



DREAMS



DREAM ON, *RAIN* READERS



RAIN

literary magazine

Dreams
Edition

DEDICATED TO CARLY LACKNER

WHO INSPIRED ALL TO CHASE THEIR DREAMS.
TO GO WHERE THEY WANT, WHEN THEY WANT—
AND TO BELIEVE, AS SHE DID.
THAT ONE DAY, THEY WILL.

1983-2024



WE BECOME NOT A MELTING POT BUT A
BEAUTIFUL MOSAIC. DIFFERENT BELIEFS,
DIFFERENT YEARNINGS, DIFFERENT HOPES,
DIFFERENT DREAMS.

-JIMMY CARTER

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2025 Student Staff

Tory Aforonpe, Aubrey Bowers, Joshua Martin-Schlichting,
Len Bergman, Makayda Cloward, Jessica Bahl

Managing Editor

Len Bergman

Editor-in-Chief

Jessica Bahl

Faculty Advisor

Kama O'Connor

Printing and Perfect Binding

Morel Ink, Portland, Oregon

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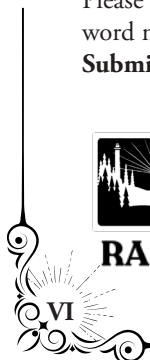
**Clatsop
Community
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RAIN MAGAZINE 

Rain Magazine

Clatsop Community College
1651 Lexington Avenue
Astoria, OR 97103

RAIN



INTRODUCTION

DREAM, DRĒM

NOUN (AS IN, “THIS JOB IS A *DREAM* COME TRUE”)

VERB (AS IN, “I *DREAMT* ABOUT YOU”)

To *dream* is an active thing, but to *have* a dream can often be the opposite—a secret kept close to the chest. Maybe they’re safer there, but in my experience, many dreams are suffocated when they aren’t given air to breathe.

Dreaming out loud doesn't come naturally to everyone, or all the time. *Dreaming* invites newness, and with it, *risk*. Risk begs for curiosity, a willingness to imagine an unseen reality. But that reality, fragile and uncertain, depends on timing, circumstance, and the dreamer’s readiness.

And that’s scary. Because risk is incendiary; it transforms everything it touches. Dreams included. But... *this is a good thing.* Risk, when paired with sweat equity, knows no boundaries. It tears down walls and invents doors, reshaping challenges into opportunities. The boldest, most transformative moments of my life were born from dreams: a new country, a new job, a new love. Risky ventures that often paid off, but only after I fanned the flames of those dreams, eager to see what might ignite.

It doesn’t mean I’m unafraid of risk, just that I’m more primed to take the bumpers off, to bring dreams over to the space reality inhabits and give them space to grow, to fail, or to thrive. To make sure the two play nice and nobody gets burned.

As an educator, this mindset serves me well. My lesson plans are flexible frameworks because I’m continually amazed by what my students are capable of imagining and achieving. They surprise me with their ingenuity and vision. This term of publishing *Rain Magazine* was no exception. Our student editors brought their *ideas*, their *aspirations*, their *dreams*.

When those dreams met yours, sparks flew. The collision of these worlds are captured within the smoldering pages of this 55th edition. Thank you contributors, readers, supporters, and advocates of the arts, for trusting us with your dreams. No longer hidden in secret, they now have space to breathe, to incubate, and to shape the words and worlds of generations to come.

Dream on, *Rain* readers, and when you wake up, we will be here with imaginative and illustrious stories to share.




LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dreams reside between *what is* and *what could be*—occupying a space both profoundly intimate and intriguingly unknown. They blur the boundaries between certainty and imagination, offering us a threshold into possibility.

This year, *Rain Magazine* with us, exploring dreams in all that haunt us, and the ones we

In a world increasingly obsessed with beauty of the unknown. They elements of human experience mystery. *Rain Magazine* is itself share our deepest thoughts and shape. Within these pages, you'll celebrate the art of navigating doorway into the unknown—invite us to imagine a world

So, dear reader, let this issue be Step through with curiosity and spark something within you—a the gentle reminder that your

invites you to step through that doorway their forms: the ones we chase, the ones dare to share with the world.

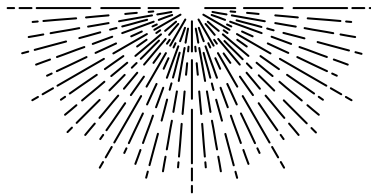
with certainty, dreams celebrate the remind us that the most profound emerge not from calculation, but from a dream, born from the courage to the exhilaration of watching them take find stories, poems, and images that uncertainty. Each piece serves as a some tender, others bold—but all that is not yet finished.

your gateway into the realm of *dreams*. read with wonder. May these pages whispered truth, a hidden dream, or imagination *knows no bounds*.

