

ROCINANTE: A JOURNAL OF ART AND LITERATURE



ROCINANTE

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Rocinante is a student publication with the intent of supporting and promoting the creative capabilities and talents of the Warner Pacific College community. Initially conceived as a student project for Dr. Pamela Plimpton's Creative Writing class in 2001, *Rocinante* has become the premiere venue for the college's artistic expression.

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Questions should be directed to WPRocinante@gmail.com.

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“THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT CREATIVITY IS THE MOST IMPORTANT HUMAN
RESOURCE OF ALL. WITHOUT CREATIVITY, THERE WOULD BE NO PROGRESS, AND WE
WOULD BE FOREVER REPEATING THE SAME PATTERNS.” — EDWARD DE BONO



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letter from the editor

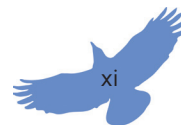


How often can a group of students from completely different backgrounds and opinions form a strong unit and work together to put such a large project together? This year, a talented group of undergraduate students created the book currently in your hands. I am proud of each individual who worked tirelessly on this year's edition of *Rocinante: A Journal of Art and Literature*.

Rocinante was the name of Don Quixote's steed in Miguel Cervantes' novel, written in the early 1600s. Before, Rocinante was nothing more than a pack horse living out his last few worthless years in an old barn. When Don Quixote elected this horse instead of another, Rocinante became more than he could have ever hoped to become.

When thinking of a knight, most people would never think of a knight's horse, but instead would imagine a powerful man adorned in armor that shines royally, bringing all who see him to an absolute awe. But what is a knight without his mount? As the Warner Pacific Knights, we are a proud group who put all of our trust in those knights who lead us to victory time and time again. Underneath our athletic armor lies a school immersed in art, illustrated in this wonderful journal. What drives our passions? Could it be that overlooked steed? As you read through *Rocinante*, remember the powerful driving force of our magnificent mount here at Warner Pacific College.

— Erin Flynn, Editor-in-Chief





Autumn Tree



by Ruth Reno

The breath of the wind gives
life to the tree stirring her colored
leaves to a whispered rustle like the gown
on a princess whirling at the autumn dance,
the last dance of the season, foreshadowing
end to celebration.

Her leaves fall off like clothing
in mounds of ambers, reds and oranges.
No longer will her gilded gown twirl
in the embrace of the strong wind
and glimmer in fading sunlight.
All has ended with the stroke of the hour
leaving crinkled remnants of her seasoned finery.

Colorless and naked she stands,
cold slapping against her branched brows.
Her life blood dormant, she waits,
waits for her season to come again.





“Ocean Silk” by Jennifer Kilm

The Ocean is Calling Me



by Benjamin Connor Irwin

The sand is churning, damp, and soft beneath my feet. This beach stretches on for miles, and lying on its golden grains are a million discarded, broken things. I see picked-apart shells and wayfaring driftwood. I see kelp, fish skeletons, broken glass baubles washed up from Japan. This beach of trash and treasures stretches on for miles as far as the eye can see. This collector of things today has collected me, as broken a thing as any it has seen. At my back there are cliffs, lofty and strong. They cradle me and this beach safe in their arms.

Before me the ocean roars, her voice never tiring. She stretches on and on, the never-ending sea. She shifts and she rolls, always

changing, always the same. How endless are her dark depths, her boundless complexities? She is beautiful, mysterious, moody, treacherous and seductive as any lover. I smell her briny perfume, I hear the whisper of her crashing waves in my ear. Her sheets of water creep up this beach, licking my toes playfully before lapsing back, inviting me to come with her. I hear her sirens calling me, inviting me to her depths. I long for her adventure, the wild throes of her turbulent love. Many men have stood on this beach before, though their footprints she has washed away. She has taken many men down to her bed in the crushing deep. Many have gone out to her and never returned.



With tentative step I answer her call. I feel the water rushing about my ankles. The waves roar hungrily, their white crests crash against the monolithic rocks of these Oregon shallows. They have stood against the siege of these pounding waves since long before you or me:

unyielding, unfaltering. The ocean is calling me. I am licking my lips as I follow the sway of her hips. I know I am not as strong as these righteous rocks, I know that I cannot abstain. The water is to my shoulders now. The ocean is calling me. There can be no turning back.



“Clove Hitch” by Ben Smith



The Raven's Rhyme: a Tribute to Poe



by Kyler Scott-Subsits

FOR MY INSPIRATION IN WRITING: POE, KING AND LOVECRAFT

Come now kids
And listen closely to me
Snuggle close and drink red rum
In the darkness you will find yourself
Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."

Once upon a midnight dreary
While I kicked it weak and weary
Pounding in the coffin nail
I got from the corner store
While I faded, nearly napping
Suddenly there came a tapping
As of someone bloody rapping
Knockin' at my 'partment door
"Tis some f—er," I just grumbled,
"Knockin' on my 'partment door—
Only this and nothing more."
Only this and nothing more.

Ah, distinctly I remember,
It was in the black December
And each every dying cinder
Lost in ash upon my floor
Eagerly I wished the morrow;
Vainly I had sought to borrow
From my drugs relief from sorrow
Sorrow for my lost Lenore
For my perfect love's great beauty
Whom the devil took—Lenore
Nameless here for evermore.
Nameless here for evermore.

And the silken sad uncertain
Rustling of each purple curtain
Thrilled me—filled me with
Monstrous horrors dreamt before
Frozen I sat, fag still smoking
Breath stood still, and invoking
“Tis some f—er rapping
At my 'partment door.
Some late bum knocking
At my 'partment door.
That it is, and nothing more.”
That it is, and nothing more.

Not wishing to sit and ponder
And dashing to the door on yonder
“Hey,” I said. “Sorry for my timing
I'm very slow, sick and sore,
I was just in my room sleeping
And you just came here a creeping
Let's just hope you weren't a peeping
Creeping at my 'partment door.
And I just didn't hear ya.”
Here I opened my door
Darkness there, and nothing more.



Back into my 'partment turning
Mind 'n' soul inside me burning
Soon again I heard the tapping
Even louder than before:
"Stop," I said, unto myself
As I descended Hell itself
And falling over my room's clutter
From my window with flutter
In stepped a stately Raven
Of the saintly days of yore.
Perched, and sat, and nothing more.
Perched, and sat, and nothing more.

Images burst open screaming
In my mind unrelenting
I saw Castle Rock, Kings World
A horror I could not ignore
A tower loomed and Cujo roared
In Salem's lot Christine was stored
Then the mist rolled from next door.
I'd seen King's Crew work before,
But not with Wilkes and White
Pain just ruled, and safety gone for
Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."
Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."

I sprinted for the other room
The smell of rot I could assume
Was coming from my bleeding arm
An injury I could not afford
The Dunwich horror stirred beneath me
The fear of Innsmouth just repeating
Called by Cthulhu beneath the sea
Lovecraft madness I once adored
But Rats in Walls was next to nothing
For the Raven wanted more
Then the bird said, "Nevermore."
Then the bird said, "Nevermore."
Then the bird said, "Nevermore."

Fell upon the curtain screaming
The Pendulum just kept on swinging
Screaming, I feared Hop-Frog's Jest
Or the fate of poor Vlademar
Amontillado could not save me
And like the Masque: Catastrophe
Lenore another Annabel Lee
The Heart's pounding louder than before
I'm not mad—
Stared down the bird of yore
Meant in croaking, "Nevermore."
Meant in croaking, "Nevermore."



I miss Lenore; My Annabel Lee
Taken by angels from me
Harbinger of Death
Blocks my door,
Blocks my door.
What more do you want my evil Prophet
The cold dark floor; it just won't stop it
It turns into my deathly coffin
Please tell me who you are
More shit than dead at Dawn
Please speak now, tell me more
Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."
Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."

And the Raven, never flitting
Still is sitting, still is sitting
On my lifeless body
Near my 'partment door.
And his eyes have all the seeming
Of a demon's that is dreaming
And the lamp-light o'er him streaming
Throws his shadow on the floor
And my soul from that shadow
That lies floating on the floor
Shall be lifted—NEVERMORE!
Shall be lifted—NEVERMORE!
Shall be lifted—NEVERMORE!



“Portland vs Poe” by Timothy Jackson



As White as Black can be is not Black at all; it's Fear of the Unknown



by Jordan Garfield

The lines are drawn
The I's are dotted
The T's are crossed
And all equality is lost

There's no turning back now that the impression is made
The bar is set for the rest
We the takers are the bond breakers
The ones who industrialize slaves

Tears are full of pain
Not one was felt
Just dried up by the flames
A handful of crystals for an ocean of waning

Chained into eternity
Feeling the wash of yearning
The only way to freedom
Oh Damascus, oh redemption

Amazing grace the world is lost
Will we see the bar raised?
Are there voices just loud enough for a single song?
Or is there a voice that speaks in place?

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound
The sound of chanting
Wretches with new hearts that found
A first and a last took the bow

More than fear but truth
A direction that led my heart
Darkness, the name that led me into
But gracefully carried me out

A messenger
A friend
I suppose a savior
Nonetheless a slave

We're here together and in the end
We can say we lived rightfully
And as many that were lost for sin
Many more will live to share and begin again

2 million lay rest a 'bottom Atlantic
for them we make a bond
To not repeat again the chains of hate
But the chains of love



The Eulogy



by Shawna Downes

as the new day dawns I see the break
of yellow morning bursting forth to dull the ache
of wooden bones, cracked and old
and kindle fire in a heart grown cold
while sleepers dream and I alone awake

as birds in winter their siren songs forsake
the waking dreamer breathes alone and silence makes
the grey walls crack with sins still untold
as the new day dawns

and golden beams ripple over the lake
and stream into my eyes, seeking to slake
the powerful thirst of a soul on hold
breathing in burning ashes of sorrows sold
and pity bought and lost in the wake
as the new day dawns



“Carrick Bend” by Ben Smith



Coal Train



by Kristen Budd

Tonight the railroad tracks were tempting me—
Their icy metal was begging the old tires of my car
To be held and not slip away.
And when the next train makes its way around
I can feel the ground shake,
Feel my bones break
Just a little bit more
Every time you walk away.

I've given years away trying to get you to
Fill me with more than just coal,
Stop shaking me around like the string of your kite—
As you abandoned everything beautiful.
I knew that one day you'd just let go;
Whether or not I wanted to recognize it.
You chase bells and whistles and clouds of
Smoke that listlessly disappear
Too blind to stop and see that everything
You look for is right here.

Don't you know that coal is meant to be
Refined until the sweat of it's
Dirty spine ruptures into a flawless gem.
Too much time does not exist
But still, I waited for your hand to fabricate me
Into what I was supposed to be,
Carve me like a chiseled piece of wood
Plant me in the forest
And push me to keep going.
Press me so hard against your body
So I couldn't tell where my skin ceased and yours began
And let our skeletons create broken pieces
Of art dangling against the walls of one another.

I've been waiting for a long time now
And I've watched my hopes
Smear into puddles under moonlight
And leave ice on the underbelly of my car
Only to send me racing to the railroad once more

My father told me a story once about
A train that was tossed
Into the deepest part of the river
And never was found.
Every now and then I dip my toes
Into the murky water and wonder if there had been
People on that train.
Wonder what a mother's last words were
As they purged themselves into
The ears of her child the moment
A realization crashed into her.
She was sinking somewhere they would never be found.
Or the lonely business man as pounding water
Shrouded his face and left him blind
Before he even got to blink one last time.



Even the little girl's face as
She exclaimed "I love you" because she promised
Herself those words would
Be her last even if she had no one to
Say them to.
Maybe it's simply a coal train
And that's why the water is so gloomy—
Years of black residue skulk to the surface
Whispering that there's things we can't always see

I wonder if you are the reason
I see darkness in broad daylight—
Your residue fuming around me to
Remind me that there are things we can't always love.
It may be me aching for you
Only when I can't have you
Dreaming of your lips when they belong to someone else
Painting myself upon canvas in hopes you might think I'm
More beautiful that way.
The nights when I left the oven on and candles burning
Hoping to light a flame so we might actually
Feel something together again.

I'm not sure when we ceased to think alike
I can't put a date on the day you began
Loving us so little and hating me so much.
The coals I've collected are worthless now,
And the gun in your hand looks like flag when you
Flaunt it in my face.
A bullet from you would be better than
Helplessly watching you hop a train
And disappear one more f—ing time

So shoot.

