital of Vermont—
as if the allusive

blankets of snow could save you
from the heat of the Pacific sun,
shining shadows over Pearl Harbor, Hiroshima.
 Surveying the aftermath, I imagine

you take your first nip, an offering
from the West Virginia boys
who call it *white lightning*.
 Visions of Zeus flash

through your mind. That's as far
as it goes. You never finished high school.
 What are the odds
they taught Greek mythology

anyway? How could you have known
Zeus also ruled his family with his right fist,
suffered addiction, took a wife and mistresses
who gave him children we, too, call

heroes? All are legends
to me, who didn't know you then.

 Now, I visit the veterans' nursing home,
find you in the mess hall

sipping black coffee, snaking on a Hershey bar.

You raise your right arm to wave,
introduce me as *Miss America*
to a woman who worked as a nurse

on a hospital ship. You knew each other
because of some secret hand signal
that looked like (but wasn't) the sign for O.K.

I pull up a chair, tell you I got a dog

and you tell me about Tiger who, I knew,
took up at your trailer for a while, then disappeared.

Anyhow, you say you couldn't afford to care
for him, but he's all you ever talk about

unless the Braves are in season, or the weather
seems bad. You find thunderstorms fascinating.
When the lights flicker above your bed,
I wonder if you wonder when the clouds will call you home.

An Un-Finisher

M.A.H. HINTON

the icon
of St. Francis
purchased months ago
still needs
to be hung

so does
the Grateful Dead poster

and the picture
of me and Brooks Robinson
from when my beard
was still red
and I still smiled
for pictures

I am an un-finisher

a thousand projects
begun
just a few
finished

reams of paper
gigabytes of incomplete stories
and half-begun novels

Thomas Merton
and Duns Scotus
tell us that we are Co-Creators

I find it easy
to believe

the Big Bang
Evolution
and another half-finished poem
laying on the page

Starlings

M.A.H. HINTON

they are gathering again
the poems

in my online journal
and in the analog one
I carry with me now everywhere

I think of them
as a flock of starlings
gathering on telephone wires

when will enough
have gathered
that their songs
become large enough
to carry them away?

conundrum

BETSY JOHNSON-MILLER

a clutch of jonquils
in my back pocket

will not bring the elusive
tranquil life to bloom

in any large or small
room I enter because

inevitably I will be invited
to sit, relax

therefore crushing the beautiful
because it's a command

I'd give anything
to obey

After the Rain

RICHARD JONES

I hurry through the early evening
down rain-washed Paris streets,
carrying a great bouquet of flowers
upside down so the heavy weight
of so many red and yellow blooms
will not break or bend the tall stems.
The flowers are wrapped in white
paper on which a small envelope
has been taped. The aproned girl
in the florist's shop waited, while
pen in hand I looked into eternity,
wanting to write something equal
to the flowers' beauty, to her beauty,
then wrote my wife's name, *Laura*.

Resolve

RICHARD JONES

*for William
and Andrew*

My sons rose early, before
the purple-gray mist of first light,
broke camp and started out from
the valley, packs on their backs,
the two of them steadily moving,
talking little if they talked at all,
leaning into the path up the hill
through the woods, hard going,
pressing forward, legs heavy
and fatigued by midday, muscles
burning, breathing heavily, packs
heavier now, tin canteens
banging notes against their hips,
hands raw from scrambling
over chutes of jagged rocks,
leaning into switchbacks and
then in warm afternoon light
up and across the high meadow
to the sheer peaks, the stone
outcroppings where they sat
exhausted, too tired to talk,
realizing they had nothing
to say to anyone, no words
for the sun or the twilight
or the eagle-view of the valley
or the night-fire's first flames,
the two of them resolved now
to not go down the same men,
maybe never go down again,
and that's when, they told me,
a multitude of stars came
out of the sky like old friends
with lanterns held high to greet them.

Billy Collins

ERREN GERAUD KELLY

Tried to get a ticket to
The reading, but it was sold out
So, i settled for watching his
Documentary
While i snacked on nachos
And beer.
I read another rejection letter
Earlier, i kept thinking
Maybe if i wrote "safer" poems
The New Yorker would love me
But the only safe place is in
My mind.
I tried to eat Osso Busco once
But i kept thinking about the
Tent cities, strung along
Sixth street.
I want to be P.C., but everytime
I write polite poems,
I see dead black bodies
Floating between the lines

Let It Come More Easily Than That

BETHANY REID

If you want to have peace,
don't imagine it a mountain lake
revealing itself only to airplanes
and the most intrepid of hikers.

Let it come more easily than that.
Fill a glass at your kitchen tap
and give thanks. As you drink,
offer a prayer for those who thirst.

Caddo Lake Elixir

JC REILLY

Vidalia tethers the *Brittle Moon*
to a thick cypress on the Texas side
of Tar Island Slough, while I nurse
my hands from the paddles' chafing.

It didn't seem so far from Hawley Arm
when we set out after supper,
but half-a-mile's rowing
has brought out the mosquitoes,
and the sky sinking to purple
casts its reproach along with the shadows:

it's more than a mile around the island,
and there might be gators—
worries too mundane for Vidalia's magick,
but not for me. To navigate by starlight
might work for sea captains,
but I have neither sextant or compass
to guide our voyage back, and hope
someone turns on the lantern at the pier.

Undaunted, she opens her satchel,
draws out a beeswax candle, cardamom,
clove, and damiana leaves. She lights
the candle on the seat beside her, scoops
some lake water in a bowl, tosses in the herbs.
This she heats above the flame a few minutes,
whispers words too soft to be heard
over the bullfrogs and cicadas, then sips.

If she twists up her face like a dish towel
at the taste, I don't see it, but feel my own
wrinkle in sympathy. "So mote it be,"
she says, pouring the rest back into the lake,
and blowing out the candle whose smoke
threads its way unseen into the fabric
of the evening. "We can go."

She unties the boat from the tree
and pushes us back into the channel.
As the paddles cut through the slough, a hint
of clove catches on the breeze like grace.

The Natural World

DALE RITTERBUSCH

There is a brooding loveliness in this swamp,
patterned shadow lying quietly
on the brackish water, trees flourishing
half-submerged, a loveliness as eternal
as men finding faith among the faithless.
My old cedar canoe is at rest,
and the water is so still, the odor
of health. It is only an imagination
which perturbs the depths, discovery
of cells disruptive, lymph nodes
swollen like the belly of a snake
after a good and nourishing kill; for years
the prostate grows, an additional piss
in the night and then more until
there is no more. The surface breaks,
and something sinks beneath: predator
or prey, it makes so little difference.
Always, something is eaten alive.