Jessica Ball



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STAR-CROSSED

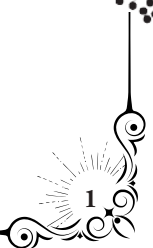
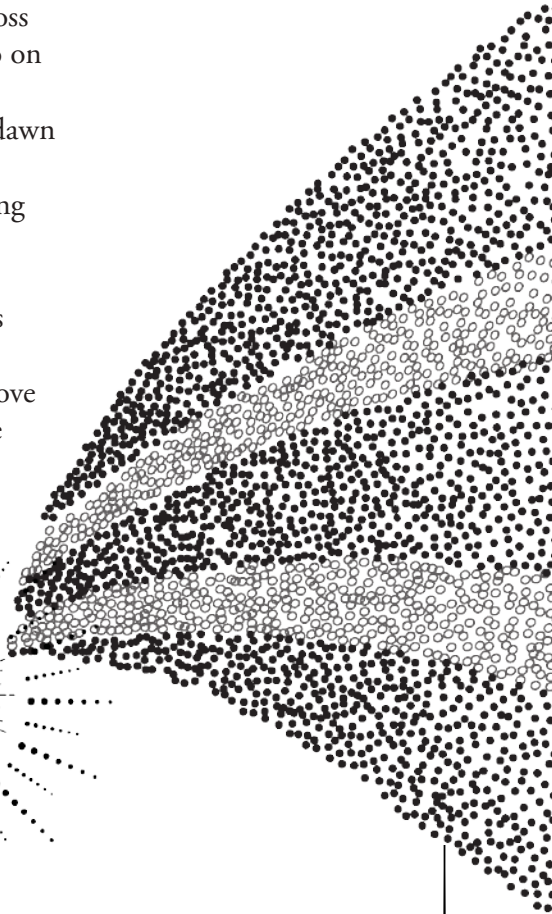
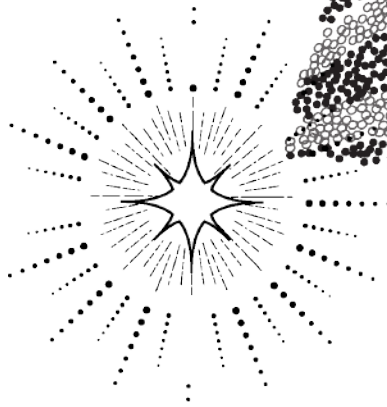
Aubrey Bowers

Brightly he shone for her throughout the day
at night she longed to see his face again
he wished he didn't have to go away
at dusk he wished he could behold her then

Every once in a while their paths did cross
but not long, for night and day must go on
their love was nothing but a tragic loss
the Moon so yearned to see the Sun at dawn

They always thought the other was hiding
never to be seen by one another
in the daylight the chariot riding
in the moonlight, shadows of two lovers

Such that the two have always been in love
they will once more be reconciled above



CORNER ARS POETICA

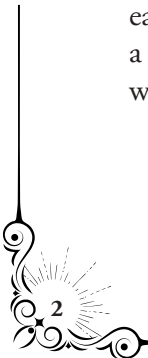
Rodney Merrill

In the corner where
two walls meet,
a tiny spider
meticulously
threads poems
soft as first light.

She maps
the air
with subtle art,
each word
a careful choice.

Day by day
she weaves
trapped moments
in delicate lace,
finding the
shape of silence.

No grand plans,
just *slow* unfolding,
each strand a verse,
each knot a break,
a tiny world
where she reigns alone.



In the quiet,
she teaches me
how to knit,
with intent,
the beauty
of every day.

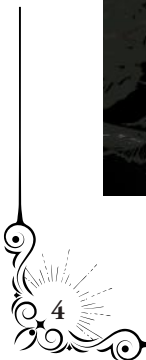


John Cox - *Nostalgia*
Photography





Jessica Bahl - *The Looking Glass*
Digital Illustration



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COMING TO

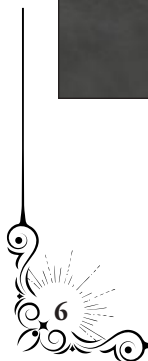
Logan Garner

Between black velvet
and the marine layer
I sit.
I sit in twilight waiting
for the pink wild sky, wipe
the salt track from my cheek
from crying in my sleep.
Was with my nephew
just now, pouring over hardships
absences, longings.
And then waking.
My cup is full.
My cup is full and I sip warmth,
bitterness.
A mile-distant fog horn
sings about coming rain.





Joshua Martin-Schlicting - *Lone Chalk*
Photography



RAIN

USEFUL HARVESTS

✧ AFTER HENRY DAVID THOREAU'S *JOURNAL*: OCTOBER 20, 1857

Donna Mendelson

On tweed ground—grasses, asters spent—
a threadbare figure bends with his load
and years and to this day's intent.
Toward me, sauntering the old Carlisle road,
Brooks Clark walks barefoot, warm-greeting,
carrying from the autumn wood rich gleanings:
crabapples and a dead robin in his shoes,
more apples in both pockets of his frayed coat.

Another man than Clark would choose
propriety and warm feet instead of harvest
in his shoes, would cloak his soul
in newer cloth but not more bright.
From our meeting in late gleams
I carry scents of crabapples and heart.