Closing Distances



by Rosemary Baylee

I would swear I'm not
Confused anymore, if only I wasn't so unsure
'Cause now that I'm not yearning,
I feel much more aware of every glance,
Dark eyes,
Startled, contact, closing distance in an instance
Then again, it's gone

I daren't hope it's not
My imagining, but every time we sing, I think
Peripherally of an old dream,
And my conscience brings me home again,
Back down
To earth, then music lifts me to the brink, unspoken
Hopes, but shattered, songs end



I would swear I'm not
Too bold anymore, if only I wasn't so aware—
Each second in the backstage pass
We close the distance, warmth on my back,
Voice soft,
Startled, breathes across my ear, I freeze there,
Taking it all in

I daren't hope it's right—
Unwise dreams only lead to more chaotic thought,
Unready and unsteady,
And my conscience bids me wait for Him,
Brown eyes
Can wait, and the closing of the distances
Is enough for now



“Sometimes, We’re Cars” by Simeon Jacob



Other



by Amy Vaught

When painting on a canvas,
Black and white make grey.
It seems ironic, then, that the genetic paintbrush,
Blending black and white, would create me.

The lucky thing about Grey is that it has a name,
It is natural, it can be identified.
Grey can be a cloudy sky, a rainy day, or a calm sea.
'Me' is a hybrid that never appears anywhere else in nature.

Grey can be tempered steel, majestic iron, or deadly mercury,
Grey can be protective armour or threatening weaponry,
'Me' can only look wrong
To most of the known world.

Grey is the mighty stone
That built the modern world.
'Me' mirrors the dirt cast to the side
Of the uniform, grey stone roads.

Grey is the graphite and lead that answers the questions,
The mark that signifies an answer known.
'Me' is that empty 'other' bubble that Grey,
In my hand, is loath to fill in.

Oh, why can't I be Grey?



To Be True Tongued



by Sarah McCarty

AN EXCERPT

Captain Vrudik looked about him, squinting against the harsh sunlight. He spat out the taste that filled his mouth; wet dirt mingled with blood. A tooth had been knocked out. The muscles in his arms and legs tremored. He willed them to steady. He lifted his sword. He stood. Though he still did not know what had knocked him flat; he found that he was unhurt.

It's over... Who won? thought Vrudik. He began to walk forward though his mind was not settled enough to inform him what action to take. He knew only that movement was imperative.

There were dead men from both camps, and one black scaly lump that stretched its tail from the woods to the river's edge and sprawled near the foot of the mountain. One arrow perforated wing splayed widely. It was a sickly yellow with gray mold spots beginning to creep over like an autumn leaf curled, crisp, and fallen. With an aching in his heart, he realized that they had not gained any ground.

But they retreated, so neither side took ground... small comforts. I suppose the white teeth from both sides can declare it a victory. Vrudik laughed bitterly from a dry throat.

A group of stretcher-bearers were already about their work. Vrudik knelt by one soldier he did not recognize. His torn insignia indicated that he was from another regiment of the Legan Army. Placing two fingers on the man's neck, he found no pulse, though the man was not yet cold. Icy fear lumped itself in Vrudik's stomach. Men all around him were dying, too many to save. He began to help the stretcher-bearers by finding the living among the dead.

Unaccounted time passed like the smoke, which wafted past in from the scorched earth to his left about a hundred yards away. The dragons had done it. Never before had the dragons used their power of fire, but at this battle, as the flying hoard had retreated, one solitary saffron colored dragon doubled back and razed a whole company with his scorching breath. Vrudik stared at the charred bones and bits of metal—once fine warriors. He looked from ash heap to ash heap; none of the men in that group had survived. This revelation set heavily upon his breathing. The smell of the dissipating smoke filled his nostrils. It was like no other smoke he had encountered. Half like that from a chimney but with a cleaner, redder scent, a hint of sulfur and of iron. Vrudik turned away and surveyed the rest of the field. The evergreen trees at the foot of the mountains were still intact. Vrudik could hear them as they made their retreat deep into those impenetrable woods. The evergreen

sentries had ever been a great barrier between the Legan and the Mountain Guard.

I do not understand those men of the hills who defend the dragons. Why fight for such monsters, he wondered. Their feelings for their own kind are stunted. They side instead with their brutish neighbors. Perhaps they are under duress from their neighbors to fight. I do not care. I am loath to fight men. Though these horrid creatures tear us apart, I have no qualms in killing them.

Vrudik commanded the stretcher-bearers to hurry about their work. Though his body ached from extreme fatigue, he felt a need to keep moving. What he had witnessed still pulsed through him, robbing his spirit of rest.

“Corporal, this one's alive, quick!” He said to the nearest medic. Vrudik went from one body to another. Too many dear faces were growing cold.

Vrudik found himself near an officer who had been picked up by the dragon's claw. The officer's right leg was limp, crushed and lying at an impossible angle. His right eye was gone. Three claw marks, great gashes, extended from his face well past his right ear. Vrudik was startled to find faint life in him still. Vrudik was tearing his shirttail to tie a tourniquet about the officer's leg when recognition hit. It

was the unscathed half of the face. There was the smooth pale handsome set of features. The bloody, wet blond curls, his half opened left blue eye belonged to only one man. It was the face of Lieutenant Edleek. Vrudik could hear in his head this man's voice earlier that morning.

“What ails you Captain Merky, is it your crooked teeth again or your coward's belly? Pity you're only half Leganian. Our bellies are like iron with courage.” When Vrudik had attempted to regain order from him and the men listening, Eldeek had added, “Yes lads, humor the dirt-face, makes him feel like he's a captain or something.”

This face, this man now dying, had given him endless grief. It would have been easier if it had been about a flaw in Vrudik himself. He could have changed the flaw. Though insults about Vrudik's personal flaws had not escaped Edleek's notice, it was not they that he had harped on. It was Vrudik's foreign mother that had most been the topic most frequented for his humiliation.

It was not as if Vrudik had never suffered unjust persecution for his Basudin mother before. Plenty of people had slighted him and his mother for their darker complexions and southern ways. They had slighted his native father for his foolish choice in a wife. Never

mind that his mother had come from one of the most prominent families in the most prosperous tribe in Basuda. No ignorant fool ever cared about that. This particular Legan, prig had singled him out in a way not even the school boys had.

Vrudik stared at this face that had dealt him such prejudice. The man was dying. He was so near death now that no other person would know if Vrudik simply left him there. There was most likely no cure for the man.

In his mind Vrudik suddenly saw another face. This was not so repugnant to him. He recalled when he had been in the shadows, he was a school boy of eight then. The two Legan classmates who had berated him the most, had made him so frightened of going his usual way home that he had chosen the road through the third district's east end. He had been told not to go there before by his mother but on this day the bullies' fists had meant much more to him than his mother's warnings.

Soon he had found out why his mother had cautioned him away from that section of the city. Two ruffians had followed him then a third had joined relentlessly blocking his way to the gate. An old man with only two front teeth had yelled at him,

“Get out merk-lad! Get out before they skin you!”

Vrudik ran but only to find himself followed and cut off wherever he went. These were no longer boys his own age he was against, these were men with brawny arms and acid gazes. Vrudik began to believe that he really would be skinned alive as some of the gossips had reported to him. Vrudik could feel the hair prickle on his spine, his fingers were cold. The memory was so vivid he could almost smell the attacker’s breath, and the stench of the filth in that alley as he sat there on the battlefield. He had tried to climb up the wall and had fallen into the rotting refuse. He heard the feet of his attackers close in around him. He felt their boots planting in the stone street.

It was then that it happened. A voice had spoken through the electric silence. Vrudik could not remember what the man had said only that the voice had sounded like a liquid golden waterfall that emanated with the strength of star-rays. He had stood up after a moment because he had heard the boots clattering away. When Vrudik looked up at the man there was nothing remarkable about him, except for his eyes. The man’s eyes were so intensely brown, and captivating that they almost shone. Vrudik, who had been paralyzed when his enemies surrounded him, now trembled. This

was a different kind of fear, one that somehow warmed his soul.

“The Emperor sent you didn’t he?” Vrudik had asked.

The man had nodded smiling slightly, as he led Vrudik home. When Vrudik had turned back to thank the man he caught a glimpse of the man’s smile and then the man was not there. It was not like lightning, nor a dissipating smoke. The man simply was not there anymore., yet Vrudik somehow felt that he was still there. Vrudik’s mother had told him it was an Air Immortal, a servant of the Emperor. This man had never been visible to Vrudik again, but he had felt the Immortal’s presence often.

Somehow now that man’s face was in his mind. He felt it would be a betrayal of the Emperor, a betrayal of his friend, to leave his enemy to die. He knew his mother would have told him to “remember the Book” and be strong, as she always had.

But this was beyond his mother. This was the lieutenant that had undercut his authority. Many of the corpses about them now might have been breathing still had this aristocrat’s son followed orders. Yet he was still alive, and he was still one of Vrudik’s men.

Then a fleeting shadow passed through Vrudik's thoughts.

If I save him now he will most likely still die. I could prolong his death—sweeten the revenge—while the world calls me heroic. Vrudik shook his head vehemently like a cat sneezing. Time slipped out of Vrudik's control like this Edleek's life. He needed to act immediately, but his heart yanked him in twain. *Yes, I will do it,* he thought, ripping another piece of cloth from his shirt and covering a piece of the open face. *It is right to save a life, and if I do it for the wrong reasons no one will know.* The blood seemed to be congealed already on his face, which seemed odd since the color had not browned. The texture was rubbery as though some filmy invisible liquid were coating over that part of Edleek's features. Vrudik did not pay any attention to that fact but wrapped his head in the cloth. Then he proceeded to wrap his arm where great gashes had left holes from flailing against the dragon's teeth, Vrudik thought, remembering how Edleek had been grabbed first by the dragons talons, then tossed in mid air into the dragon's mouth, and dangled there by his leg. Edleek moaned as Vrudik lifted the bent arm slightly to wrap it. Something inside Vrudik's gut ate that sound with dark enjoyment.

He felt a hollow dry fist squeezing his liver. There came the rushing darkness pressing

in upon his spirit. *How can I do this? Vrudik thought. This is not about my mother. But it is not about me either. This is a creature of the Emperor, like me. How can I claim him as my dearest friend and willfully grieve him? How can I stand here and grieve my master in this way? I might as well kill the man. I have already done so six times while just sitting here, in my heart. What is the difference?*

He willed himself to compassion. It was no use. His soul was ice toward this man.

Vrudik hesitated. He rose.

He walked away, wiping his bloody hands on his torn shirt. He set his jaw. He walked a little taller.

“Captain Vrudik, Sir.”

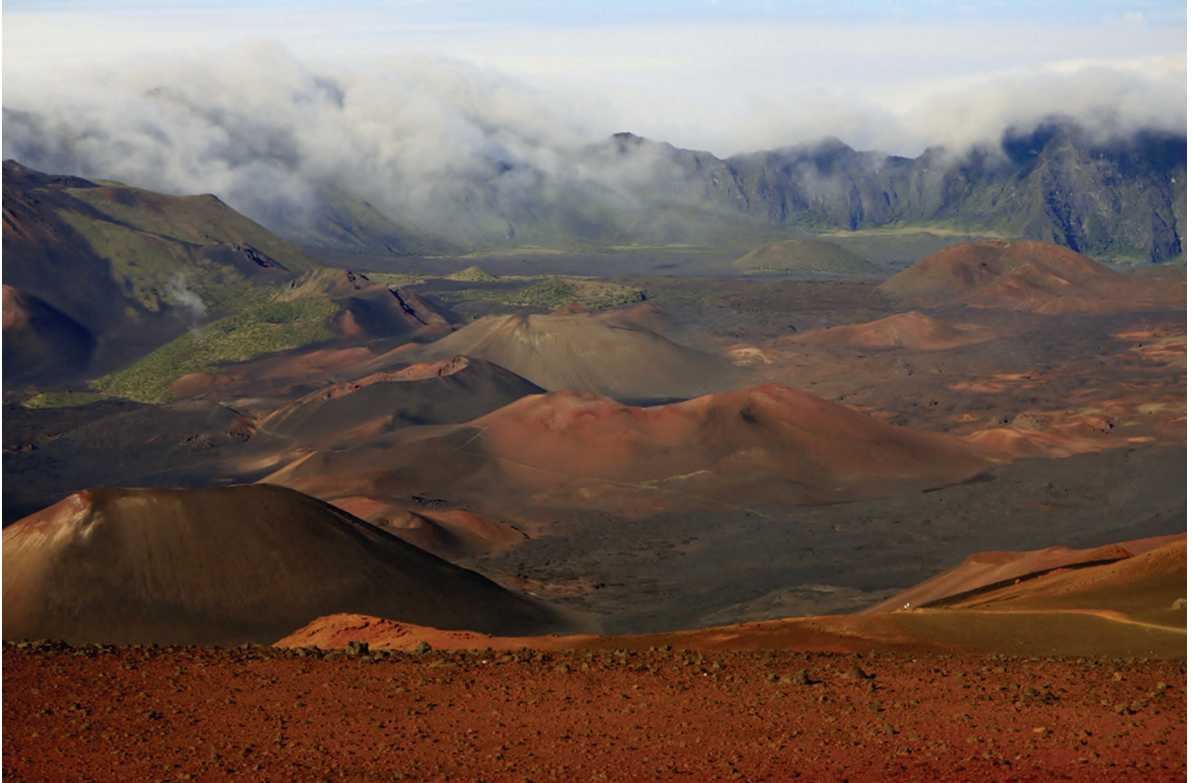
“What,” said Vrudik. The medic's shoulders slumped. His eyes were numb.