Even Shakespeare

ZACK ROGOW

On some days even Shakespeare must have thought
There's too much gore at Hamlet's denouement,
or he regretted jokes crowds hadn't bought
and Romeo's ruffly speeches made him yawn.
Metaphysical grunts of Lear seemed trite
and Will wished his love in her plumed bonnet
would spread her knees without his having to write
yet another motley-minded sonnet.
Then he'd exit the Globe and slip away
mayhap in the midst of Act III or IV,
and follow Thames' tide at close of day,
watching an egret at the nearer shore
suddenly take flight above the flood:
a white shadow blazing against the mud.

Amaranth

MAURA WAY

It was too unwilting red
to ever be called Pigweed

but even the Queen Anne's
Lace is really just a carrot,

My label, too, conjures
a more glorious being.

I'm not sure what you were thinking

ANNA LOWE WEBER

buying blueberries so early in spring.
The sun has only barely begun come out of hiding,
and here you are, returning home in triumph from
the grocery with bags full of avocados, hard as rocks
in their alligator skin, strawberries such a washed out,
tired red, I find them depressing to look at,
much less consume. Why not just buy
a watermelon while you're at it? But you
don't understand my frustration, insist that
we live in an age of seasonless crops, where pineapples
and butternut squash, grown and harvested thousands
of miles away, cohabit in the produce section.
And you're right, I suppose. But consider
a peach in April, and again in July. Tell me
it's not worth the patience then, the wait
for the ripening. Honeyed juices uncontainable
after the first bite; golden flesh giving way
to pinks and crimsons as a quieting sun does.
How could a sad, April peach be equated
to such a jewel?

But I make you eat them anyway—the peaches
you've brought home in April. You insist they aren't that bad—
decent, even. Sitting on the back porch together
on one of spring's first warm days, I watch as you crunch
your way through the pale, yellow thing. I guess
none of us really knows what life with another person
will be like until you're years in— too far out to shift,
reroute. Too far out to change the course now.
Better just to accept them for their flaws. To sit
until they've finished the fruit. To offer a napkin—
unnecessary though it is, seeing as there was no juice.

Field Sermon: Reenactment

JOHN SIBLEY WILLIAMS

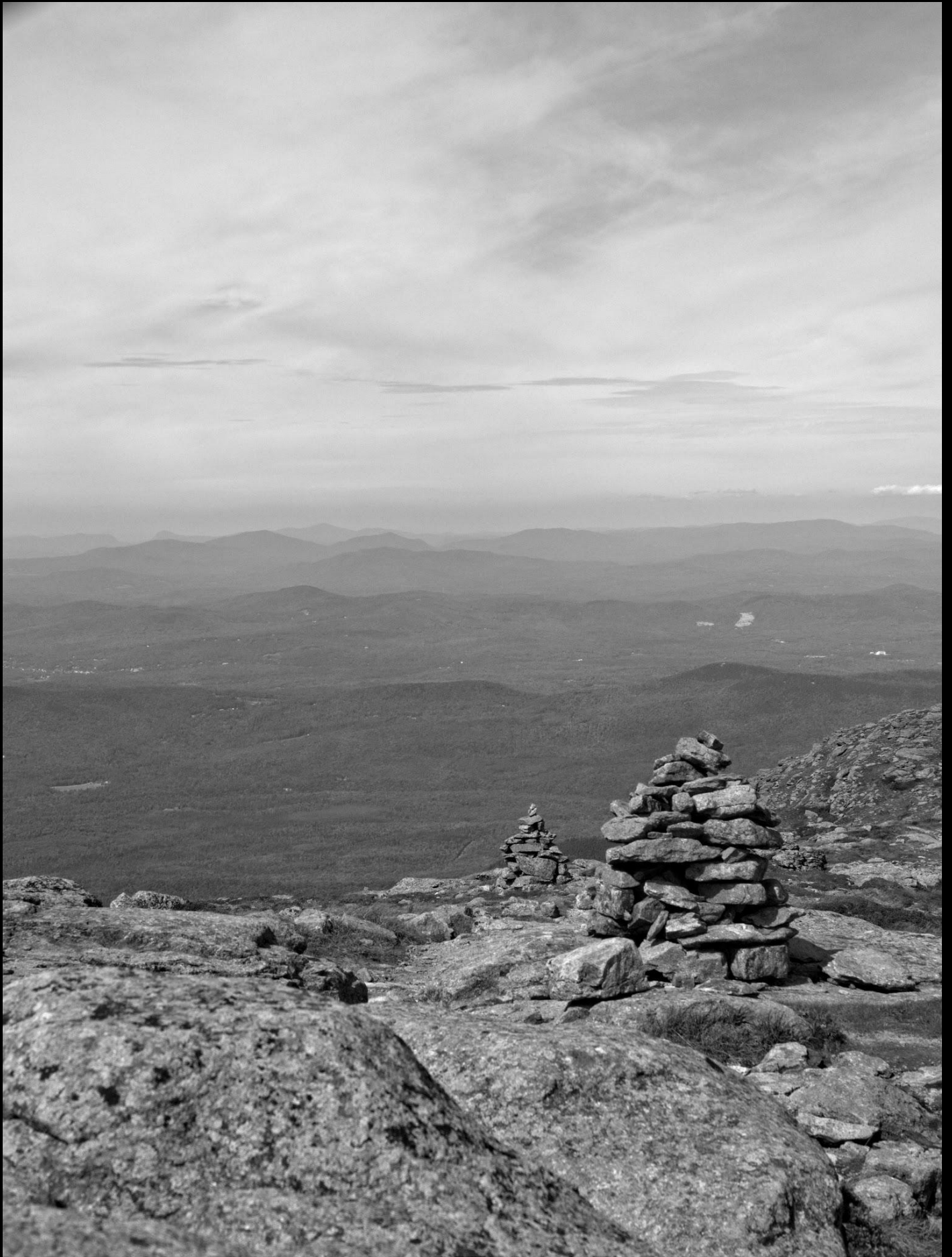
Somewhere in the close darkness,
pinned to shadow, in the small hour
just before those delicate fires dawn
ignites in you take hold, a mule deer
steps into range and your father asks
is this not what we've prayed for?
and you answer again with a bullet
that misses its mark. Then morning
comes with its empty hands raised
overhead like surrender. Later, war.
Then another autumn with its trees
undressing into your mouth and that
sticky metal sleeplessness of having
learned, finally, to kill. Then there it
is: another boney halo of antlers, lit
from behind, though detached now
from a body's fire, a body's grace.
Another chance to make him proud.
Yet another breathy chant to no one
in particular. Your father is dead.
And his Father. The morning hung-
over from night. When you ask it,
the world gives you its throat.

Field Sermon: Renunciation

JOHN SIBLEY WILLIAMS

If the cut is clean, a cross-sectioned sky reveals the same spent rings as ponderosa pine. Inside our body's body, when turned to music, a cry so close to song. And the lake filled with men in white finding some sort of grace in the silt is the same spot my dad once taught me how to gut walleye. Blood in the shallows. God along the mirrored surface. Listen closely, that distant clamor of belled goats may be the great gale grandpa always said would blow the whole house down. To bring the dead back to us, never speak of them again.