A RIB-STICKING FEAST

Jan Bono

Thanksgiving: The great American Family Values holiday, steeped in nostalgic rituals and traditions. At our house it's also shrouded in secrets. Consider some of the Bono family's *Unsolved Mysteries*:

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

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

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

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

*Whose job was it to

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

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

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

But the most intriguing puzzle of all is one in which I played co-conspirator.

Hours before the Macy's Parade, Dad and I chopped onions and celery, melted butter, and measured spices. The steam in the kitchen smelled heavily of sage. Condensation rolled down the inside of our kitchen windows.

Together we wrestled the 24-pound bird, stuffed him with dressing-to-die-for, stitched the ends



closed with forest green yarn, and sealed him securely inside a roll and a half of heavy-duty aluminum foil. This turkey would not be leaking juices!

Dad hoisted the main course into the oven and went to the sink to wash his hands.

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

"What's gone?" I asked, handing him a dishtowel. He held up his left index finger. "My band-aid."

It took a few seconds for the implications to sink in. Then we simultaneously turned to stare at the foil-wrapped globe visible through the oven window.

"Uh-oh," we said in unison.

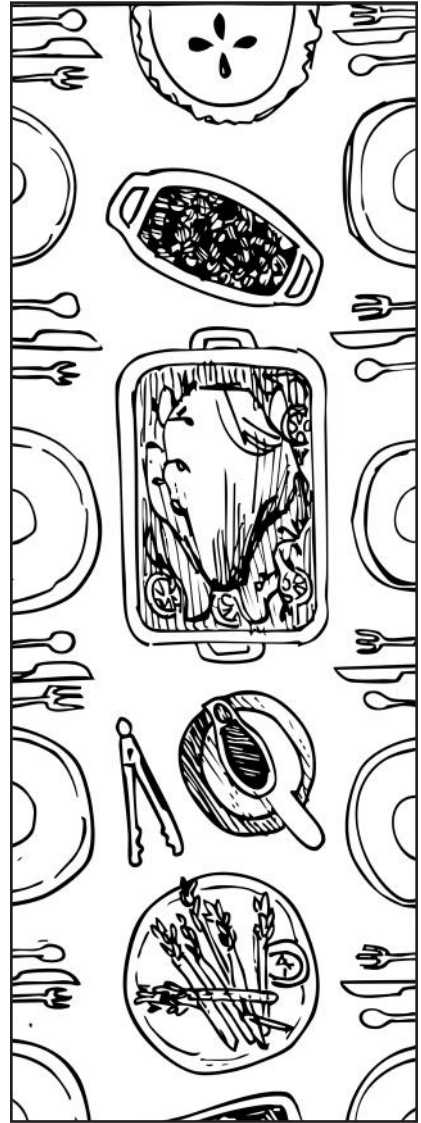
I don't recall whose idea it was to keep this to ourselves. I do remember that I spent the entire meal holding my breath while I watched every mouthful of stuffing being eaten.

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

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

In keeping with the historical

significance of the holiday, and with emphasis on our constitution's second amendment, we refer to this tradition as 'the right to bare arms.'