“Is that one dead Sir?” He indicated the lieutenant.

Vrudik stared at the medic.

“Sir?”

“No, get him a litter. Move!”



“Majestic Earth Tones” by Jennifer Kilm



Great Warrior River



by Erin Flynn

Running a well-known yet foreign path, she sets out. Trees fly by on both sides and her feet skim over rocks long ago smoothed by her ancestors trodden trail. Wind sends sweet kisses and birds sing her a love song as she glides past. For years she's fought the warring element of earth, yet time and time again her sweet strength proved victorious. Her unbeatable force slowly wore away the one thing trying to restrict her boundaries. When he tries to squeeze, she expands; when he pulls away, she continues to push. He tried to take control but she ended up reforming his entire being.



“Cutting a Path” by Erin Flynn



Your Matter Stories



by Arthur Kelly

Embodied, enfleshed, solid
matter. I am perhaps more than
but not less than and my matter
stories and is storied.

O the stories my matter could tell
of yearnings physical and spiritual;
a fleshy response to life's eager demand
of lusts and risks and high calling

Explosive matter
the adolescent guilt felt like hand clasped
on arm, caught, and the pliable hardness
of flesh yielding and resisting and
aching. A moat around my soul—beware:
no swimming allowed.

Still, in water, tanned,
nearly naked body, against the tide, swimming
as if this is the place I belong.
body wet, mouth salty, eyes red, felt in
bare feet on hot sand

Now, of soft holding familiar hands. With each other.
Holding near half century of storied matter. Of births and
of deaths. Of yearning for silence and peace—
O the storied silence.

Then, the ache of feet—the miles they walk
connect with the ache of the soul and
the miles it walks—blisters.

These senses—
Sight, touch, sound, smell, this nose—
this nose knows stories are storied in smell
storied in touch
storied in sounds

The aroma of shellacked pews
Wednesday nights, knees knowing
the story of prayer on the soft
fir floors of the Santa Ana First Only Church of God,
nose buried in the L of pew,
the proximity of bodies—mother and father; of
Brother Deck and Sister Peterman—the
earnest beseeching of their prayers—
this nose re-members
all.



My eyes re-member the near dark of coffee house and
my ears tell of screech of ancient espresso, poet in the corner,
railing against meaning—all are runed in this matter
all told, narrated, re-created, here re-membered.

This sharp nose with time shattering power carries
piercing memory of eucalyptus and pepper
tree, carries me back to storied place and time
and specific mattered story of firm-fleshed youth in spite
of the sagging now of flesh and the wrinkles of my face—
all eloquent with story; my matter stories.

Zyktreploy Birds



by J. Willows

In times of darkness when all hope seems dead
and evil musings come into my head
there is one dream that brings me some joy
and it is of a Zyktreploy.

Beyond the valley that's filled with ooze
and past where the great Snorjpat's snooze
nearby the forest there dwell many herds
and among them are the Zyktreploy birds.

These birds are like horses with mighty wings
but they do the most terrible things.
Strangers that come near are known to die
at the feet of these horses who fly.

I came to this land of my fantasy today
and was smitten by a Zyktreploy's sweet neigh.
I wanted to capture one for myself
A beautiful creature as a sign of wealth.



I ventured near a curious young bird
And he squealed in terror as I dragged him from his herd.
I was quickly surrounded by these horses that fly
and I thought it was now my turn to die.

But just before the first painful blow
it suddenly began to randomly snow.
Now every evening—as everyone knows
nearby the forest it irregularly snows.

And in this strange land of my fantasy's eye
that snow is fatal to the horses that fly.
They tried to escape but were frozen as stone
A morbid monument, a power overthrown.

Now when you go past the valley that's filled with ooze
and beyond where the great Snorjpat's snooze
nearby the forest where dwell great herds
there no longer live any Zyktreploy birds.

The horses that fly will not kill again
But then I see that I was their bane
Now I as I wander through the long years
My dreams of Zyktreploy birds all end in tears.



"Cerulea" by Rosemary Baylee

Make Me



by Joseph Cieslewski

Make me to drink of Lethe, my Lord;
make me to forget all.
Make me to lie at rest in Your word,
and to dwell in Your light-filled hall.
Make me to sup on nepenthe,
and taste the sweetness of Your death.
Make all my thoughts to be heavenly;
make me breathe Your sweet breath.
Make me to sing in Your choir,
to sing some blessed, supernal tune.
Make me as pure as gold in Your fire;
let me burn in the light of Your noon.
Speak my True Name to me,
and teach me to be who I Am.
Make me to kneel and swear fealty,
and then, Lord, make me to stand.

words unbound



by Shawna Downes

let loose the flow of tumbling words
like ribbons on a page
knotted together with kindred ink
spilling out from the marred places
hidden places
dark places
toss them into the air
and watch the tangled, colored text
sink into paper
forming lasting marks
like the scars
on your heart



Seeing is Just Enough



by Eli Ritchie

Just before the sun eases down,
an ambiguous time
light enough to move
Without adjusting your eyes,
There are fireflies.

They phosphoresce in a snap
Like dragons, or with a spark
Of visual romance,

This first time.

My adult eyes,
Are already out of their easy tears.

Everyone else passed by,
Accustomed to beauty, and blind to its charm;
These men don't make love to only one woman anymore,
At least, not in their minds.

Out west, without Virginia tobacco soil,
Brake lights flashing in traffic red
Is as close as we come
To fireflies—
When we quickly catch everyone else
And have to slow down our time.

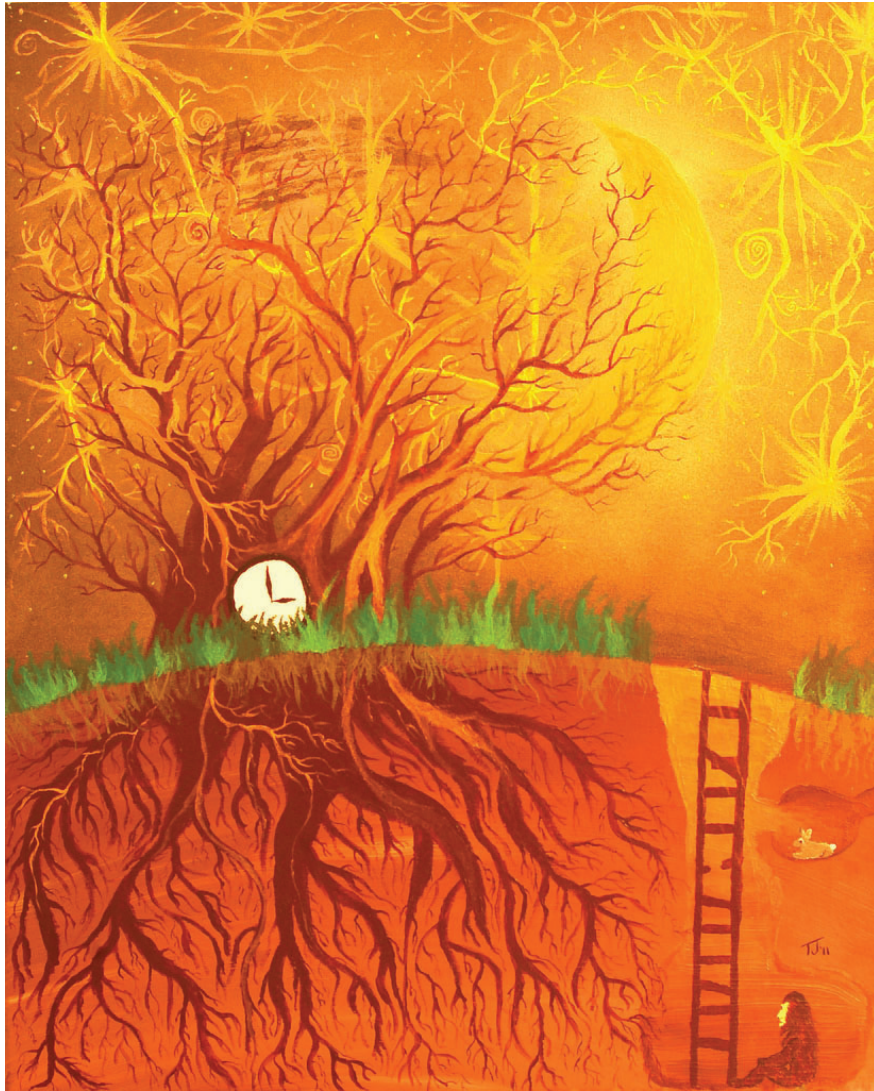
Ours are red—
Frustration red
Frustrated eyes, face, stationary legs
Running with blood, red
From the angry part of our fire,
Still blink in light and catch your eye.

Those of us who see just enough
Can take it all,
And sit in light
As it dims and shines,
Conscious of both
And blind to neither.





“Binney & Smith” by Jessica McIntire



“3am” by Timothy Jackson

Toll House



by Nicole Walker

A mixture of powder waterfalls into the pool of nectar
While the hand of God hovers, churning them together.

Pebbles are poured into the muddle,
Globs are removed with a shovel
And put onto the conveyor belt of stainless steel.

Trapped inside a dungeon, they're scorched by the heat
Relaxing, stretching outward, clinging to the solid surface.
The buzzer rings, signaling bail
And they are brought out of shadows into the light.

Cold air stings their skin and they stiffen like statues
The pebbles are fossilized inside the structure
Soon they assemble for protection
Atop one another, staying out of sight
Fearing the inevitable massacre of men

Three Good Fridays



by Barbara Froman

AN EXCERPT FROM LUTHERAN LADIES CIRCLE: RECKLESS ADVENTURES

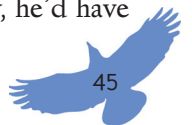
“...DARKNESS OVERCAME THE LAND” LUKE 23:44

Walt pushed the okra and fried pumpkin seeds around his plate. He preferred pecans in his vegetables for a little crunch, but his daughter-in-law had presented him with a bag of raw, green pumpkin seeds, saying they were good for prostate health.

Shocked that she would even mention this private manly part much less give him food for it, he'd left the bag on the shelf for a month before giving it a try. The green kernels stuck to the okra. They sure were chewy little critters. What starving fool had been so desperate he'd discovered these seeds were food?

The red light from the answering machine continued to wink at him. He'd ignored it when he'd walked in the door from a day of fishing. While he was in the shower, getting ready for Good Friday services, he'd heard the phone ring again. Most likely it was his son checking on him. Instead of calling, Walt fileted a chunk of fresh bass, fried it with okra, sprinkled the whole mess with pumpkin seeds and had supper, adding store-bought pudding for dessert.

Ruby would've insisted on a leafy salad. He hated that rabbit-food, but if his late wife had been there to fix one right now, he'd have



eaten it. She'd wandered through his mind a lot this morning as he watched Roger's boys fish. Maybe he should have an experience like that with his own grandchildren.

Walt glanced at the blinking light again. Yeah, he'd mention it when his son came by. He'd receive a visit if he didn't return the phone calls. He would duck his head, acting hang-dog and take the scolding for not letting them know he was all right. He still won. He got to see his son and sometimes his grandkids. Often his daughter-in-law brought strange presents like chocolate-zucchini bread or pumpkin seeds.

"They're busy," Ruby would've scolded.

"Well, I won't be around forever," he spoke out loud to the memory. His mind crawled over the years. She was standing in front of him, blocking the kitchen doorway. He was holding that same rod he'd used this morning, arguing, "I work sixty hours a week. Stop trying to make me feel guilty about taking a day to fish."

She'd placed a hand on his arm. "Take the boys. They hardly get to see you, except when you're tired."