Short Fiction



Modern Life

BRITTANY ACKERMAN

I.

When driving, one can see how the land stretches, like pulling a sheet over a bed. But mountain ranges cannot be smoothed out with a swift shake. We had left when it was still dark, and now the light is brimming over each valley. He slept and I drove. I drove as he slept. I watch the land change and it's not until I open a bag of white cheddar popcorn that he wakes up and offers to take over.

It takes hours to get out of Los Angeles. I drink a sugar free Redbull and watch the buildings disintegrate along the highway, transfiguring themselves as rock walls and mounds of dirt. He sleeps on his hoodie, crumbled up into a ball as a makeshift pillow. The part of our relationship where we dated and made promises to each other is long over, but we both wanted to go to see the red rock country in Sedona, Arizona. We have enough weed and pills to make it three days in the dessert.

The red of the Sedona mountains is more like a dusty orange, rust colored, like what happens when you look under your faucet, below and inside the cabinets. There are tarantulas petrified in tequila. There are ice cream shops that sell malted milkshakes with lines out the door. He notices a sadness in me that not even the vortexes of this town can take away, the twisted roots and turquoise necklaces, the coyotes and the dust. All the dust. He wants me to be happy and I tell him that I am trying. He holds my hand as we hike infamous rock formations. He rubs my shoulders in the hot tub at night when we've had too much to drink. But when the maid accidentally calls him my husband he laughs and I realize what is and what could never be. I am holding a hair dryer and she has come by to drop off towels. Half of my hair is still wet and he flips through channels on the television and he is not my husband and I am no one to anyone and I'm not sure I'll be okay when it's over.

II.

I am wrapped in a white sheet on a white bed without a bed frame. It is very comfortable though, like a cloud stolen out of the sky, and warm somehow, like our bodies had generated enough heat to last until morning. Beds are always cold until you make love in them. I collect my necklace from the side table and find I had placed it on a condom wrapper. I will later give this same necklace as a gift to a girl I don't like very much because it was her birthday and I didn't want to buy her a present.

I watch him smoke, naked, outside. I think to myself, This is real life. I'm not thinking about God. I'm looking for humanity.

He asks if I want to go for breakfast so we take his green truck, the one he no longer has, and we get burritos with eggs and cheese and bacon and avocado and I've never had such a thing before. He buys me a green juice and we share it on the way back to his place. I get a call from my new job and the service is spotty. He parks and I get out of the car and wander off a bit down the dirt road. He lights up a smoke and I continue walking. I walk far enough to where I can see the water out, out there. On the line, the lady tells me to come in on Monday. She says to bring identification. I think about how it all ends when you start something new.

III.

He calls a few weeks later, after I took too many sleeping pills but woke up anyway. He says he wants to meet up for lunch and I say Yes, but then when the day comes I cancel last minute, and I lay in bed and watch the day turn to night. I won't be myself again for a while.

On another day, later, in the future, I drive out to Silver Lake to watch a movie with my coworker. I smoke too much and when he wants to go to sleep, I drive myself home. I have leftover pasta from dinner in the car and I eat it out of the container with my hands. It reminds me of when I was a little and ate plain penne with my fingers. No one ever told me to stop. No one ever told me it was wrong.

Level Up

ELISABETH DAHL

Pack one blender: Half a banana, slice of orange, strawberry syrup, ice. Then, 'cause it's ninety-eight degrees at the zoo today and the line is ten deep, pack a second and third. Shift your hips, releasing the uniform polo from your lower back.

The Great American Smoothie cart, your minimum-wage job on wheels. Next-to-nothing dollars an hour and all the blender leftovers you can stomach. "Mixed fruit" smoothie—only kind the cart sells. Half a banana, slice of orange, strawberry syrup, ice. They call it a recipe, but that seems too grand a word. You could teach one of the flame-colored tamarin monkeys down the Rainforest Path to make one in five seconds, and even then, its flat black monkey eyes would say, *That's it?*

Flick on the three blenders, which you've come to think of as Larry, Moe, and Curly. Larry and Curly run slow sometimes, though today they're keeping up. Moe's the old reliable—your go-to. You used to watch the Stooges when, as a teen, your mom and stepdad would be at work and you'd babysit your little brother, Jase. After, you'd kneel beside him so he could reach your head and bonk it.

Feel the power as the blades scream through the ice, a sound stretching from the giraffe enclosure to the toucan cage. You're a one-woman heavy metal band. When the blender contents turn Dubble Bubble pink, grab cups and pour. The work's so mindless, you can chew over any issue as you do it, like how the first day of classes will go tomorrow, and whether you even remember how to study. Ten years ago, you ran out of money and quit junior college. You started working at a grocery store, an okay job for years—until the chain went out of business and the recession hit. And here you are, twenty-eight years old, in the only job you could find. As gamer Jase might have put it, time to level up and get that bachelor's.

At eight, when the zoo train makes its final circuit, unplug the cart and wheel it into the storage area. Count out the cash box, peeling apart the stuck-together bills. Give the Three Stooges a wipe. All through Jase's funeral three months back, sitting among the good-for-nothing meth-head stooges he'd fallen in with, you kept hearing *nyuk nyuk nyuk*, which made things both more and less awful. His new friends were scabby, just like he'd become toward the end, age eighteen.

Run a soapy cloth down the cart, then follow with a second. Fingerprints are all over the metal, as they are throughout the zoo, where kids have spent the day running from exhibit to exhibit, touching bars and fences.

Drop off the deposit bag. Arrive at the bus stop for the 22. Ignore the guy in the Orioles tank who's announcing what he'd like to do to you tonight. There's a whistle in your backpack. You've got brass knuckles too, a half-joke from Jase, years earlier. Even if he was ten years younger, Jase looked out for you.

Cross the street, walk to the stop for the 46, and claim one corner of the Plexiglas enclosure. Check that the guy hasn't followed. Put in your ear buds, turn up the Violent Femmes—you're old school—and watch for the bus.

When the 46 rolls up, show your pass to the driver. Suck in the air conditioning, be glad the bus is empty. Unzip your backpack, check out the school supplies you bought at lunch. Uncap a Sharpie and write your name on the cover of a notebook. If it weren't for Jase dying, you probably wouldn't have registered for classes. He'd been the smart one, the one your mom and stepdad imagined would be first in the family to graduate from a four-year college. All those hours with Grand Theft Auto were just what he did when he wasn't at the books. He'd be a doctor or lawyer or something else that made people go *ahhhh*.

Pray the classes go well. Really do it—pray for a second. Tomorrow, you have Marketing Communications and an accounting class. You're thinking you'll study business, same as when you were at junior college, but who knows. At the moment, and until you find a better job, you're still the Great American Smoothie girl.

Look out the window. Think, *This is the sunset on the day before I went back to school. This is the sunset on the day before my new life started.* The sunset is pink flecked with orange, just like the smoothies. The resemblance is either poetry or a plain old joke. Tomorrow, you'll start to find out.