Len Bergman

A Feast For Jan

Micron Pen



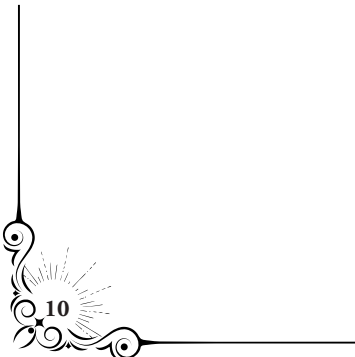
THE STORY

Florence Sage

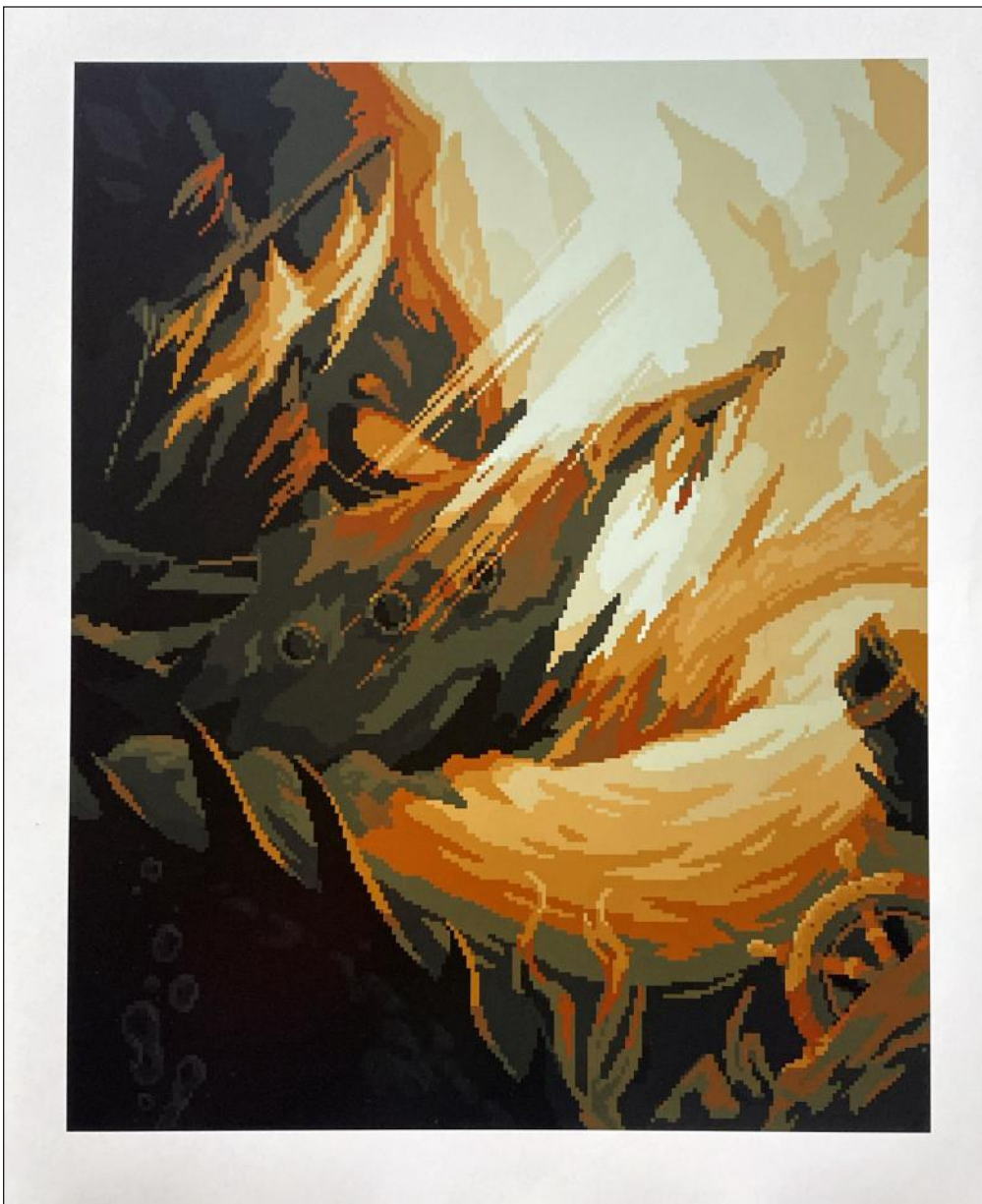
Ask me for a poem
and I will tell you a story.
It won't be the whole story.
It will be a cover story.
I will give it a title to fool us.

Underneath its weave
will be another story
without a title, without a form
or a place or a mark on the page
of something lonely
waiting to be said

that even I don't say,
can't say, can't see,
can't solve
even with a poem
but maybe you can
so I will tell you.



RAIN



Brooklyn Westerlund - *Sunken Shipwreck*
Digital Illustration



PHILOSOPHER'S COFFEE DECAFFEINATED

Steven Mayer

Several coffeehouse meetings take a toll discussing philosophical issues about religious belief/disbelief and global threats to humanity (see note). Before engaging, we search for a topic with less serious implications that incite invigorating philosophical conversation. Most of us are in an intellectual dead space, devoid of ideas. A poet fantasizes about improving the human condition and notices a spike in positive energy in her life outlook when she does. A retired attorney retorts, *What the hell? Let's discuss how to experience life more thoroughly than the human condition permits.* Instant consensus is anxiously achieved, with fists pounding on the table for applause.

The poet experiences boundlessness in her mindful meditations and imagines flying like a seagull. Several others confess dreams of human flight. A scientist prefers glider flying because of its exquisite peacefulness—no engine noise—with an unobstructed panoramic natural landscape view, and *he feels like a bird soaring over*

the forest and hills. Another writer confesses when walking in the early morning, *he often climbs a high dune, spreads his arms wide, and imagines gliding in the wind motionless.* Our feel-good fantasies are compellingly seductive. Others share swimming like a porpoise, climbing like a monkey, running like an antelope, and sleeping like a cat. Our fantasies may become our best dreams. One armchair philosopher imagines future advances to allow such feats, and a college student comments, *why wait? Just put on a virtual reality headset ... and fly away. Virtual reality may be the smartest option,* says another; *imagine the traffic nightmare if we fly.* Given the risk, we agree to pass on actual human flight and clip our fantasized wings.

While we are at it, a writer comments, *I am interested in progressive reincarnation. By progressive, I mean we don't transmigrate to a lower life form—not a worm at the end of a hook.* Several others share their fantasies of more lifetimes to embrace life's opportunities fully. Our armchair



philosopher notes, *I don't want to live forever because it might end up being hell. I romance Buddhist nirvana, believing more lifetimes are necessary to attain enlightenment. Evidence of inexplicable "old soul" experiences is reason to pause and ponder.* Not for long, as a visiting scientist comments, *population growth renders this idea untenable.* A person of faith opts for living life over again to correct mistakes but not forego heaven. Another person comments, *it's a good fantasy, but what prevents one from making more mistakes?* Our attorney smiles, *I am too smart for that.* Our group bursts into laughter ... if nothing else, the idea provides therapeutic relief in considering life changes. I am often reminded of this idea as a Buddha statue shines in my garden.