"They wrestle and skip rocks scaring fish and wildlife from here to breakfast. I deserve some time to myself."

"They won't be around forever." She always was one to wallop him with guilt. He punched the play button on the machine.

"Walt!" Vera called his name loud and thin as though she'd seen a ghost. "Can you come to my neighbor's house immediately?"

He shook his head. That woman loved to volunteer him for duties. Since her husband, Paul, had died, she'd become more demanding. Vera was always stiff as an old sack, but she used to at least laugh once in a while. Had he changed as much since his wife died?

Naw. He'd always been a cranky, old coot. He smiled. Ruby would've agreed.

He hit the play button again. The other message was from a siding company, hawking sweat-proof windows. His son hadn't called him. He could be lying in a creek or floating face-down in a pond for all his family knew. It was awful to get so old nobody needed you.

Nobody but Vera.

He found that irritating and heartening at the same time. He sighed and poked a seed. His fish had gone cold.

*

Vera rang the doorbell. She had two devastatingly important tasks this evening: check on the elderly Mr. Vogler and then set up the sanctuary for Good Friday services. She shook her white head at her duties. Her ninety-year-old neighbor was tangled in the quirky web of being housebound. He practiced bird calls and insisted visitors guess which fowl he was imitating. Vera was getting very good at identifying crow-in-distress from crow-spying-food. She'd purposefully waited until evening to visit him so, after 10 minutes, she could say she needed to get a loaf of banana-nut bread out of her oven and get to church—and she wouldn't be lying. To compensate for the short visit she'd brought along a plate of freshly-baked sugar cookies.

As usual, no one answered the door. Vera called his name as she let herself in. Silence answered. She looked in the favorite places where she predicted he'd keel over. He wasn't there. Even though he wasn't supposed to poke around with his bird feeders, she checked outside and breathed relief when she didn't see him toes-up in the backyard.

She called his name as she walked to his bedroom. He lay in bed. The coverlet pulled to his chin. "Gus?" Vera whispered then shook the bed. "Augustus Vogler!" The old man

didn't move. In the muted light, he had the same pallor she'd seen on her husband, Paul, when she'd known he was gone. The fading aura of a body freshly abandoned by its soul. She rapped the old man's chest and flicked his nose. No response. She'd done the same to Paul, but had never told anyone.

"This is not good timing," she told the Deity as she left the house. Pastor Poe had given her only one task for this evening: set up the line of Tenebrae candles. "That's all I'll allow you to do," he'd said, adding she should take more time to grieve and not busy herself. But... he was young at shepherding. When he'd lived longer, he'd know it was the busyness that got a person through. She'd show him how it was done. If he was ever to become a seasoned pastor like her Paul, he needed to learn to juggle two communion cups, three Bibles, and four parishioners at the same time. She'd notify folks of the death after tonight's services. She cast a backward glance at the body as she left the room. It's not like Gus Vogler would mind waiting.

The thought carried her all the way to the moment she put her hand on her doorknob. She knew she couldn't sit in church, her mind tittering of a dead-man that only she and God knew about. Vera called Walt.



The second phone call went to her neighbor's daughter, who lived ten miles away. "Gus is gone," Vera breathed into the phone and explained what she'd found. "I haven't called 911. I thought you'd want some quiet time with your father. I distinctly remember those moments with my Paul.

She should keep talking and comforting, but there wasn't time. She had to get to church. "I may not be here when you arrive, but I called a gentleman to wait with you. His name is Walt. I left a message for him. Hopefully he'll get—" Vera paused. "I think my house is on fire."

Smoke rolled from the oven. Fire alarms in the kitchen and hallway beeped with irritating loudness. Vera carried the charcoaled banana bread out of the house and set the dish on the front step. As she opened windows and doors, she mentally flogged herself. She was becoming one of those old people who lost their keys and forgot why they came into rooms. She needed to change clothes. She smelled like a fireman, and folks at church didn't need to know about this. They'd think she was even more grief stricken and incompetent than they already assumed.

Vera grabbed another blouse from her closet and shucked out of her old one as she walked down the hallway. A woman stood in her living room.

"Good heavens, Lorena. You scared me to death. What are you doing here?" Vera only heard part of the answer between the intermittent swearing of the fire alarm. She walked out the front door in her bra and into the yard, motioning for the full-figured blonde to follow.

"Are you all right? What happened?" Lorena's voice carried a note of concern, but her squint-eyed look chorused an anthem of skepticism.

"I'm just fine." Vera hove her arms into her sleeves as though Lorena was disturbing her usual routine of dressing on the front lawn. "What do you want?"

Lorena stared at the smoking bread dish as though uncertain what to do. Finally she faced the older woman. "Where are my Lenten decorations? I'm putting them back up."

"Oh good grief. I haven't time for this nonsense." The alarms shut off, leaving Vera's last words as a misplaced shout. "I've got to get to church."

"I just came from there. Most of my black Lenten décor is missing and you're my number one suspect. I came to talk to you privately—not at church."

“The sanctuary was beginning to look like a morgue. I asked you to not overdo it with the depressing decorations, but you ignored me. It’s about respect, Lorena, and this discussion will have to wait.”

Lorena pointed to where Vera had misbuttoned her shirt, making one side longer than the other. “You think kidnapping my displays will gain you respect?”

“Is this what you wanted me for?” Walt asked as he walked through the yard. “To referee?”

“Thank heavens you’re here.” Vera patted her front, inspecting her blouse for coverage. “I didn’t see you drive up.”

“You two were busy. I parked back there. Is this the problem?” Walt pointed to the wisps of smoke curling off the loaf pan.

“I’ll be on my way then,” Lorena said. “Just give me my decorations and I’ll run them over to the church.”

“Lorena! A man has died here!” Vera’s fists shook by her sides.

The big blonde blinked at the older woman. For a moment a hole of silence gaped

between them. Walt stared until he finally mustered, “Who?”

“My neighbor.” Vera flung her arm behind her. “I need you to stay until his daughter arrives. I don’t know what could be keeping her.”

Lorena’s brows furrowed. Walt put a hand on Vera’s shoulder. “Are you talking about the guy standing on his porch watching us?”

After Vera turned and squinted, she tromped hard and fast, fists swinging with each step, across the lawn. Walt and Lorena followed in her wake. “You’re supposed to be dead,” Vera shouted.

The ninety-year old touched his body with his fingertips, verifying his pumping heart and still-inhabited flesh. “Sorry.” He smiled. Vera gave him a detailed account of how she’d found him unresponsive and expired. “Nope.” He shook his head. “I didn’t sleep worth a plug last night. I was just taking a nap.” He let out a *cocka-doodle-do*. “Guess.” He pointed at Walt.

Vera closed her eyes, shaking her head, her white hair shimmering around her face,

as her breath huffed out like a released valve.
“I’m going to church.”

“Me, too,” Lorena said. “As soon as I get my decorations.”

“Rhode Island Red,” Gus Vogler shouted into the conversation. “Now what’s this?” He puffed his cheeks and loosened a series of twits and tweets. Walt lowered his head. A frown crossed his face as he studied the man.

“I have never missed a Good Friday.” Vera stared at Lorena. “And I won’t this year either.”

“I’m parked behind you.” Lorena crossed her arms over her ample bosom. “I’ll move as soon as you give me the decorations.”

Vera turned, quick-stepped across the yard and down the street.

Walt called after her, “It’ll be over—” A high-pitched screech cut through his words.

“Red tailed hawk, hunting,” Gus Vogler explained. “She’ll get it.”

Lorena hurried to her car. “And where are you going?” Walt said, rushing words into the gap before Gus let loose with more birdsong.

“To pick her up. You’ll take care of this?” She flourished her hand at Vera’s open doors and then Mr. Vogler.

“Sure. Sure. I enjoy telling people I haven’t met about the resurrection of their father in a situation I know nothing about.” Walt looked the old man. “You happen to have a beer, buddy?”

The *haaa-haaa-haaa* of a kookaburra echoed down the street as they went inside.

*

“Miss Nash said tonight is scary-church,” Johnny whined from the car’s back seat.

“Who’s Miss Nash?” The father of the Harris family eyed his five-year-old in the rear-view mirror.

“Kay Nash from kid’s choir.” His wife, Lizzy, pulled a loose thread from her sleeve. “No, honey, church isn’t scary.”

“Miss Nash said there’d be dark things that make you jump.” Johnny showed claw-hands to his little sister in the car seat beside him.

“Scare-ey,” repeated cherub-faced, Bette.

“Which one is Kay Nash?” asked Fred.

“The one that’s usually looking for coffee.” Lizzy scratched at a spot on her jacket. “Arrgh! Why am I always wearing the kids’ food?” She wrapped a napkin around her finger, licked the end of it and rubbed a spot on her shirt. “No, honey, things at church aren’t supposed to scare you. Besides, you’ll be in child care. Tenebrae is a very solemn service of shadows.”

“Sounds scary.” Fred made big-eyes in the mirror at his son.

“I wanna go,” Johnny said.

The church was dimly lit and eerily quiet as the family entered. Lizzy led the children to child care while Fred waited, studying the sanctuary. “It looks like all the light bulbs are dying,” he told her when she returned.

“It’s a Service of Darkness. People all over the world are at Tenebrae tonight, not just Lutherans. The service has been done on Good Friday for centuries.” Lizzy gave his arm a tug.

“Feels like a funeral. A funeral without music,” he mumbled entering the sanctuary.

“This is Jesus’ funeral,” Lizzy whispered as they sat.

Two women were hurriedly arranging candelabras. Soon fourteen candles glowed from the altar. A reader dressed in black apologized for the late start, explaining there had been a problem setting up. From the pulpit she announced, “The sun sets on Good Friday. God’s Friday. Darkness enters our world, just as darkness covered the earth at the crucifixion of the Son of God.”

Black-clad readers told of the last week of Jesus’ life. After each reading, a candle was extinguished. The church grew darker as worshippers lived the betrayal and desertion. The gray light erased details and smudged people into shadowy forms.

Someone shouted, “Crucify him!” Others in the sanctuary took up the refrain, calling for blood. People stole sidelong glances at their neighbors. Three, slow hammer blows finally stilled the cries.

Only one candle remained lit when loud, discordant organ notes jarred every surface. The steady bass of a heart beat warred with chaos-chords of the earth groaning and convulsing at the crucifixion.



The heartbeat grew louder and stronger, *Boom-Boom*, dominating the dissonant notes, forcing them to fade away. *BOOM-Boom*. The beat was steady, rhythmic, comforting. Then life hesitated. The rhythm slowed as the last light, the Christ Candle, was carried from the sanctuary.

Worshippers sat in darkness while long pauses stretched between the heart beats. Lizzy found herself holding her breath. Then there was nothing. The soundlessness of death settled over her. She could hear snuffles around her. She, too, regretted she'd ever contributed to the death she'd just witnessed.

There was no benediction. No blessing. People left in silence, as they had at every Tenebrae service for the past thousand years, ploddingly making their way from a dark church into a dark world.

*

"Was it scary?" Johnny asked as his dad carried him to the car.

"No. It was sad," Fred said.

"Are you sad?" Johnny put both hands on his father's face, but at the sound of voices arguing, he turned to look. Two ladies walked toward the church as others got in their cars. "...and I want respect," the white-haired woman quietly growled.

"Well, I'd like my plans to work out, too..." the blonde was saying.

Johnny watched them pass, then squirmed, trying to look at his mother carrying his little sister. "Are they fighting?"

"They sound like you and Bette, don't they?" Lizzy said.

"Tonight is mad talk and sad church." Johnny lay his head on his father's shoulder. "Don't grown-ups know about Easter?"

"Eas-ter!" his little sister yelled. She added a laughing trill which Gus Volger would've identified as a nightingale—singing into the darkness.



“Rustic and Calloused” by Heather Miles

Safety in Smoke



by Kyler Scott-Subsits

Inhale deeply
Drawing it in
Swirling;
Trapped in my lungs
Then out;
With the flavor
And the smell of burnt cinder
With the nicotine in my veins

I relax.

Option two makes a bit of a mess
Writing on paper, with the tip
Of a knife drawing with red ink

One or the other

The pain won't leave on its own
And so I stay here
Sitting
Calm
And waiting for the pain to pass
And for my day to continue





“Vietnam War” by Ruth Imig

In Search of a Poem



by Authur Kelly

an image, ephemeral, emerges
like spare leafless branches
lessened through foggy air
then emerging as sun burns clear

like an ocean wave
hardly seen, beyond, a lift, there,
yet gathering
force and form and substance
and presence not to be ignored

nearly within grasp
hovering like hummingbird
skirting, probing,
iridescence of reds and greens,
backwards forwards upward downwards
holding still
gone

sudden back: full and lovely
complete or nearly so enough so
not finished but done





“Our Journey” by Simeon Jacob

Blackwells



by Leah Ballard

I stepped off the curb, and watched a group of people pass by. Through the window we could see an absentminded face checking his phone for the umpteenth time. We cross the street to the bookstore and pull open the door after hours. He looked up, “Do you have tickets?”