The Great Wolf

KEMAL ONOR

The Great Wolf was before him. Its fur silver, touched by patches of frost and moonlight.

“Teach me to be like you,” he said. “Teach me the way of the lone wolf.”

The Great Wolf’s head cocked to one side as though it did not understand what the man asked.

Then, as the master had instructed, the man placed a rabbit at the wolf’s feet. He then waited. It was a very long time before the Great Wolf even sniffed the rabbit offered. All at once the man questioned his decisions. He thought of the home he had left behind. He remembered how his parents felt like sandpaper when they all slept in the same bed. He remembered that his father had to get out of bed three times every night like clockwork before he could get any sleep. After the third time, he always returned smelling of cigarettes and rain. It was always raining in his memory. His memory was so filled with rain that everything he could think of in his feeble mind was water-logged.

His wife had slept alone as a child, being that she was an orphan. They had once been told if they were ever to have any children of their own they must perform the act of love when it was not raining. For a year and a day, they had waited patiently, waking early in the morning. But it always rained. Sometimes it was a single drop of rain, on other days they rode in boats through the halls of their home. Some days, when they got home from work, the two sat on the couch, counting minutes until water seeped in through the walls or up through the floorboards.

The home had finally collapsed when he left, and his wife and parents were still inside when it had happened. Now and then the man gave a hopeful thought that his father had been outside smoking when the house collapsed, but it was not so. That was the last day he could remember, as though his mind was now too filled to take on any new information. One day he would empty his head of the water taking up the place of memory. The Great Wolf watched the man patiently. The man had traveled a long distance through willowwacks, stopping only to consult the master of the forest for directions to finding the Great Wolf. Further he had gone, deep into the mountains; he went along ancient roads that never saw a city.

The man felt compelled to sit, and he did. The Great Wolf stalked forward, its masses of muscle and fur rippling like moonlight on water.

He felt the heat of the creature's breath, that dry heat that reminded him of a time when he traveled through Istanbul. The heat that carried with it the Turkish aroma of salt, sea, and roasted lamb and chicken. As the Great Wolf circled round him, he recalled a particular excursion to a mosque. He was not religious but he had wanted to take in the culture of the city. He was reminded of a woman he had seen; her eyes following him through the burka. He thought of this woman because of the way the Great Wolf stalked him; like the way she had stalked him, and then approached him. He had worn shorts that day, shorts that grazed his knees. There had been a question as to whether he should cover his legs. He had been permitted to enter without covering his legs.

The Great Wolf put its jaws to the man's neck. He felt the sharp points, quivering with an electricity of force. He knew he must not be afraid. The Great Wolf's tongue flicked across his neck. He was so lost in the memory of that trip that he didn't even flinch when the Great Wolf snorted a blast of hot air, sending a wave through his hair. He thought of how the woman had the figure of his wife. Then the Great Wolf turned its head sharply, and his body was left without thought.

While I Was Out

CREE PETTAWAY

If I was alive the day John F. Kennedy was shot, I would have most likely been drinking a milkshake at Highland Park Soda Fountain. Butterscotch would have been my poison of choice, and I wouldn't have waited to slide the change I'd found in my mother's purse across the counter, before sticking a finger in the top of the glass and licking my finger clean. My mother's words, "that is not a thing ladies do," would be playing in the back of my mind, but I would have continued on. My beehive hairdo would have been freshly wrapped and plump and crisp with hairspray, just like The Ronettes, and I would have felt just as alluring as them, but half as classy. The only thing keeping my skirt intact would have been the safety pin I clipped to it that morning, expanding as my belly did, as the milkshake escaped my glass and filtered into my mouth faster than the server could refill glasses of Dr. Pepper.

At 12:30 p.m. I would spin around to see Doug Henley staring just north of my waist and just south of my glass as I pulled the straw away from my mouth and sat the glass on the counter. I would wipe the moisture from my lips with the glide of my thumb and Doug would blush. Try to slow his breath and bite his lip to keep me from seeing how much my presence unwound him. This time of year the shop would have been nearly empty. Men and women deciding to stay inside their stale offices and cluttered homes and slurp their homemade soup instead of risking a cold from what mild breeze there may have been that day.

Despite the chill that would now coat my skin, the ignited warmth between Doug Henley and I would be undeniable. I would have tilted my head that way women do when they meet a man and try to guess what he's about. Wonder what and who he's doing at night, and what his day job might be. All things between Doug and I would be familiar though. I would have been the kind of girl that teased him but never let him go too far, and he would have been the kind of guy that could never move past all the awful things his mother said about me. On days like this, when not many people were around, Doug would have painted himself in faux confidence and moved to the stool next to me.

"Bit of a chilly day to be eating ice cream don't you think?" he'd ask.

"Bit of a chilly day to be eating alone," I'd reply. And the smirk on my face would tell him that I was teasing, and that I wouldn't want him to go.

“Another milkshake for the lady,” he’d say to the server, who now stood just across from us, staring at the narrow space between us.

“Strawberry, this time,” I’d chime in. And Doug would go on to order his usual Swiss grilled cheese and Coke, and I’d think how unoriginally American we both were.

By 1:00 p.m. our dishes would have been cleared and the atmosphere around us would have felt eerily quiet. On my sugar high I would have barely noticed, and would have been probing Doug about the primadonna he took to the movies last weekend. “You know Susie Faley,” he’d say. “She’s a nice girl.”

“A complete shell of a person,” I’d say, with no actual justification, just the fact that I disliked her messing up my weekly run-ins with Doug. He would have tried to convince me, just as he was trying to convince himself, that her eyes sparkled of diamonds because she was the girl his mother was fond of.

Our conversation would have continued on until 2:38 p.m. when the server leaned on the back counter, tossed the cloth he’d used to wipe the countertops on the soda fountain, and flipped the radio switch on. I probably would have been saying something about my Thanksgiving plans and my aunt’s dry yams when the server shushed me, pressing his ear closer to the radio. Inside the box a monotone voice would speak out, displaying all signs of exhaustion. Not one of us would have said a word about what he announced. Just sat there in our emotions and overflowing feelings. The server would have blown his nose into the handkerchief just tucked in his pocket and excused himself to the back. The world would have been stricken with panic attacks and unnerving grief, and sitting in Highland Park Soda Fountain talking to someone else’s future husband, I would have missed it all.

“Even One Note Can Swing”

TERESE ROBISON

I'm looking at my CDs, thinking about playing a little jazz or blues when suddenly, God damn! It's my birthday. Gotta celebrate before it ends.

Happybirthdaytome. Happy birthday to me. Happy birthday, dear Ja-ack (uh oh, fell off that high note a little)... dum di dum dum to me. I wonder who composed the song, with its bit of drama. There's that minor note in the chord at the end of the first bar. And in the third bar too, like there's some doubt you're going to make it. But major notes at the end. You do!