Why dream of future lifetimes when we can dream of making this one better? Consider utopian socialism—it envisions a perfect world with a just society. Several people ask for clarity. A poet offers *a world where individual effort generates wealth, but we only take what we need and give the remainder to others in need.* Some miraculous economic mechanism supposedly makes this happen transparently and equitably. Our scientist cautions that *it is a preposterous economic idea.* Even so, a quick

Google search reveals many books on this subject. One writer/historian notes *utopian communities have come and gone, though their members hold on to their ideology in the face of disaster.* A poet confesses being in a commune in Southern California in the 1970s—*it didn't take more than a year for it to fail because personal self-interest reigned whenever inequity emerged.* Like other social fantasies, *dreams about communal experiments led to nightmares in practice.* My wife staged a theatrical performance, *The Order is Love*, based on a rural 1890s Mormon pioneer community that attempted to live in a utopian manner and failed. Watching the performance, many empathize with those who sacrificed and suffered. Idealism is emotionally appealing, inciting a romance of the heart. Most heads nod in agreement but realize it is doomed from the start, requiring people to live with less than they earn. Some of us are despondent, myself included, dreaming of a society with no hate, crime, or violence. No rich or poor when the dust settles, weary of class struggle. I hum John Lennon's "Imagine" and silently pray for a just and kind society over the one I am in.

Unnoticed in our glee and frivolity is the heightening intensity in our winter storm, with



King Tides warnings to stay off the beach. We are a block away when a huge wave hits a breakwall and forcefully sends spray skyward. It's good that no one is at the wall, daydreaming of summer.

Several in the group fantasize about cultural diversity, embracing a universal common language whilst preserving worldwide cultural heritages. *What would have to occur for this to be possible*, asks our lone social conservative. Most smile, stating that *global governance honors diversity. Travel is extensive and affordable. Immigration is a nonissue. We learn to celebrate differences, not merely tolerate them.* One thinker ponders that *our ideas are beginning to resemble a utopian society ... and if so, it is doomed to failure because of our unchecked idealism.* She warns that *common biases represent a tremendous source of cultural inertia.* Most nod their heads in agreement. Dreams and fantasies percolate out of robust imaginations, as do lingering doubts.

A few with college degrees quickly voice the fantasy of implanted intellectual endowment. *Given advances in cognitive neuroscience, this fantasy is close to reality*, says a person with a scientific background. He adds that *the human brain is a*

computer into which we can upload data (knowledge). Wait a minute, an armchair philosopher comments; this idea provokes serious ethical issues—who decides what types of data, based on what criteria, in what manner, and at what time? While science contributes technology to interact with the human brain, philosophy contributes a rigorous examination of ethical and social issues. A writer questions, *would all people qualify for fundamental math, science, history, language, and art intelligence? What about specialized knowledge to be a doctor, engineer, scientist, musician, artist, and ad infinitum? Hell, says a writer, what about becoming an instant novelist? It seems we are losing our humanity.* Our scientist smiles; *are we willing to be displaced by artificial intelligence to preserve humanity?* Several people mumble that *what looks like a great idea becomes a poor one in practice.* One says, *I have no desire to be an Einstein, but I welcome implanted art aptitudes so I can play the guitar with my grandson and paint watercolors with my granddaughter.* All are eager to sign up ... think no homework or exams.

Our retired attorney muses, *if we are going to mess with the human brain, why not the human body?* He fantasizes human invincibility. Short of being Superman, immune to disease and injury but with the aging



process intact. Another predicts *we will see the day when this is possible*. Her fantasy is to have perfect teeth and never need dental care. Our entire table is on board with this idea. *While we're at it, let's eliminate the need for drugs*, suggest an elderly man. Our attorney believes *our political system, including special-interest lobbies, would fight it*. No one is surprised that such a radical idea would provoke radical responses. I ask *what technology would be*

required to create human invincibility?

Our table is buzzing with a crossfire of ideas that render ideas

risky and disruptive. We experience confounding ambivalence and frustration. *Have we exhausted all of our fondest fantasies?* I ask. We gaze around the table, expecting to find exhausted faces, only to see ones alive with bright-mindedness and enthusiasm. Conflict, anger, and bias are absent. Our philosophers' coffee has been decaffeinated of its combative intellectual engagement.

Before we adjourn, I mention an odd fantasy: *practicing religion as an art form* whilst others wonder what nonsense I speak. I

clarify that *I long for the day when religions shift philosophical paradigms, view aesthetic experience at their core to define meaningful life practices, and theology expunges its untenable metaphysics and dogma. Religions become less institutional and more humanistic in their expression, resembling art forms in which spiritual and mystical experiences are widely honored. Artful religion provides impetus for virtuous living and humanitarian action. Churches are also*

community action centers. Religion is no longer an ersatz for science. Silence is heavy at the table

as we bump into cherished ideas. Responses are diplomatically measured. My idea is original, peculiar, and indigestible. We agree to allow fermentation of my fantasy and discuss it another day, perhaps when the sun is warm, and the sky is blue.