“Uh, we liked it on Facebook.”

“Okay, go ahead, you guessed the password,” with a tight-lipped smile he waved us on. I grinned, already feeling like I was part of the club.

We wandered toward the back of the shop, through modern fiction and philosophy. An older man came from behind us, passing on the left toward the stairs hidden off to one side, “It’s

down this way,” he mumbled over his shoulder as he disappeared into the basement level. We followed down the stairs into a huge open room, divided by bookcases into thin slices, a maze of scholarship leading toward a large open expanse another half level below. The store front is deceptively small, I wasn’t expecting such a massive basement, so bright and open you wouldn’t have guessed you were underground. They’re good at that in this town.

The tops of bookcases peered out of the chasm in the center of the room and, as we drew nearer, the tops of heads peaked out too. Two short stair cases sat across from each other, catty-corner in either direction from where we stood, hesitating. We decided not to climb down. Serious, beautiful faces dotted the ring

around the expanse, sipping wine from stemmed plastic cups, pseudo wine glasses. Thick empty glass-frames enclosed the serious faces, tights and old man sweaters disguised their awkward bodies. They emanated a certain air of class in spite of themselves. I paused behind one row of strangers, feeling slightly under dressed, or at least a little boring. Nonetheless I joined them, staring thoughtfully down onto the recessed stage. A young man fidgeted in the center of attention, reading aloud from a printout; something about punk rock concerts and the-morning-after haze. As he finished, he smiled, dropped his quivering hand and found a seat on the floor along the inner ring of book cases. The serious faces kept watching him as they clapped; no one smiled.

A slightly older, less than attractive figure took his place in the middle of the hollowed stage to introduce the lone musical performance of the evening. He must be in charge. His black t-shirt was definitely too small, I had a feeling it had been favourite not too many years ago. Everyone in the room knew it was time to give that one up, if only he could admit it. His hair, thinning, fell in his face, part of his performance was holding the mess out of his eyes as he spoke. He continued this move throughout the event. One hand was covered in a fishnet, fingerless glove, nails painted black. I found I liked him

more when he put on his worn, beige sweater, the uniform.

I touched Emily's arm and motioned to the empty space around the book shelves, a good spot to lean and refrain from smiling. She stopped by the concessions and grabbed two stemmed cups for us to sip, desperately trying to keep a straight face through the bitter red wine.

The woman he introduced was beautiful; perhaps "girl" would be more accurate than "woman." Her hair was natural red, dramatic thick bangs hung down about her eyebrows. Her eye makeup was thick black, and her lip stick just the right bright red. Her poem was about Facebook. How predictable, I thought. And it was great—also predictable.

I envied her. Her sleek black heels, her retro black dress, polka-dots peaking out above the strapless black tube, she could definitely pull off polka-dots, no small feat. She read her poem from a thin publication, the cover folded back on itself. She held it with one hand. Every time she looked up at her audience she relaxed, dropping her arm. For that moment the book perched in front of her midsection, as if projecting her face upward at us, daring. This is what I have to say, she said.

I laughed at her subtle irony, nodded at the familiar frustrations she put to rhyme, and clapped when she finished. “She is so hot,” Emily whispered as she clapped on one thigh, still holding her plastic wine glass. “I know. We’re so cool right now.” We smiled at each other and quickly put our serious faces back on. Tiny black t-shirt just pointed from his seated position this time.

Maisie stood up and apologized for the rough presentation to follow, “I couldn’t sleep last night,” she tastefully stuttered, “so I decided to read something new for you guys.” Her skinny jeans were cuffed above her safe, black Keds. I liked the childish sweater she wore, dark with bright purple detailing. She also had hair that required pushing back from her face, and repeated this move throughout the performance.

A few days prior, Maisie had tapped me on the shoulder asking which exams I was studying for, which essays I was writing. I paused at these unfamiliar queries and realized she must have mistaken me for one of them. “Oh, I’m just a visiting student,” I explained, “So I’m just going to whatever lecture I want. And I don’t think I’ll be going back to that one,” I added with a cautious smile. “No kidding,” she laughed. “I wish I could say the same.”

We’d sat through two lectures together that morning, and Maisie was stressed out, still unsure of what to write about for her dissertation. “Dissertation?” I’d asked, “For your bachelors?” Maisie nodded and shrugged, “This is Oxford.” She talked a bit more about being so sick of dead, white men—what she really wanted to read were the thoughts of dead white women—but feminism was getting old too, come to think of it. I nodded, flexing my best scholar-social skills, sighing with similar frustrations, confusion about my own term-long essay, a mere 4,000 words.

We swapped more small talk about clubs I was joining, and was I interested in poetry, “Because there’s this event coming up,” until I persuaded her to write down her email address. I said, “Just put it here, on Tuesday...because its Tuesday,” opening my planner, embarrassed at the photo of my mother’s face, sloppily duck taped to the cover.

I thought of this exchange as Maisie read her late night poem, something about the morning after, and was she a boy or a girl in her brother’s skinny tie. And I clapped when she finished, sipped my wine and smiled, pleased to be mistaken for one of them.

The Ring



by Ruth Reno

She wears a bold ring on her left ring finger.
The wide gold band spans halfway to the knuckle
And a carat-sized diamond-shaped stone
erupts from the center on a tiffany throne.
This gem is beveled and mirrors light from all facets.
She displays her hand and preens as if the ring
was a gift from a fiancé. She flirts with it.
For her eyes only. Around others she toys with it, conceals
It under the palm of her right hand or tucks it in her pocket.
After two decades without a married marked finger
It's odd, she thinks, to feel the hold of a ring.
It never mattered before to be without one.
Should it matter now to wear an imitation?

Winter Man



by Nicole Walker

Three balls
of packed powder
Pushed together.
A tubby tummy
Lined with bulging buttons
And stick arms reaching out to attack
the snowflakes that fall upon the pointy
carrot nose and lengthy pebble smile.
As the winter fades his stature shall shrink,
Until all accessories become one with the snow.
For he is immobile with nowhere to go,
A puddle in the grasses of February.





“Reflection” by Taylor Kautz

A Walk



by Kyler Scott-Subsits

Now, hush, and hear my dark little tale
Don't worry, relax, don't look so pale
Come, here, sit down, put up your feet
What would you like: a smoke, or drink?
A snack to eat?

The good and bad
The strange and twisted
The happy and sad
The holy and damned
The poor and rich
El Gato or bitch
All are welcome to hear my grand little tale
To lose is to gain, to win is to fail



Now I found myself walking
Down a dark little path
And the forest was talking
The croaking of frogs
The barking of dogs
All the strange little jingling
The church bells... ring-a-ling-a-ling

I soon lit my pipe
What a grand little rite
And the silhouetted trees
Turning the sky
-Spinning like bees-
Round and round and round again

The sweet air touched my lips and the coolness of the air
Made warmer my smoked beard
I remember a saying an old friend once said,
A hose is a flamethrower of water.
What he said I did fear

Granted this was the same man that quoted the Hunter
The man who trekked across "bat country"
And told you to keep your "tongue" out
After all "it's of the devil"

But I digress, the alarms and leaden pipes added chorus
To the man calling his dog
And the garden around, God's such a good florist

From the plane they couldn't see me
Or could they?
It was really quite freeing
The shadows that lay

This late in the day and this far down the path,
You can't see much except the shapes of the surrounding
Carolina pie, which was the first time I saw the patterns. The woman and
Her dog, the patchwork leaves, the beaches and madhouses
The grass barley covered my companions
The mad little men were attracted to the smoke

My smoke

The light posts I passed reminded me of Narnia. The truth was there
As I breathed out, the smoke looked like a waterfall horizontal and
Pouring into the air

For a second I almost stopped. I heard an echo of my Angel
Her laugh, but the tree monkeys caught up with it
The man on the moon was on my side with this
The devil monkeys and their deadly fits

My jacket gets tighter and tighter, until it keeps me straight
I shake

I come up in the cool air again
And then down again,
Gnomes! Ghosts, Zuma beans,
It's all the face of madness
That stands behind you
And me
And everyone of us
Goodnight





“Untitled” by Mercedes Alcaraz

Closed for Winter



by Ruth Reno

Missing are the sandals
gritty buckets, shovels and clam nets, sprung hose
scattered about the lawn
folding chairs on the front porch
red, yellow and blue Adirondack chairs on dune hill

rooms dusted
cushions plumped into couch corners
books shelved except one on the sea green table
afghan folded over the back of the floral chair
linens pulled from the beds and baths
quilts stretched and smoothed from headboard to end



refrigerator emptied of whiskey stew and uneaten vegetables
counters cleaned and dishes stacked
wine bottles recycled
coffee mugs rinsed
note pad left by the phone turned to a clean page
board games and playing cards closeted
floors swept and thermostat lowered
shades drawn

emptied of summer smells and disarray
quieted laughter and footsteps
adventures left hanging
In photos of beach antics

Sand dollars and shells spanning window sills
stepping out the door
clicking the lock
closing summer

View on Rain



by Ruth Reno

They scoff at her repeating rhyme
in which worms bask.
“Oppressive and dreary,” they grumble,
yearning for round the clock blue.
They mock her soul
and sunbird to arid soil
anticipating her entombment in a pool.
Her precipitation drowns the dry,
restoring lush green.
Yet, how little they applaud
this raining queen!



Carrying a Body



by Daniel Young

I didn't expect this. I didn't expect it to be this easy.

I had been carrying the body of my friend for a few days now. Wrapped in a duct-taped canvas, partly for decency, and partly for the smell. He reminded me of a fly bundled in spider silk. His feet dragged everywhere. I became aware of his clothes and shoes as much as his rag doll limbs. The texture and contour of his suit and tie were so uncharacteristic of his true personage. I don't think he ever set a comb to his hair. When he was alive he always wore tattered, paint covered jackets and slippers with the soles worn out. There is no doubt he was an imaginative fellow. But this had gone too far. I didn't expect *this*.

At the beginning, I was disturbed by the lifelessness within his body. It was a shell. The arms and legs were like heavy strings and his eyes were loose and empty like a baby doll. And yet this was my friend. I refused to play along with his mad scheme. But he convinced me otherwise. The sheer genius of it was too tempting for him to resist. I had to follow through because it was his last request. It would give him life again.

His shape, form, and weight were so obviously characteristic of a body. I received odd looks and chatter amongst observers as my friend and I slowly made our way to the cafe. But I didn't expect it to be this easy. Someone called the police. Finally, a worthy action. An

officer intercepted me on my slow drag towards the coffeehouse. I managed to take a deep breath in as the officer approached me.

“Um...” (I was expecting a ‘Freeze, you’re under arrest!’) “Is that a body?”

“Yeah,” I said. I hadn’t really thought this far. “He’s my good friend. Charles was his name. Charles Banderthropp. I know this looks bad, but it’s really not a problem, Officer. Really this is just a misunderstanding. He wanted it this way—”

“He’s that artist guy.”

“Yeah, yeah! That’s him.” I was relieved he knew or at least heard of Chuck. I explained myself and asked if I would have to be arrested. He said no. He was awfully understanding about the whole thing and told me to keep on going. He asked if I needed help carrying Chuck, and I said no. (That was against the rules.)

When we finally reached the cafe, I seated him in the opposite chair from me. All eyes were fixated on me and Chuck. I never felt more judgement and tension than in those couple of hours at the cafe. *Well, Chuck I think weshmandgud.*

I was instructed to begin conversing with Chuck, but my voice eked out of my throat. “Well, Chuck, how do you feel this morning?” I imagined if it was a typical day Chuck would say something sarcastic. So I think of something clever. I paraphrase a remark of Winston Churchill: “In the morning I will not be drunk, but you will still be ugly.” No laughs from the sea of eyes. I continue. “I’ve been reading a book lately on linked variables. It proposes a model on charting linked variable relationships in order to reduce large variable counts in systems. It’s not your typical how-to kinda book.” I continue.