I've had good birthdays all the way. Lonely, my foot. I've got both feet kicking to great boogie woogie—it's Pete Johnson, “Climbing and Screaming.” Lonely is holding hands with yourself, someone said, but my hands are waving, beating up that beat I love. And *blues* I called *happies*, always, for the way I used to dance with Sukie those years we were together. She should have stuck around to see me turn 80 now. Not to mention 70, or 60. We would have had that great cake she liked, what was it called? Black velvet? Red?

Well, I don't blame her. She gave up. Even wiped out the married name and went back to the maiden (not that there was anything maidenly about Sukie when we met). She disliked *Pettigrew*—said it fit me when I grew picky and petty as we aged. I don't blame her, maybe don't even miss her that much. Would have been nice though tonight, the music. Bouncing to it after the cake. Bouncing around too, and cuddling, in bed. I remember every fine time there. Every inch of it we covered, from the head to the foot. It was designed for the best relaxation and security as well as the fun. The whole house seemed that way. What do they call that kind of arrangement of space. Kung Fu? (ha, Jack). Never could pronounce the name, something Chinese, I think.

Now I just sleep at the edge of the bed, on the same side always. Like the edge of a continent it seems. Should I call her, I wonder? Would love to hear her voice, mellow, with chuckles at my jokes—sweet like pecan pie, if you could taste it. I know what she'd say to me. Seize the day, Jack, don't just *poke it a little*. I could play Pete Johnson for Sukie over the phone. We shared our days for almost 30 years.

Here's something I know about us. Bygones, even with mistakes, are never gone and it's a good thing. Without them to entertain and show us, we'd just stand in place. Keep going then, okay? With Pete Johnson, Albert Ammons... Slow down maybe, but not that much, Jack. Not that much.

TWO Plus

TERESE ROBISON

He approached the door, but waited till she saw him through the screen.

“*You,*” she exclaimed; he heard *you bastard*, and agreed humbly, “*Me.*” Object pronoun, getting actions he deserved?

She jumped right past *What do you want?* to “*Why should I talk to you?*”

Something rose in him like drops in a fountain. She didn’t call out the Rottweiler to attack him, the dog he’d given her before he bolted. He answered, “*Because you think it’s good news? I won a lottery and I’m going to pay you back?*” He wanted right away to negate his sarcasm. What he felt was nauseating loss, not sarcasm.

She said, “*You trashed us. You trashed the marriage.*”

She had on a dress he’d picked out for her in Nordstrom’s once. Pale red, a Missoni knit dress. She modelled it for him in the store; he could hardly keep from kissing her. He’d teased, “*What do you think?*” knowing she was thrilled that the dress—everything about her—pleased him.

Her looks hadn’t changed in three years, an itch he needed relief from, remembering how he’d been her itch too, that stung when he forfeited their marriage.

His scruffy briefcase held packets of hundred-dollar bills; he’d collected almost \$10,000. He peered into the blue house and wondered if she’d thrown all his things out, clothes, books, family stuff passed down. Those three years stabbed his memory. He’d stolen her money in order to bet against a new gambler in town. After losing some of it, he won—enough to learn that hitmen would recover the gambler’s losses. He put part of his winnings in his wife’s account, fled across the country. Stayed sometimes with a woman who had her same brown-blond hair, clear eyes, compact form. He’d taken menial jobs but was still gambling, not risking big losses, living on what he won and his modest pay, struggling to restore what he’d robbed.

In desperation once, he tried writing a letter, though he hated writing. What came out of his ache startled him ... *Even if I were blind, I would see you. Even if I were deaf, I’d hear you.* He blushed with shame, tore up the letter.

Through the screen now he strained to hear his children's voices in the house. Tiny when he left, not even crawling. Dread and desire unmoored him. He stooped to the briefcase, brought out an envelope.

"Give it to me." Her hand stretched, and through the open door he could see the living room of his home, dark, bare. A patterned sofa, two kids' chairs. A man's jacket hung from the sofa.

Time to go. He propped the briefcase by the door.

The whole time, she'd stayed stiff, lips pressed, her frown unblinking. She moved back into the house and he waited a moment and crossed the yard with its plants sunk in dry soil. There was no need to look back right now, and he drove away from the cul-de-sac.

Sociopaths Don't Cry

ISABELLA RONCHETTI

When he was eight the boy fell off a brick wall and had to get a tiny part of his brain removed. The figures in the white masks and cotton-candy gloves with the monstrous monitors and static screens numbed him with pain killers and replaced that tiny part of his brain with a little metal tube. With the death of that piece of the tail of his hippocampus, his world of magnets and miracles would forever be gone.

As he grew up, the boy learned to hide the clinking sound the mettle made in his head every time he ran down the stairs. He would spend his summers observing the tired people on the train and the brave men with the red suits at the fire station and the child playing with a yellow balloon in the park and the girl with the blonde bangs eating a jelly donut at the beachside coffee shop.

And from watching them, he learned how the seahorse-shaped part of their brain made them *feel*. He learned what made them happy and sad and angry, and he also learned what made them fall in love. He learned how to comfort his friend when his dog died, how to smile as he unwrapped his Christmas gifts, and how to beg for forgiveness when his mother caught him smoking his first cigarette out his bedroom window in eighth grade.

His brother and sister were paper children and they held onto the tree branches and telephone wires to avoid being blown away. He twisted and folded their paper bodies into an origami Hansel and Gretel, putting on his very own puppet show. Feeding on their fear and self-doubt, the boy convinced his siblings that they were the stars now, he convinced them that dancing on a cardboard stage with strings tied to their paper limbs was the greatest thing they could ever wish to achieve. And after dinner, he'd lock them away in the baby-blue nursery.

He never felt remorse or happiness or sadness, or any emotion other than anger for that matter; he only observed people and learned to predict and manipulate them.

One warm July afternoon, the girl with the blonde bangs came over to his house and they drank cherry punch and splashed around in the unnatural blue water of his swimming pool till the sun began to set, casting a warm yellow light over the girl's freckled face and making her squint. They wrapped themselves in polka-dotted towels and watched a sappy black-and-white comedy in his basement living room.

He smiled when she smiled and laughed when she laughed; at this point it came naturally to him to pretend to feel. When they kissed, he tasted sneaked cigarettes and cherry punch on her lips and smelled the chlorine in her tangled hair. He listened to the discordant beats of their hearts. On that clammy July night, if only for a fleeting moment, the boy wished he could feel.

The rest of the summer was a blur to the boy. He spent most of the days outside in the scorching heat with the girl, into the late hours of the nights illuminated by the frowning cheese moon. The boy's anger continued to grow, his envy of everyone around him and his anger at the little metal tube in his head that had become a barrier between him and the rest of the world.

When he was seventeen the boy did something that broke his mother's glass heart. And all the little shards would scratch her, inside, every time she'd breathe.

His paper siblings had idolized him their whole life, and they denied and rationalized what he'd done in every possible way. In their eyes, he could do no wrong. They were too afraid to trust themselves, so they listened to the monsters who lived in the drawers, the monsters who told them to isolate themselves from the world and to let their paper bodies turn to pulp in their brother's bathtub of lukewarm lies.