In my tiny corner of the world, tempestuous romances of the heart engender playfulness among coffeehouse philosophers ... a good time together. It is preferable to reading the paper, discussing sports, or munching on a pastry.

NOTE: THIS IS THE THIRD AND LAST CREATIVE, NONFICTION PROSE IN THE "PHILOSOPHERS' COFFEE" SERIES. THE FIRST, "PHILOSOPHERS' COFFEE," WAS PUBLISHED IN RAIN 2023, AND THE SECOND, "MORE PHILOSOPHERS' COFFEE," WAS PUBLISHED IN RAIN 2024. BOTH WERE SUBSEQUENTLY PUBLISHED IN FINDING HEART AGAIN 2024.



AS LONG AS THERE ARE BIRDS

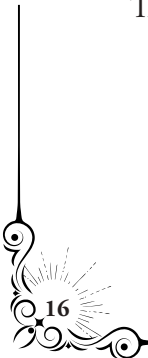
Jennifer Nightingale

I found myself on a mountainside
Underneath a scrubby tree.
Birds were chittering and singing to me
I watched a red-rumped swallow
Hawking her way across the heavens
Feeding on invisible insects.

My arms were young and graceful
I lifted them up to the tree
Two birds flew down and rode
The back of my hands
I could feel the soft down of their underparts

I carried them into a windowless attic
Where things are dark and unfamiliar
They flew into the darkness where they didn't belong
I held a lantern, the sort that are always there for you
In your dreams

Both birds landed on my head with their feet digging in
Singing to me while we looked for light
When the heavens are an empty blue bowl
And no bird sings
Then I know
That my heart will grow cold





Len Bergman - *Coming Home*
Digital Illustration



ELK AT MY WINDOW

Gretchen Keefer

It had been one of those restless nights with lots of position changes and a series of non-thoughts running through my brain. To not disturb my husband any further with all my tossing and turning, I grabbed a quilt and curled up in my chair by the window.

As the gray light of the early winter morning slowly developed, I saw the dark shapes of local elk feeding on what forage they could find. The bull with his great antlers led the way down the road, the herd dispersing through the neighboring yards behind him. One settled itself on the white expanse in front of our house and began chewing its cud, a smaller version lying by its side. Another of the hazy shapes ambled slowly across the yard to the pine tree by my window and began to nibble on the needles.

I marveled at the dexterity of its lips as they curled around the needles and pulled them off the twigs.

She!

What? I thought.

SHE, not it. We're all cows. Can't you tell?

Defensively I replied, "You could be an immature male."

Humph came the response. *Humans!* She continued to nibble at the pine tree.

Numbly I prodded myself. Here I had the chance to converse with an elk, and I could think of nothing to say. "What's your name?" I asked inanely.

Names are human. We have designations you wouldn't understand. She snorted, I could tell through the window by the way she curled her lips and shook her head. Was that her designation, or was she as disgusted with the banality of the question as I was?

"What do you think of humans?" That was a bit better.

Humans are boring. Their minds are full of possessions, which mean nothing to us. We don't think of humans much.

"But we hunt and kill you. Doesn't that bother you?"

It seemed she thought a moment before replying. *Yes, that is true. Often the hunters are doing us a service. When the herd is smaller, our forage is protected from overgrazing. The herd member who is designated or volunteers to be the sacrifice is helping the rest of us. Do humans do that?*

I could think of a few martyrs – had they actually volunteered? And had they "saved" anyone? One did, to benefit all mankind, but it was true that humans rarely thought of helping their entire community in such a fashion.



"You are still not afraid of us. Here you are right in front of my window, next to my house, conversing with me."

We know that most of the time you will not harm us. Actually, if you were out here, I could very easily injure you. Also, we find your comments about the world around you occasionally amusing. You are so out of touch.

The bull stepped back from the road and shook his antlers. A moment later a pickup hurried past on its way to some important human endeavor, like logging or brush clearing. The bull then stepped carefully onto the road and ambled slowly across.

"Why else are humans boring?" My brain was beginning to function.

Humans are too much into themselves. They see everything in only human terms, such as giving names to everything and expecting us to care about what they think.

Touché.

"How else would we understand things? Isn't it normal to have a self-centered perspective?"

Perhaps. She looked at me through the glass. *But you could at least try to see the world from another's point of view.* She pawed at the snow with a slender hoof. I wanted to think she was looking for more food, but I stopped myself from putting my thoughts into her head.

Good, she responded. *Yes, I am looking for food, but I could also be telling you to stay away. Emotions are human, so it is best to focus on seeking food when you are trying to describe what an elk, or other animal, is doing.*

"Got it. Are pine needles as nutritious as we've been told?"

Enough, especially in the cold. We'd rather have fresh leaves and grass. Forage will be better when we go down to the valley. She jerked at another twig, leaving it dangling by the bark.

The cow lying in the snow chewing her cud slowly got to her feet and began to walk towards the road, her yearling calf following. The majority of the herd was following the bull as he strolled towards the woods behind the house across the road. They all seemed to have one walking pace – slow. Cars from each direction stopped and waited patiently for the herd to cross.