I noticed that my voice filled the room, which never happened at the cafe. I was always the quiet one. Whispers occasionally broke the silence, and rapid footsteps towards the door. No one sat around me, which was ridiculous because we were in the center of seating. Everyone stood against walls like I had the plague. Then, something amazing happened. Camera flash. Another flash. A gush of flashes began to inundate our humble coffee meeting. The thing that Chuck had been waiting for all his life was finally on its way.

To be continued.





“Leaking Luger” by Timothy Jackson

Half-Life Disease



by Rosemary Baylee

Poetry fails me in the face of my convictions
Failing through the metaphors and cross-examination
So this time it's just honesty,
The growing weight of gravity
As I come back to earth

Resonate, reply
I'm a little bit abandoned
And I need to hear from someone
Else that this is not a lie
Arrogant, awry
Seems like I can't get a reading
When my heart has trouble beating
And there's darkness in my eyes

Poetry fails me in the face of my convictions
Failing through the metaphors and cross-examination
So this time it's just honesty,
The growing weight of gravity
As I come back to earth



Correlate, comply
Turn your voice into a muzzle,
An exposee of the puzzle
That you do not wish to solve
Mediate, contrive
All the falsehoods you can ponder
And the time that you could squander
Just to kill public resolve

A dull knife does more damage than a sharp one
A whole life is more precious than a half one
So why does the world keep on insisting
On resisting sanity, society's a
Half-life disease

Hope is the sobriety that comes from desperation
Peace has no anxiety in wholesome resolution
Love is knowing truth and trust we cannot understand
And faithfulness is all of these' demand

Poetry fails me in the face of my convictions
Failing through the metaphors and cross-examinations
So this time it's just honesty



“Toxicity” by Jessica McIntire

Small Price to Pay



by Ruth Reno

I stand at the sink looking beyond my faint reflection to the evening sky,
while slopping my hands, unhampered by a dishwasher, in Dawn soap and water.

And where is everyone else, but in the living room, stuck to couches,
eating grapenuts and cream, dirtying more dishes and grimacing at abhorrent
mistreatment of dogs on Animal Planet.

I rap an invitation from kitchen to living room, “Come see the sky,”
but TV barking is the only response, while I stand like a lone observer in an art museum,
and stare at the window framed masterpiece
of a fiery sky marbled in dusk blue and evening fuchsia,
a backdrop to silhouetted firs like a row of Matisse cutouts
all for the price of doing dishes

Alive



by Shawna Downes

living stones and water bones
rattle in a bag
pulsing tones
hammer drones
stretch—
and breathe

the beats— the lights—
the streets— the sights—
the black knives and the bee hives
and the rattle
the rattle
the silence—



The Little That I Know



by Jennifer Waia'u

The Blood
It loves you
And destroys you
As we speak
It gnaws at its own
Limbs

Your color fades
And we are more
And more
Silent
As your knights
Storm their own
Castle.

Like a devout friend
It never fails
To be present.
But while you sleep
Your protector
Forgets your face.

But it loves you
And destroys you.
As I write
It loves you
To death.





“Untitled” by Mercedes Alcaraz

Vision



by Shawna Downes

accept the clamor
the syncopated beat
drumming out the times
slightly off
slightly blind
when faced with faces
not like our own
how shocked we are to find
ourselves
in foreign eyes





“L & D” by Daniel Young

Pandora's Tales of Strange



by Kyler Scott-Subsits

AN EXCERPT FROM MAN WITH THE HEX

“Marcus!” Crone yelled out into the night.

Crone’s heavy footsteps fell onto the porch outside of the Jazz Club and the humid southern air dampened his shirt instantly.

“Marcus!” He called out again, pulling a flashlight from his belt and looking down the empty street. His squad mate was nowhere to be seen.

“Where the hell are you?” Crone said to himself as he walked over to the vehicles that he and his squad had arrived in. The light

from his flashlight illuminated the government plates and sleek, black paint only briefly as Crone proceeded to check to see if Marcus was inside. The vehicles were empty. Crone silently cursed, the situation being more difficult than he had previously thought. He was already uncomfortable in his clothes, but now nervous sweat added itself to the mix making it flat out miserable.

Crone took a closer look at the door and saw that Marcus’ key was in the door. The keychain rocked back and forth in the still air, as if Marcus had just put it in the keyhole. One of

the few working streetlights flickered and went out. Crone looked up and turned his flashlight to the broken bulb.

“Of course.” Crone mumbled. With one last glance around he turned to head back inside and alert the rest of his squad.

But Crone suddenly caught a movement in his peripheral vision. He turned his flashlight down what looked to be a deserted alley. Crone cautiously proceeded forward, reaching down and pulling out his Arc-N sidearm, a standard pistol for any Curtain hunter and a weapon with enough power to easily bring down a vampire or werewolf or any other kind of undead a Curtain hunter could face.

But even with that knowledge, Crone’s hand started to shake as he entered the alley and the temperature dropped.

“Hello?” Crone called out into the dark, “Marcus?”

But there was no answer. In fact there was less than an answer as the air seemed to thicken and dampen all sound to the point where Crone could hardly hear his own footsteps. Or maybe it was just his heart beating so hard that all other noise was lost.

Crone ran his light along the sides of the alley taking slow deep breaths; it was empty with the exception of him and a single dumpster. And it was as Crone ran his light along the dumpster that his breath caught in his throat. Dark red liquid splattered across the dumpster, an abstract piece of sick art on a dirty blue canvas.

Crone gave the alley one quick look around, convinced eyes were on him, but he saw none, and with that he cautiously crept over to the dumpster. Taking several shallow breaths and mentally psyching himself out he threw open the lid.

As soon as the lid was up the stench hit him with a near physical force and the grotesque mesh of bone, flesh and blood registered instantly in his head and Crone fell backwards onto the ground.

Turning sideways he puked up the Raisin Bran cereal and turkey sandwich he had before the squad left on their mission. In all his years of hunting the undead and supernatural with the Red Curtain he had never seen anything like that. In all the training that the U.S. government had given him and his fellow Curtain members in their secret training programs, nothing had prepared him for this.

Through his panic Crone suddenly realized that he could see his breath. The air was near freezing and the humidity sucked from the alley.

Fighting through the first shock Crone realized he had to alert the others. But Crone's flashlight flickered and went out, plunging the immediate area around Crone into darkness. He looked up towards the entrance to the alley, and as he did the buildings on either side seemed to become longer, and the light became dimmer, so that it was just a small dot at the end of a tunnel.

The darkness became heavy and unbearable.

The feeling of being watched became heavy.

Crone felt breathing on the back of his neck.

Crone tried to scream.

But he was dead before he could even take a breath.





“Untitled” by Tyler Lindell

Awake



by Rosemary Baylee

I took down my hair for the first time
Since you made me fear my reflection
I want to believe I was made to be loved
Not made for your falsehood's protection

My eyes slide away from the mirror
My body, my face unfamiliar
I know in my soul I was made to be whole
Not fractions divided by failure

I'm awake, lucid, and ready to breathe
I was made to love in the halls of the King
Holy, unbreakable, innocently
I am free to be all that I need to be

If only I could meet my own eyes
Forgiving myself for the lies
I want to believe I was made to be loved
For the truth, undiminished by pride



I frown and I smile, trying faces,
To melt away where you left traces
I know in my soul I was made to be whole
All my present and past in their places

I'm awake, lucid, and ready to breathe
I was made to be doubtless and unfaltering
Holy, unbreakable, innocent, the
Everlasting One has recreated me

Break every hold of the enemy
Save me from inside my memory
Give me a newborn identity

Lord, You define my reality



“Bowline” by Ben Smith



The Glittering Gecko



by Timothy Jackson

The glittering Gecko
eyes the safari expanse
and spots the brown cow
the spotted cow
the black cow
Whose hooves turn up dead roots
and the homeless cows eat in silence

The glittering Gecko
observes the constellations at night
dialing digits
in a clandestine manner
to call upon the celestial spirits
and call them from Hades

To strike down the brown cow
the spotted cow
the black cow
so that they all moo and mourn
in the milky night sky

The Gecko calls upon wise owl
and orange eyed cat
So the three can possess
and make a mess
of the expanding safari desert.





“Bucket List” by Taylor Kautz

Lease



by Shawna Downes

AN EXCERPT FROM A SCREENPLAY

LOGLINE

KATE WATSON, a broke, jobless college student, must raise \$438 in ten days in order to pay her rent.

CHARACTERS

KATE WATSON – Protagonist

OLIVE – Best friend

LEE – Barista

FADE IN

INT. KATE'S APARTMENT – BEDROOM - MORNING



KATE WATSON wakes up to a dismal rainy day out her window while her cell phone vibrates on the night stand next to her bed. She gets out of bed, then starts going through her morning routine. She gets dressed.

BATHROOM

She brushes her teeth.

KITCHEN

She pours some old French press coffee into a cup and takes a drink. She spits it out.

BATHROOM

She brushes her teeth again.

LIVING ROOM

KATE grabs her keys, bag, coat, and shoes and walks outside, slipping her shoes on as she walks on the sidewalk.

EXT. CITY STREET - MORNING

KATE walks into a nearby coffee shop.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - MORNING

KATE waits in line at the coffee shop until she reaches the counter.

KATE

Hi. I'd like a 16 ounce caramel macchiato.

LEE

Okay. Will that be everything?

KATE

Unless you also sell jobs and boyfriends, yes.
Actually, no. I want a blueberry muffin.

LEE

I'm available. Hahaha. Um. Never mind. That will
be \$4.17.

KATE isn't interested. She pays for her coffee and leaves.

INT. KATE'S APARTMENT – LIVING ROOM – AFTERNOON

KATE is sitting on her couch surrounded by a mess of papers. She is trying to balance her budget and failing. She is \$438 short no matter what happens. There is a knock at the door. KATE answers the door. It's OLIVE, her best friend, who has brought pizza. KATE grabs the pizza box and goes inside with OLIVE.

OLIVE

So how bad is it?

KATE

I'm \$438 short no matter what I do.

OLIVE

What the heck happened?

KATE

(Sighing)

Here we go.



CUT TO: INT. KATE'S APARTMENT – LIVING ROOM – LAST WEEK – AFTERNOON

KATE (V.O.)

Brie and I had been getting along great.

KATE enters the living room. BRIE is sitting on the couch, painting her toenails. The open bottle of nail polish is resting on top of a pristine copy of EVERYTHING IS ILLUMINATED by JONATHAN SAFRAN FOER. Nail polish is dripping down the side of the bottle and onto the book. KATE looks enraged.

LIVING ROOM - LAST WEEK – EVENING

KATE (V.O.)

I mean, she did have her boyfriend over quite a bit.

Kate walks in to the apartment, looking tired. She walks over to her bedroom door and sees a scrunchie around the doorknob. Music is playing inside.

KATE (V.O.)

But I was totally understanding.

KITCHEN – CONTINUOUS

Kate enters the kitchen and opens the cupboard. She proceeds to lick every plate in the cupboard.

LIVING ROOM – THE FOLLOWING MORNING

Kate has clearly slept on the couch. BRIE and CAM exit her bedroom. Kate snaps a picture of them on her cell phone.

KATE

Look at you two lovebirds! Geez, I think you set a new record! I was thinking of setting up a live web cast next time.

LIVING ROOM – LAST WEEK – AFTERNOON

Brie walks out of her bedroom with most of her belongings packed in overflowing suitcases. Cam is carrying most of them. Kate is lounging on the couch watching a movie. She is surprised when Brie comes out.

KATE (V.O.)

So it was a real surprise when Brie decided to suddenly move out.

CUT TO: KATE’S APARTMENT – LIVING ROOM – PRESENT

Olive is staring at Kate and clearly does not believe a word she’s saying.

OLIVE

Come on, Kate. You two hated each other from day one.

KATE

Fine. I’ll give you that. But she was basically the worst roommate of all time.

OLIVE

Now, come on, she wasn’t that bad.



KATE

She tried to reheat a slice of pizza in the oven on my grandmother's china.

OLIVE

So?

KATE

At 400 degrees.

OLIVE

So?

KATE

It exploded.

OLIVE

Okay, maybe she was.

KATE

Oh, she was. Do you remember when she tried to flush my favorite pair of underwear down the toilet?

OLIVE

Fine, she was.

KATE

Thank you.

OLIVE

You're welcome. Now what are you going to do about the rent?

KATE

I don't know. I already paid my half. She's the one who always did everything last minute.

OLIVE

When is it due?

KATE

June 15th.

OLIVE

What? That's in ten days!

KATE

I know.

OLIVE

Crap.

KATE

Do you have \$438?

OLIVE

Are you kidding?

KATE

I wish.

OLIVE

Did you ask your parents?