The boy's mother had been battling the monsters for many years: she knew that once they got inside of you they could twist your intentions and your perception of everything around you. But her glass heart was broken now, and she no longer had the energy to continue to push them away. So she let them inside of her, she let them jump rope with her dreams and ping-pong with her deepest fears. She let them play tug-of-war with her sanity and feast on her fondest memories.

Now, no longer able to fall asleep to the *ping ping* of her beating glass heart, she stayed awake watching the stars from her terracotta balcony and crying dry tears to the pain of the glass in her arteries and to the pain of the monsters' games in her head and to the pain of her son's betrayal.

Knowing what he'd done, the girl with the bangs looked back on that first evening by the pool, the nights they'd spent on the roof together, the polaroids they'd taken in their striped swimsuits at the yellow beach house, the ephemeral memories

captured on the grainy ribbons of cassette-tape film, the words and the drunken cigarettes they'd shared at 2 am on the back porch.

But he went back to her tied her to his bedpost with a perfectly wound rope of apologies and twisted stories and lies so that she would trust him again.

She was gullible and naïve. In no time, she got sucked back into his fly trap of sticky words and crumb-cake promises. Still, he felt no remorse.

After weeks of not speaking to his mother, the boy surprised her in the garden, where she was singing her tulips to sleep in their soft soil bed. He began to weave his net of hollow promises and untruths, but he was not able to convince her as he had the girl. For his mother an apology was no reparo spell.

In this world, empty words don't fix smashed hearts, empty words don't relieve the pain of glass splinters stuck inside your veins and wedged in the cartilage between your bones.

Essays



Post-Mormons Are Leaving

DAYNA PATTERSON

Post-Mormons are leaving the circled-up pioneer wagons for wide open plains.

Post-Mormons are leaving crushed under ox-pulled wagon wheels, their jaws broken, lungs punctured.

They bear heavy family trees on their shoulders, the weight of eight generations, roots raking the earth. They carry their children's children on their shoulders, packs and handcarts filled with susurrate rust.

Post-Mormons are the new Ex-Mormons. Or rather, Post-Mormons are Ex-Mormons who've swallowed embers and live to say, *That was me.*

Ex-Mormons see shards. Post-Mormons see a new bottle, the old bottle standing by, other bottles near: glass flasks, liquor cylinders, spirits bottles. Some tapered. Some ribbed. Some squat and square.

Post, Latin for *after* / *behind*

Ex, Latin for *out of*

Post-Mormons, then, are the ticker tape *after* the parade, fallen and trampled, swept together for recycling.

Ex-Mormons, then, are fugitives fleeing *out of*, refugees from the bombed city, survivors of the kill zone, escapees.

Post-Mormons are leaving the harsh x (like hex) of the Ex-Mormons and gathering their sorrow into the O of Post.

Post-Mormons are leaving the walled garden's knowledge tree with its satisfying fruit to scavenge glacial soil's mysterious sustenance.

They are leaving in droves, hemorrhaging from wards and stakes and missions around the world.

They aren't leaving because they want to get intimate with evil or because someone swapped their cream for 1%.

They're leaving because conscience needles. Because better angels prick. Because the path where they find their feet nettles, tricked with weeds.

They're leaving bible bags. Missionary name tags. A stack of seminary manuals.

Post-Mormons hold an expired temple card. They remove their magic underwear, the magic gone, roll them and stack them like cords of white firewood, stow them in closets. Or shred them for cleaning cloths. Or burn them in a backyard bonfire.

Mine in a bedside bin. My husband's in the garage, boxed up.

Post-Mormons are teens in grownup bodies. They purple their hair. They ink their skin. They pierce noses and tongues and navels.

They are alcohol virgins. They hold a salt-rimmed margarita. A chilled sangria. A champagne flute.

They are coffee virgins. They drink their first latte. First iced cappuccino. First mocha with whip.

They are smoke virgins. Some puff their first cigarette. First cigar. First joint.

Their *Thou shalt not*s turn to *Why not*s or *Maybe not*s or *I'd rather not*s.

Some leave husband or wife and kids. Attempt open marriage. Come out.

My mother and her wife, married at the end of a long December.

Post-Mormons walk barefoot over the wreckage of faith crisis, exchange bleeding digits for free time. They take up cycling and watercolor. They take up fly fishing and poetry. They take up bartending and competitive Scrabble.

On Sunday, they hike or shop or sleep or clean house.

Sometimes they miss getting all dressed up and sitting snug in a family pew and singing congregational hymns and carols. The chapel's sanctuary a down quilt of quiet.

But those crazy angels with their hot poker.

Post-Mormons are leaving in the night, trailing red, across a frozen river.

Post-Mormons are leaving, a quail flock following overhead.

Post-Mormons are leaving, a pocketful of sunflower seeds to scatter as they go.

Destructive Acts on a Budget

MATT MUILENBURG

The charge: *Prohibited Destructive Acts of Graffiti*.

The court date and time: August 21, 8:30 a.m.

The fine: One-hundred-twenty-seven dollars

And fifty cents.

The summons peeked from the edge of the shirt pocket like a fugitive hiding in the bushes. I plucked it from the pocket and read the three paragraphs of boilerplate finger-wagging that the local government had mailed weeks earlier. They'd addressed the letter to *Dear* and the salutation included both *Thank you* and *Sincerely*, words that possess a connotation antithetical to the letter's objective. Twice I read what lay between the greeting and the send-off, trying to square the crime with the fine: one-hundred-thirty dollars, and for what? For a bathroom stall sonnet Shakespeare'd above the community two-ply? For *Roses are red, violets are blue, for a good time, trust Cthulhu?*

The fine seemed excessive, and I was happy to know I wouldn't have to pay it: neither the letter nor the fine was mine, nor, at that point, was the shirt from which I'd pulled the summons. I had visited a local consignment shop on my lunch break in search of something to wear for the rest of my workday. The pale gray chambray that I'd dumped a cup of coffee on that morning lay in a dark-roasted heap in the corner of the dressing room. The secondhand long-sleeve oxford that I'd hurriedly excavated from the clearance rack hung above it. The shirt fell well into the business casual parameters of my workplace and featured prominently one of my favorite colors: the most royal of purples. I choose the shirt for these reasons and also because I knew it would fit well enough. I was in a rush, the seconds ticking off my lunch break at increasing speed, and didn't have time for a fitting montage. I only ventured into the dressing room to put the shirt on.

So I did. With each button that I slipped through a tiny slit that some Sri Lankan seamstress had snipped in four-inch increments up the border of the oxford, I was claiming ownership:

Button 1: of the shirt's style, aged a few fashion cycles.

Button 2: of the small stain—bleach, not coffee—trapped inside the collar.

Button 3: of the sleeves that cuffed a quarter inch short of my wrists.