The elk in front of my window (I knew better than to give her a name) raised her head from snuffling at the fern and watched the herd cross the road in the lightening day. Then, without aiming another thought in my direction, she followed.



Suddenly it was bright day and the pleasing aroma of sizzling bacon wafted down the hall. There were no elk in the yard, and breakfast was nearly ready. I rose stiffly from the chair and looked carefully out the window. The flat place in the snow where the cow had lain was easy to see, as were all the hoof tracks around the house. The pine tree had a dangling twig, stripped of needles.

I wondered if I would be better prepared for a visit when the herd came back.



FATHER-DAUGHTER SESTINA

Mimi Maduro

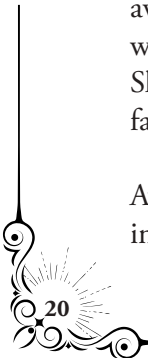
April drizzle and fog dampen the usual fire
in her fingers; she rubs her hands as she sits at the piano.
Hoarse, she gulps her saliva as if coaxing her voice
to recover its function; recalling a dream about her father
where she wrote sentences without verbs and noted
their absence while he polished his silver pen.

He copied long columns of numbers clutching his pen
methodically balancing accounts while all around fire
licked the house, threatened to scorch the piles of notes,
his compositions. They ignored the flames, sat at the piano
together and played duets. When she missed the downbeat, father
tapped his foot, counted louder believing his bellowed voice

could make up for the missed beat. It's here she lost her voice,
remembered she dreamt this dream before. With the silver pen
she wrote about the jazz records and garden of her father.
Then she scrawled in big letters: HELP! LOST IN THE FIRE.
She held up the sign in the window while he played the piano,
Bach's Two-Part Inventions starting with the "D" note.

Outside passers-by would not read the desperate note.
She saw in the sentence she wrote a verb that told of her voice—LOST.
As the flames came closer she turned away from the piano
away from him and the Bach Inventions. She picked up the pen
wrote about swimming in the Atlantic—about water, not fire.
She ran from the burning house turning round one last time to see her
father.

Awake in the morning chill she remembers the silhouette of her father
in the dream as the blaze burned him into ash. His notes



singed into flecks of white puff. She remembers his lifelong fear of fire
as she brews mint tea with honey to coat her raspy voice
that want to speak of her place, her garden, her pen,
her words, her songs. She turns to the piano.

Miles away she can see him breathe in his old body. She sits at the piano
plays Schumann's "Scenes from Childhood" for her father.
She wishes he could hear the legato that might stir him to pen
his story of duty and regret, to finally finish the notes.
She hopes soon they can walk together in steady voice
that they could recite St. Florian's prayer for protection from fire.

Drizzle turns to rain as she leans over the piano keys, pen in hand.
She composes strings of notes and chords — an aria to give voice
to the fire that ties her to her father.



LIKE A REVOLUTION

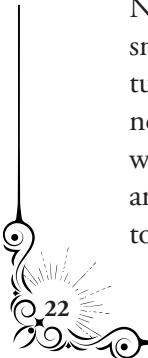
John Ciminello

Outside the classroom windows,
in numbers too many to count,
snow falls like a revolution,
commerce stops, traffic slows to a muffle
as we the students watch sidewalks and street signs,
playgrounds and lesson plans
disappear under a new glaze,
and for a moment we see a plan
to make time go backwards.

In our eyes, snow is defiance,
a frozen rebellion, a silent cheer
loud enough for the math teacher
to raise her chalk and demand,
“Eyes front, it’s only snow.”

For us, it’s snow with a chance of time,
a windfall to sled and build snow castles,
skate and play hockey,
where all fun is equal,
and the whirl of trees at the edge of the pond
makes us dizzy and we all fall down.

Outside, snow accumulates like a manifesto,
No dogma or heresy in the drifts,
snow has no fear of fire or
turning into muddy puddles of slush,
no fear of long division or teacher’s rule,
winter creates its own liturgy
and we the students have no power
to make a snow date,



so, we calculate the probability
of an early release,
and collectively will the class bell to ring.



Christine Eagon - *Portal To The Fairy World*
Watercolor on cold press paper



MIKE'S COFFIN

Scott Starbuck

"Put him in cardboard," I said.

"We have plywood," said funeral director.

"Both are disrespectful," answered Karen.

"I mean he was *our friend*."

"It's not a race car," I laughed.

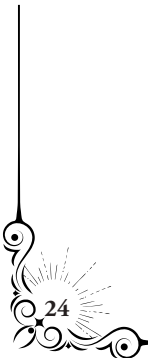
"He can't drive it."

"We're getting that one," my wife pointed
to a shiny blue upscale model.

She also ordered a headstone
with eagle and lighthouse.

Now, below Mt. Hood Mike's dead
as ever, but more restful to us

having bought him a nicer box.
As for me, put my ashes in Lewis River.