KATE

I still owe them money.

OLIVE

Okay. It's no big deal, really. We'll just have to get creative.

KATE

You know I hate it when you say that.

OLIVE

Look, it's the 21st century. It's the era of PayPal and Craigslist. Heck, the two homeless guys at the bus stop always seem to have money.

KATE

You mean that crazy guy who thinks he's Theodore Roosevelt and his klepto buddy Hashbrown?

OLIVE

Yeah! Let's go ask them!

KATE

You can't be serious.

OLIVE

Of course I'm serious. This is Portland! People will pay you money to punch you in the face if you let them. \$438? 10 days? No problem. Come on!

KATE

Here we go...



“Prayer” by Lou Foltz

Sestina



by Brittany Tate

The road ahead seems to never end
Each step consuming precious energy
Mud jumps out of the puddles created by rain
Some drink of it, succumbing to the pain
Motivation to move forward is fueled by pure desire
Pushing forward, I refuse to die in the fire.

My muscles burn as if consumed in Hell's fire
With every inch that passes, I promise myself it will end
If only I could control it with desire
Pressing on I will continue to search for energy
Raw, wet, sore, my feet cry out from pain
Turning my head upwards I long to drink from the rain

Beads of sweat run down my skin like drops of rain
Skin so hot, feeling like it has been next to a fire
Worse than the physical, in my heart I feel the most pain
Hoping that along with this journey, that too will end
I envy the birds flying overhead with so much energy
Wondering what it is they desire

The trees grow tall, the flowers beautiful, I to match is my desire
All to be fed by the water from the rain
The air and rain offer energy
Only to be devastatingly destroyed by fire
Is this really how it was meant to end?
Almost numb I do not even feel the pain

If only it were possible to bleed out the pain
Words cut like swords, but still do not cut the desire
Like this journey, will love end?
Or endure on like the rain
Pouring down upon the fire
Each extinguishing each others' energy

Digging deep I begin to find energy
Ignoring the pain
The rain battles the fire
As I battle for desire
My soul is soaked from the rain
Bogging me down, I shall meet my end

Alas, this too shall end
All spent is the energy
Heaven above has conquered my desire.



Dead or Alive



by Jayden Bontrager

the hours have passed
since that last breath left
the bitter decay has set in
lying in silence
no life in this corpse
suddenly a spark from within
driven by one thing
forced awake by desire
a hunger for the flesh of live men
not dead or alive
all feelings are gone
just a body that can't even sin



“Sparks of Life” by Erin Flynn





"Untitled" by Rosemary Baylee

First Visit to Tacumbú



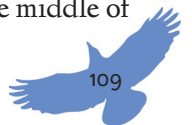
by Timothy Revett

To our left was a ragged chain-link fence. Ahead was the prison wall. Behind us was the throng of inmates who had been following us and pressuring us to give them everything we had. From this point there were no prison guards in sight. We were cornered and completely vulnerable to an assault. I silently prayed for protection while asking myself, “Why did I come here?”

Terms like “frightening” and “spiritually dark” fall short in describing my impressions of the Tacumbú Men’s Penitentiary upon my first visit there in August of 2007. The prison’s residents simply refer to it as “Hell.” I had visited jails in the United States on a number of occasions and I knew of the infamy of Latin American prisons; yet, when I left my apartment

that morning, I could not imagine the shock I was going to experience inside Paraguay’s largest and most notorious correctional institution. The human rights violations that exist within the prison are known to the United Nations. The horrors of prison life there are very well known to inmates. What is yet to be seen is how Paraguayan society will be affected by what local newspapers call “a time bomb waiting to explode” (ABC Color, 7/20/2011).

I accompanied three men on the visit to Tacumbú. Two of the men, Juan and Rodrigo, had served time there. Ramon worked in a ministry for ex-convicts. We were greeted by an intolerable smell of garbage and sewage upon arriving at the front gate of the gray, six-square block mass of concrete situated in the middle of



a neighborhood in the capital city, Asunción. A creaky gate, an uncomfortable pat-down, and then distant whistles and yells became audible. From the security checkpoint we stepped into the inmates' world. Although it was a cool, rainy day, and much of the prison is an open patio, the inmates wore shorts and flip-flops. To our right a man sold a variety of crafts made by the prisoners. There were colorful paintings, wood carvings with inscribed poetry, and decorated leather-covered thermoses for *yerba maté*. To our left was an entry into a dark, tin-roofed pavilion from where the pounding beats and dirty lyrics of Cumbia-Villera music came. I felt dozens of pairs of eyes on me. Requests for money began, solicited by inmates and correctional officers alike. At this point, we'd only entered the V.I.P. section.

After passing through the next gate into the processing area, the sewage and garbage smell grew more intense. Now we were among the yells and whistles that were once distant. From the barred doors of two overcrowded cells of newly-admitted convicts on one side, obscene hand gestures and profanities protruded. Across the breezeway from the cells, at the guards' station, correctional officers yelled back and threateningly waved their night sticks. What I saw waiting for us directly ahead made me question whether I should enter through the final gate with Juan, Rodrigo and Ramon.

Tacumbú was built for a capacity of 800 men. It currently houses 3,334 men, who serve time there for all types of crimes—from petty theft to serial homicide, and everything in between. Tacumbú is called a maximum security prison; however, most inmates roam freely alongside visitors in the general population area. The inmates stay in their cells only during evenings and contraband searches. The guards remain in towers on the walls and at a few stations inside the prison. There may be a maximum of 60 guards on duty at a time. Violence towards visitors is not uncommon. In the years since my first visit, inmates have told me about horrendous acts against visitors that didn't appear in the newspapers. If I had heard such stories before, I would not have opted to join Juan, Rodrigo, and Ramon that day.

On the other side of the last gate paced a crowd of young men whose tattooed, skeletal frames were covered by the rags of what they probably wore on the first day they entered this smelly, concrete aberration to civilization. Most of them were barefoot. All eyes were on us; they were waiting for us. While the guard was opening the gate, Juan, Rodrigo, and Ramon intently scanned the crowd for familiar faces. The gate opened. We stepped in. We were surrounded immediately. Money, my wooden cross necklace, my shirt, my shoes—the inmates asked for everything and they didn't respect

personal space in their asking. I mustered a smile, a handshake, and a simple “no.” Some accepted my response. Others repeated their requests with the desperate fire of crack addiction burning in their eyes. I hid my shock behind a smile and a stream of silent prayers for safety. The overwhelming garbage and sewage stench didn’t bother me by this time.

A short, blond man broke through the crowd with a look of surprise and concern. Ramon seemed to know him. The man, Samuel, insisted we follow him, which we did without question. Samuel led us past the narrow entry zone, sandwiched between two fenced-off areas. We turned left at the end of one of the fences, in front of a snack bar located a few yards from one of the open sewage holes. We passed a couple of pavilions and the Catholic chapel. We arrived at a corner where prisoner assassinations occasionally take place due to low guard supervision. The crowd of addiction-driven inmates stayed close behind us, repeating their petitions for our possessions. Samuel stopped to tell us something. My prayers drowned out what he was saying. This was the most unsettling moment of our visit. Although we were at the corner for maybe two minutes, it seemed like time stood still. Anything could’ve happened.

Samuel led us around the corner. Thankfully, the crowd dissipated. Ramon showed me a 10-foot section of the prison wall with new concrete. In recent years some prisoners exploded a bomb there and escaped. He said the bomb was probably smuggled in component by component, and that some correctional officers most likely knew about the plot before the explosion.

We arrived at our destination: a section of the prison called Libertad, which means “freedom” in Spanish. Libertad is a pavilion inside the penitentiary and is managed by the Mennonite Brethren Church. Inmates here must abide by a code of conduct and attend church services. These and other factors make it one of the safest sections of Tacumbú. The environment inside Libertad starkly contrasts that of the general population. We spent the next hour listening to testimony after testimony of inmates who came to Tacumbú for horrible crimes but experienced transformation since arriving in Libertad. Many of them were now discipling other inmates or helping with the church services. Later that day, after we had left the prison, I was still in a little shock from the experience, but I was also very much inspired by the faith of the inmates in Libertad as well as the ministry volunteers who served there.



Tacumbú is a known haven of human rights violations. After my first visit, they weren't just statistics on a United Nations report or a newspaper article. I had seen some of the human rights issues first hand: overcrowding, malnourishment, unsanitary conditions, the constant threat of violence. They were in my face, reminding me that while I was inside those walls, the consequences of such conditions could

react against me. For the nation of Paraguay, this same threat—a violent reaction to these conditions, as well as the façade of security and correction, within Tacumbú—is real and constant.

Yet, there is also hope because inside the darkness of Tacumbú “the light shines...and the darkness has not overcome it” (John 1:9).

Lament for an Untimely End



by J. Willows

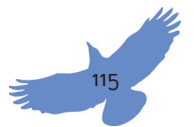
I used to be someone, back when life was blossoming.
I was everything, all at once!
I ran as the fastest horse, and flew as the prettiest bird.
In the blink of the eye, I could go from a cheetah to a collie,
and then make it back to being a girl when I felt like it.
I was Red Pollard, tearing down the homestretch on my mechanical Seabiscuit.
I was a great artist, sketching magnificent portraits
On notebook paper with number #2 pencils.
I was a magnificent musician—the best in the world!
Playing solos for an audience chosen by Nature herself.
But then, I fell off Seabiscuit, and he ran from me.
My pencil broke in a flourish of torn paper,
and the audience booed in a chorus of shattered courage.
An anguished cry sounded in the darkness,
The rush of angry tears, and a million reasons to doubt myself.
This was the end of my childhood. This was the day I grew up.



Almost two decades ago,
A daughter was born to a Mother who wasn't ready,
And a father who should never have had the temptation placed before him.
The child—a beautiful little girl with blonde hair, blue eyes, and a sweet smile—
Came into the world much the same way that most children do.
But she had barely begun to play before all of her toys were taken away.
She was locked in a box, and tortured as no child should be.
She screamed, pristine tears streaming down her innocent face.
Then her voice was taken away,
Her fingers rendered useless,
And her imagination suppressed.
I will never forget the way she looked at me, just before she died.
It was a silent appeal, ages old: please, I don't want to die!
But then an adult took her place, and life went on.
Nobody remembers that girl.
Nobody remembers her kind eyes,
Her sweet laugh,
Or how beautiful she looked when she was happy.
Only the angels mourn her.
I killed that girl, and I will never be the same.



“Beautifully Estranged” by Heather Miles



Drink Up



by Josh Gaunt

Tonight we drink to ourselves
We attempt to engage one another
Smacking our lips we speak; spouting off
Do we understand how this liquid fools us

Sipping we grab our thoughts, freely speaking we ponder
Makes us feel powerful, unstoppable, stronger
Interaction truly isn't happening here because,
Conversation deceives the eye

Lily White



by Rosemary Baylee

Lily white
The lady fair leads her lover to her barren room
Glowing embers on the hearth
Beneath her autumn moon

Sweet, sweet labernaum petals
Lay about your laughing smile
In lost unlisted photographs
Lithography could not portray you
Darling, lackadaisy darling
Lacking none but wanting
And wilting
Without the only one you ever really loved

Low and lazy
She lifts her hair from listless eyes and fever bloom
All have left her lying in the dark
To lick her inner wounds



Sweet, sweet labernaum petals
Litter all her letters while
Endless longings scar the paragraphs
Laity grows empty and you
Lie down, lackluster darling
Locked up with a heartstring
And lasting
So long without the one you only ever loved

Look at the ladybird
She languishes inside
And lives for the shivers in her spine
Each time she remembers
The interlaced design of her loves' lacerations upon her mind

Lilies and labernaum petals
Like a lonely soliloquy
Are lost beneath the linens and the dry and lacey lavender,
The light and rending laughter of la vie amore's shade



“Linda” by Jessica McIntire

Mr. Robot Man



by Daniel Young

posed on a corner.
Silver coat and skin fades into the skyscraper behind him.
The raised arm towards heaven reaching.
As though a gift were handed down in that extended moment.
Still life.
 An imitation.
 Like a photograph.
A hat discarded by the feet, upturned.
Loose change keep it wind-stalled.
Eyes in contorted despair
look onward as though a love has died.
Unblinking, unmoving, for days on end...
'Till a curious pedestrian
inserts a few coins.
The mannequin comes alive!
Begins to undulate forward
then turns.
Eyes intent and focused on the hapless citizen,

and dances in the manner of an industrial arm.
Sharp, swift, and repetitious.
Chuckles emanate the fortunate audience,
as more presidents fill the hat.
He changes routine.
Every step a mechanical feat.
His final move, he spins like a washing machine.
Balanced like a top.
In perfect pose he stops.
Frame freeze like terror.
Arms beckon the setting sun.
Face, a carving of grief.
His day ends as it began.
I call him Mr. Robot Man.