Button 4: of the charge to wash in warm before tumble drying on low.

Button 5: of the detergent that the shirt had been ghosted in months earlier and the laundry list of body sprays and deodorants and colognes its polyester and cotton fibers had absorbed throughout various fittings.

And Button 6: of the letter and its five creases, the three that were made by the consigner intersecting the two that were ruttled into the 8.5x11 by the government official who'd originally squeezed it into the envelope. The words and numbers captive inside those creases—each of them like bars on a prison cell—were now mine, even if the Prohibited Destructive Acts of Graffiti were not. I had not committed that crime and my rap sheet, officially, is blank. Missing from it are all of my hand-slap transgressions, all the minutia of a miscreant whose rebelliousness has only ever extended into the *tsk-tsk* rather than the time-served. I am hardly innocent. I've just never been caught by those who possess much more than a strict and subjective moral authority.

I finished buttoning the oxford and tucked it into my khakis, picked my coffee-stained button-up off the floor, and went to the checkout, knowing I could probably walk out of the store without paying if I so choose. But I didn't, of course.

I ripped off the tag and handed it to the cashier and asked her how much consigners profit from each sale. "I'm thinking of bringing some clothes in," I lied, wanting to know how much the consigner would receive from my purchase.

"Sixty-forty," she said. "We get sixty percent, the seller gets forty."

"Seems fair," I lied, again. I then moved to take the letter from the pocket, but stopped myself, realizing that giving the letter to the cashier would only subject the consigner to further embarrassment. I had the option of sparing him from the humiliation of having another person read about his destructive acts. Surely the cashier would have read the letter: primal curiosity dictates such a response. I worked as a journalist for seven years, churning out millions of syllables for tens of thousands of readers across the Midwest. While those readers paid anywhere from fifty cents to two dollars for the newspapers, a finite percentage shilled out coin for the news and sports on which I reported—the majority wanted to read two things: the police reports and the obituaries. There is something about the human condition that motivates us to seek out the miseries of those who are doggy-paddling, or maybe even drowning, in troubled waters. We need to know there are others skinning their knees on rock bottom, sucking on paper cuts sliced into their dirty fingers from subpoenas, from

warrants, from death certificates. From the Last Will and Testament of Moral Superiority. It lets us know that someone, maybe someone next door, has it worse.

It's why I read the letter three times before leaving the changing room, even though I was rapidly burning through my lunch break. It's also why I didn't want the cashier to see the letter—I wanted to keep the consigner's embarrassment to myself.

“Your total today is \$7.49,” the cashier said.

I swiped my debit card and took two dollars and fifteen cents of burden off the consigner's shoulders. It was the least I could do.

Author Profiles



Brittany Ackerman is a recent graduate of Florida Atlantic University's MFA program in Creative Writing. In 2016 she completed a residency at the Wellstone Center in the Redwoods, as well as the Mont Blanc Workshop in Chamonix, France under the instruction of Alan Heathcock. She recently attended the Methow Valley Workshop in May of 2017 under the leadership of Ross Gay. She is currently living in Los Angeles and working on a novel of fiction.

José Angel Araguz is a CantoMundo fellow and the author of seven chapbooks as well as the collections *Everything We Think We Hear* (Floricanto Press) and *Small Fires* (FutureCycle Press). His poems, prose, and reviews have appeared in *Crab Creek Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, *The Windward Review*, and *The Bind*. He runs the poetry blog *The Friday Influence* and teaches English and creative writing at Linfield College.

Tara Ballard and her husband have been living in the Middle East and West Africa for the last seven years. She holds an MFA from the University of Alaska, Anchorage, and her poems have been published or recently accepted by *Cutthroat*, *The Southampton Review*, *Salamander*, *HEArt Online*, *One*, and other literary magazines.

Jillian Bauman is from Florida and loves to photograph nature, people, and her roommate's cat. She enjoys singing, piano-playing, and her favorite fruit is cherries..

Bethany Reid blogs at <http://www.bethanyareid.com> and lives in Edmonds, Washington, with her husband and daughters.

Ace Boggess is author of the novel *A Song Without a Melody* (Hyperborea Publishing, 2016) and two books of poetry, most recently, *The Prisoners* (Brick Road Poetry Press, 2014). Forthcoming is a third poetry collection: *Ultra Deep Field* (Brick Road). His writing has appeared in *Harvard Review*, *Mid-American Review*, *RATTLE*, *River Styx*, *North Dakota Quarterly* and many other journals. He lives in Charleston, West Virginia.

Elisabeth Dahl is a Baltimore-based writer. Her shorter pieces for adults have been published by NPR.org, *Post Road*, *The Rumpus*, *Necessary Fiction*, and other outlets and journals, and she has received a grant in fiction from the Maryland State Arts Council. Her first book, an illustrated novel for children entitled *Genie Wishes*, was published by Abrams Books in 2013. She has a bachelor's in English from Johns Hopkins and a master's in English from Georgetown.

John Dudek is a recent graduate of the MFA program at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. His work has appeared in *The Journal* and elsewhere.

Alejandro Escudé, originally from Córdoba, is an Argentinean-American poet and high school English teacher in Los Angeles. His manuscript, "My Earthbound Eye" was the winner of the 2012 Sacramento Poetry Center Award and published in September 2013. He received a master's degree in creative writing from UC Davis and, among other journals, his poems have appeared in *Phoebe*, *Poet Lore*, and *Rattle*. In his spare time, he enjoys birding throughout the many natural parks in Southern California.

Brian Fanelli is the author of two poetry collections, *Waiting for the Dead to Speak* (NYQ Books), winner of the 2017 Devil's Kitchen Poetry Prize, and *All That Remains* (Unbound Content), as well as the chapbook *Front Man* (Big Table Publishing). His poetry, essays, and book reviews have been published by *The Los Angeles Times*, *World Literature Today*, *Main Street Rag*, *The Paterson Literary Review*, *Two Hawks Quarterly*, *Portland Review*, and elsewhere. He has an M.F.A. from Wilkes University and a Ph.D. from SUNY Binghamton University. Currently, he teaches at Lackawanna College in Pennsylvania.

Anna Harris-Parker's poems have appeared in *Cellpoems*, *Mikrokosmos*, and *Poetry for the Masses*. She is an Assistant Professor of English at Augusta University, where she also advises *Sand Hills Literary Magazine*, and directs Writers Weekend at Summerville.

M.A.H. Hinton grew up in Montana and lives in Minnesota. His publications include poetry in *Spitball*, *Temenos*, *GFT*, *West Texas Literary Review*, *Aji*, *Into the Void*, *Blue Heron Review*, and *Emerald Coast Review*. He has also published several Western short stories.

Sandra Hosking is a professional editor, writer and playwright based in Spokane, WA, USA. Publishing credits include *The Spokesman-Review*, *Journal of Business*, *Glass International*, *Inland NW Homes & Lifestyles*, *Down to Earth Northwest*, *Insight for Playwrights*, *Literary Salt*, *Redactions* and the *Midwest Book Review*. Photography recently appeared in *3 Elements Review* and *Joey*. Hosking holds an M.F.A. in theatre/playwriting from the University of Idaho and an M.F.A. in creative writing from Eastern Washington University.

Betsy Johnson-Miller's work has appeared in *Alaska Quarterly Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Boulevard*, *AGNI* (online), *North American Review*, and *Poet Lore*.

Richard Jones received an MA from the University of Virginia and an MFA from Vermont College. Jones's first collection of poetry, *Country of Air* (1986), won the Posner Award from the Council for Wisconsin Writers. He has since published several additional collections, including *The Correct Spelling & Exact Meaning* (2009), *Apropos of Nothing* (2006), and *The Blessing: New and Selected Poems* (2000), which won the Midland Authors Award. Jones has received the Coordinating Council of Literary Magazines' Editors Award for his work editing the literary journal *Poetry East*. He has also edited the anthologies *Poetry and Politics* (1985) and *Of Solitude and Silence: Writings on Robert Bly* (1981), which he co-edited with Kate Daniels. His own poetry appears in the anthologies *Poetry 180* (2003, ed. Billy Collins) and *Good Poems* (2003, ed. Garrison Keillor). Jones has also produced a CD on the art of poetry, entitled *Body and Soul*. His website is <http://www.richardjonespoetry.com>.

Erren Geraud Kelly received a B.A. in English-Creative Writing from Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge. He loves to read and travel, having visited 45 states, Canada, and Europe. The themes in his writings vary, but he has always had a soft spot for subjects and people who are not in the mainstream. But he never limits himself to anything, and always tries to keep an open mind.

Diego Luis took these photos on travels across the world from New England to Spain to China. As a graduate student, photography is a form of creative expression that forces him to escape the deep confines of libraries and archives and see the world in all its complexity and grandeur.

Matt Muilenburg teaches at the University of Dubuque. His prose has been featured in *Southern Humanities Review*, *Storm Cellar*, *Superstition Review*, *3Elements Review*, *South85 Journal*, and others. Matt holds an MFA from Wichita State University and lives in Iowa near the Field of Dreams movie site.

Kemal Onor completed this work during his graduate studies at Pine Manor College, under the guidance of faculty member Jedediah Berry. He also holds a BFA in writing from Johnson State College, where he worked closely with Jensen Beach.

Dayna Patterson is a former Managing Editor of Bellingham Review. She is also Poetry Editor for *Exponent II Magazine* and Founding Editor-in-Chief of *Psalter & Lyre*. Her poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in *The Fourth River*, *Hotel Amerika*, *The Journal of American Poetry*, *Literary Mama*, *North American Review*, *Sugar House Review*, *Weave*, and others.

Cree Pettaway is a first year MFA student at Louisiana State University. Her most recent work of fiction, "Why We're Not Married," is set to appear in the inaugural issue of *Oyster River Pages* in August.

JC Reilly writes across genres and has received Pushcart and Wigleaf nominations for her work. She serves as the Managing Editor of the *Atlanta Review* and has pieces published or forthcoming in *POEM*, *The Absurdist*, *Picaron Poetry*, *Hawai'i Pacific Review*, *Imperfect Fiction*, the *Arkansas Review*, and *Rabbit: a Journal of Nonfiction Poetry*. When she isn't writing, she plays tennis or works on improving her Italian.

Dale Ritterbusch is the author of two collections of poetry and an eleven-time Pushcart nominee. He recently retired as a Professor of English at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater and twice served as Distinguished Visiting Professor at the United States Air Force Academy.

Terese Robison, a Barnard College alumna, has been an editor, translator, interpreter, and tutor/mentor for youth on probation. She taught writing at Gateway Community College in New Haven before moving to Brooklyn, where she works as a writing consultant at Touro College. Her poetry has appeared in *Hiram Review*, *Bitterroot*, and three anthologies compiled from contest awards. Her short fiction has appeared in *Tahoma Literary Review*, *Life in 10 Minutes*, *Monkeybicycle*, *Mexico This Month*, and elsewhere. A collection of her stories was developed in postgraduate study with Janet Burroway at FSU, as well as at UCLA and SCSU. She is also writing a book on idioms and metaphors in English speech.

Zack Rogow is the author, editor, or translator of twenty books or plays. His eighth book of poems, *Talking with the Radio: poems inspired by jazz and popular music*, was published by Kattywompus Press. He is also writing a series of plays about authors, incorporating their

writing into the action. The most recent of these, *Colette Uncensored*, had its first staged reading at the Millennium Stage of the Kennedy Center in Washington DC in 2015 and ran for five months at The Marsh in San Francisco and Berkeley in 2016. His blog, Advice for Writers, has 200 posts on topics of interest to writers. He currently teaches in the low-residency MFA in writing program at the University of Alaska Anchorage and serves as a contributing editor of *Catamaran Literary Reader*. You can find Zack online at <http://www.zackrogow.com>.

Isabella Ronchetti is a young artist and writer originally from San Francisco, California. She spent a few years studying in Florence Italy, and currently is living in Virginia. She enjoys spending her free time reading psychology books, swimming, and people watching.

Kristen Vander-Plas was raised in Lubbock, Texas. She graduated from Texas Tech University School of Law and began experimenting with photography right out of law school. She enjoys capturing the beauty of West Texas landscapes. Kristen practices law in Lubbock.

Maura Way, originally from Washington, DC, currently lives in North Carolina. Her poems have appeared in *Drunken Boat*, *Verse*, *DIAGRAM*, *Beloit Poetry Journal*, and *The Chattahoochee Review*. Her first collection, *Another Bungalow*, is forthcoming from Press 53. She has been a schoolteacher for twenty years.

Anna Lowe Weber, originally from Louisiana, currently lives in Huntsville, Alabama, where she teaches creative writing at the University of Alabama in Huntsville. Her work has appeared in the *Iowa Review*, *Colorado Review*, *Rattle*, *Salamander*, and *Ninth Letter*, among other journals. Her chapbook, *Blessings for the Unborn*, is from Finishing Line Press.

John Sibley Williams is the editor of two Northwest poetry anthologies and the author of nine collections, including *Disinheritance and Controlled Hallucinations*. A seven-time Pushcart nominee, John is the winner of numerous awards, including the Philip Booth Award, American Literary Review Poetry Contest, Nancy D. Hargrove Editors' Prize, Confrontation Poetry Prize, and Vallum Award for Poetry. He serves as editor of *The Inflectionist Review* and works as a literary agent. Previous publishing credits include: *The Yale Review*, *Midwest Quarterly*, *Sycamore Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, *The Massachusetts Review*, *Poet Lore*, *Saranac Review*, *Atlanta Review*, *Arts & Letters*, *Columbia Poetry Review*, *Mid-American Review*, *Poetry Northwest*, *Third Coast*, and various anthologies. He lives in Portland, Oregon.