Observant People Notice Observant People



by Rosemary Baylee

Passing patterns of feet are nothing new—
Angle past, don't look behind you,
Don't meet eyes of those around you
Don't look too far up or down or around or soon
People might think you're crazy or something,
Maybe that you're lazy, touring,
Whatever else the hell it is
That keeps people to themselves in such splendor,
Keeps them from wonder.

Groups are different, and indifferent
To anyone else but themselves, civility amped up by the courage
Of having someone have your back
Or the lead
Or the parts in between
Assigned roles and banter and manners and business.

Dual cellphone cameras are whipped out and
Whipping wind slips down my sleeve
And suddenly I'm present,
For a second,
With a stranger;
Without words, he leaves, trampling leaves,
But I know that the windfalls caught his senses up just like mine
And a split-hair of time was allotted to finding kinship
But only in that, nothing more
Now we're both just like crazies,
Self-conscious and
Self-validated in simile.

Grey doesn't have to be unnoticeable.
It's the motion, the brightness in the eyes, that catches my eyes.
Art realizes art and action tastes, sees, touches, hears action
Silence doesn't have to be immobile
"Suss suss," go the bright red leaves
"Tak tak tak tak," across the pavement
"Click"—that's how a camera sounds when it's not on mute, I think
No matter how it sounds, his chuckle rebounds in my head
With a realization:
Observant people notice observant people
Preoccupation is an occupation of the state of mind
That moves beyond the daily grind,
Leaving all present forces immobilized
Unpresent ones become vivi-blind.
Don't forgo color. Blood is red for a reason.
But notice the grey because, beside it, life seems more alive.



What would happen
If that connection
Grew a pupa of conversation
And spun white threads of interaction
On the principle of hope and love and (No, don't say it!)
Even conviction?

But we all know that there's no time for that, no place for that
No hope for that, no love for that,
And where's the church at if it's not our hearts?
Sidetracked,
I depart.

Living people notice living people.
Maybe we'd get something done at last
If the living would stop wasting time on the dead
And the tried guilty past.
The leaves clap their hands and redemption sings.
Trust me. We're not the only ones who can hear these things.



“Summer Wheat” by Kari Jennings



Rounded Binary Form



by Kimberly Hyatt

“A three minute exploitation of two chords.” That’s how I would describe the first full-length song I ever wrote. I remember agonizing over it for hours. I needed it to be perfect. I don’t know how many different versions of that song I have played or even how many are recorded on the cheap cassette recorder my dad bought for me. I only know one version now. It is complete, symmetric.

I wrote this song during my relationship with Tony, the metal guitarist, and continued to write it after we broke up. He was there when I played it for our end-of-the-year project/performance. I knew he was watching and listening behind the closed door to the band room. My hands were shaking, my throat was tight, and I felt as

though I would puke at any second. But I played it anyway. I played it because I knew he was watching, because I knew this song was for, inspired by, and about him. I don’t know how it sounded, only that it was three minutes of my life that I was glad to have lived through. After class, a friend told me, “Kim, it’s like your song was saying, ‘Listen to me!’” I looked at her, puzzled, how did she know that’s how I felt? My music told her that? Could I repeat this phenomenon?

Did he know that’s what my song meant?

We had tried being friends. It just never seemed to work for us. It wasn’t long before we would be holding hands, laughing, leaning in close...

We had tried being enemies. We had intentionally forgotten the other person's number, destroyed all the pictures we had of each other, managed to "lose" the gifts, the letters, the movie tickets from our nights out. It didn't seem to help. There were still the friends who knew us together, the places we had hung out together, the songs we had listened to together, all reminding us of a happier time.

A

We did have some good times, like our first summer together, when I invited him over for lunch every day, assuming that anyone in a metal band must not have a mother who fed them. Or, our first date, sitting in the back of his brother's pick-up, munching on food court Philly cheese steaks, rushing home to watch the kids when my mom got called into work, and Date 1: Round 2, when she came back, and we drove to the bluff, looked out at the city lights, and danced in the middle of Willamette Blvd. Even though our dates were generally pretty simple, the genuine enthusiasm from us both made each one special. During this time, we never fought. We disagreed and got frustrated with each other, but the term "kiss and make-up" was not lost on us. Things were simple back then.

He is the youngest in his family, the charmer, the life of the party. I am the oldest in mine, the responsible one, the nurturer, the person in the kitchen cooking for the party. He brought a smile to my face, brought fun into my uneventful life and made me forget all my worries. I kept him feeling like a king, always willing to fulfill his request, always respectful. We were a good match.

My song would have been better if it had been in Binary Form.

Binary form is when a song is split into two distinct sections, an A and a B section. When analyzing a piece of music with this form, the symbols used would look like this: A|B.

B

That's how I remember our relationship, the good times, and the ugly times. Almost equally split down the middle between the time spent together in high school, and the time spent off-and-on again in college. I don't know why things got so bad so quickly after I started college. I know that it was when I started to question whether or not we had similar values and decided that we did not. I am sure that he



felt unable to compete with my new friends and didn't know how to fit into my new schedule—his feelings hurt because he was now less of a priority in my life. We both were hurting. I felt as though he didn't understand, and he felt as though I didn't care. Instead of communicating that to each other, we began to use each other as a scapegoat for all our frustrations, which led to bitterness, and more using, and more resentment. Even though we tried to amend our ways on multiple occasions, the damage was done.

It seemed the moment both of us had decided it was really over this time, he disappeared. He moved to California to be closer to his dad's side of the family. I never expected to see or hear from him again, and I was quite content with that. But, wouldn't you know? The same week he is in town visiting his mom is the same week I stop by to see how she is doing.

He greets me pleasantly. His reaction to me being at his mom's is so much different than mine. When Gail told me, "My sons are in town," I instinctively reached for my coat and keys, ready to run. However, he marched straight in, even though my car was parked in his spot, and tells me it is good to see me. I responded with an awkward hug, not knowing how to handle the situation. We talk for a bit, after which he invites me to go to coffee with

him before he leaves for California. I tell my roommate every detail of our encounter, praying that she, knowing our history, will talk me out of meeting with him.

He calls me the next day, and we talk for one hour and thirty minutes. Me, mostly, because I am nervous and babbling. Even though I am hastily pacing up and down the sidewalk as we talk, I am loosening up and so is he. I know because I hear his signature hissing laugh. "Ts.ts.ts.," he snickers.

A'

This is the return of the A section. What we would call A prime (A'), when analyzing the form of a musical work. The same material is there, except this time it is different, or altered in some way.

When he picks me up for coffee, my hand reaches for his without thinking first. Embarrassed that he might have seen, I quickly shove it into my pocket in case it tries again. We reminisce about the good times, the bad times, and the times that we just threw our hands up over, not knowing how to make sense of the whole situation. It disturbs me how familiar it all feels sitting next to him in the passenger seat, having talked to him every day this week. Yet,

it also disturbs me to hear my own name when he says it. When we were together it was always, “Good morning, Beautiful,” or “Just hanging out with ma’ lady.” Hearing, “Hi Kim,” is awkward, unpleasant, and new. But it is also good that we have these boundaries, the cue that things are ending and won’t be the same again. Next week, he will be returning to California and our song will have ended.

Just like I wrote it the first time, in rounded binary form.

Rounded Binary can typically be reduced to two main sections, the A section, and the B section. These sections generally contrast significantly. At the end of the B section, the A section returns in a shortened, or altered form, creating symmetry and a sense of completeness. (A|BA’)





“Untitled” by Tyler Lindell

On a Vitalist's Deathbed



by Daniel Young

Men of science!
Play with your things
design your instruments
build your rooms and set
the conditions just so.
Hide behind glass windows
and see with mechanical eyes.
My being has escaped your gaze.
Hah! Where am I?
In death your observation fails
your hubris deflates
your existentialism is meaningless.
The spirit slips through,
your clamps and iron concentration.
With brazen smile and song
defy the best efforts of man
for they can only do as much
as they understand
which is so very little





"Untitled" by Tyler Lindell



“Rescue” by Jessica McIntire

Tissues



by Daniel Young

A box lies here
six sides folded inward
weak blankets of dead trees line my insides
to be used and discarded, built
for the the comforts of a sniveling little child who played in the rain.
I was once a great cedar. Tall. And would savor breath,
for I saw my brothers taken before me.
I who gave company to the wanderers, the wonderers,
the dead and the living.
Kings of air nested from my branches
as creatures below rested in my shade.
My roots held back strong waters.
And after a long life, I was cut from my heart.
Divided into these small little boxes.
Foreign words mark me.
I feel nothing anymore.
Only the nostalgia of my lost rings.
My proud inner coils of life.
As I melt into the sea...

From Blue to White



by Eli Ritchie

Once the foremost advisor to a depression portrait, a future boomer revolutionary and
The Prince of apple-pear juice-box lunches,
Now decorative nostalgia in a novelty reggae dreadlock hat
A lap to hold coupons and cufflinks in a small white box
Perched on top of the bookshelf next to the rented wall.

One wobbly-threaded eye looks through consciously sad expressions,
Past a split nose to see a change in scenery after a child's lifetime
Propped against walls on blankets painted blue,
Shrunk by time, miles from growing again.

Bygone knight arrayed in quilted armor
Now bereft of companions with obvious looking names.
You, who stood against darkness's quandaries, now
Waits for his time in blue beds to come again,
a sewn stone in a rolling universe.



Lovely Roots (sad day of sand)



by Timothy Jackson

In Zambia today, is a sad day of sand
As black hearse floats by with mourners in black
Across black roasted road, they all hold hand
In hand of sweaty skin
With glowing white sun on smooth satin
You can see the lovely roots

You can see the lovely roots
Entangled in the kicked up sand
And in the Zebra's snow and satin
As they pass safari gates in barraging bands of black
Leaving behind chicken bones but eating skin
Adding grease to sweat in hand

And they grasp hand
In hand again, to create more lovely roots
Within the roots and prints in skin
As they all have identity, beings of sand
Prying threaded feelings of black
From the smooth cloak of Satan's Satin

Grasp hands closer, don't shoo the buzzing black satin
Exit the transport still holding hands
Brown baobab has turned black
Thirst at the roots
In pit of scorching sand
Where scorpions scuttle and pinch at the skin

They stand there and expose the skin
Open clothes in a natural suit of satin
As they open up a mouth in mother sand
And weep hand
In hand of lovely roots
They let their hymns go black

They see the cousin of Baobab turned black
Entomb the vulture feast of skin
As the blister box is hugged by roots
Entering the cave of sandy satin
Dead dog duties done, they weep hand
In hand to feed the sand

Sand that is the skin
Of black satin
Seen in the hand of lovely roots



staff



EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: Erin Flynn

COPY EDITOR: Ben Conn

PHOTO & ART EDITORS: Timothy Jackson and Jessica McIntire

DESIGN & LAYOUT: Kyler Scott-Subsits and Lance Shroyer

PRODUCTION MANAGERS: Josh Gaunt and Monique Lay

MEDIA RELATIONS: Shawna Downes

GENERAL STAFF: Sarah McCarty

FACULTY ADVISORS: Dr. Pamela Plimpton & Windy-Ayres Wray



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Submissions are accepted year round at WPRocinante@gmail.com. Although reading periods are subject to change depending upon the editors, expect responses during mid-Spring semester. Please attach submissions to an email containing your name, contact information (email and phone number), a three-line biography, and the genre and title of your submissions.

Poetry: limit five pieces per person

Prose: no more than ten pages double-spaced

Artwork/Photography: limit ten per person. Any digital photographs must be 300 DPI. If you are unable to submit a digital copy of your work, contact the staff via email.

Check rocinantewp.wordpress.com for more information.

Any submissions without proper contact information will be subject to automatic exclusion. Those submitting hard copies are responsible to claim their submissions within 30 days of the journal release party.

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CONTRIBUTORS

AMY VAUGHT
ARTHUR KELLY
BARBARA FROMAN
BEN SMITH
BENJAMIN CONNOR IRWIN
BRITTANY TATE
DANIEL YOUNG
ELI RITCHIE
ERIN FLYNN
HEATHER MILES
J. WILLOWS
JAYDEN BONTRAGER
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JENNIFER WAIA'U
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RUTH RENO
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TIMOTHY REVETT
TYLER LINDELL