RAIN

CHILLY DAYS IN OLD ASTORIA TOWN

Charlie Becker

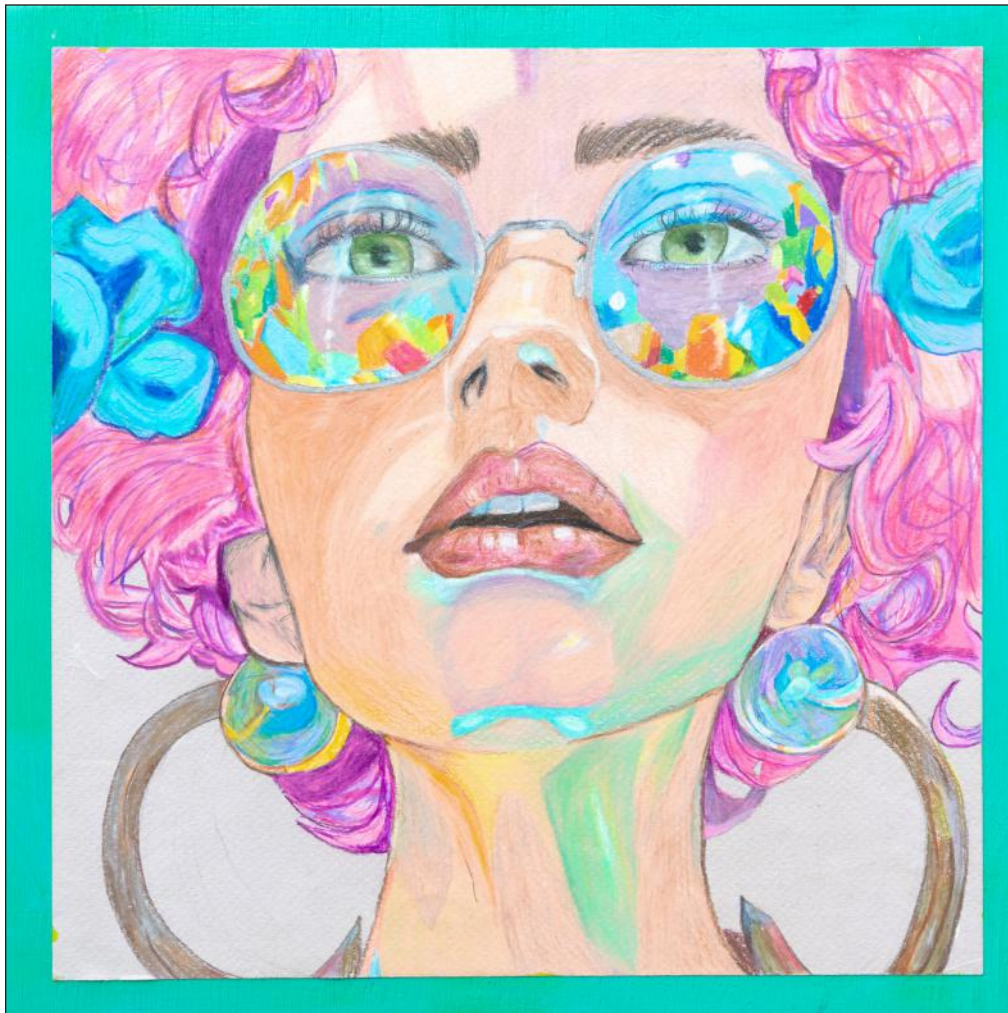
Well, I'm hunkered down in chilly Old Astoria Town, a little sun on the river, ships high in the water, bows up river, bows down river, ebb tide, flood tide, slack tide, and parallel ships swinging and dancing with tides and seas on the Great River. In the evening, I walk downtown in the cold, moist fog, a miserable misty drizzle I can almost bite into, and chilly east winds that move right through me. On this evening of dark, cold rain, I'm walking by a guy bedded down on a piece of cardboard in a sleeping bag in a downtown doorway ... cardboard is much sought-after in this weather ... and as I walk by, the gentleman says to me in the most congenial fashion...

"Good evening" ...

And I wish him good evening as well, and I walk on. The old warming center closed this year, and it's slimmer pickins for folks on the street. A bit unsettled, I wonder how people endure in the damp, cold discomfort of the street, and yet they persist. It just seems to be in our nature to persist. And with my

walking stick and a starboard list, I walk uptown a few blocks past the Liberty Theatre to my apartment, and I walk into my well-appointed man cave, snug up to the flame in the fireplace, and I turn on KMUN Jazz Radio, and my world is good, groovy tunes move through me, and I think I'll warm a pot of ginger tea ... I'll pour a cup ... one for you and one for me.





Isabel O'Connor - *Did You Know Cotton Candy Dissolves In Water?*
Prisma Color



HIJINKS WITH THE BROWN DOG

Robert Michael Pyle

He has a name, but I call him the Brown Dog
because he is very, very brown. I sometimes take
him out to throw and chase a rubber ball.
When present, the ball is his One True Desire,
his planet, his reason to be, his greyhound's rabbit,
all rolled into one three-inch sphere. He pays no mind
to other dogs, whose owners say, "It's all about the ball,"
and I say, "You've got that right."

A long-time cat-man, I didn't know
how it was with dogs. So now,
for the moment, I am his hero
as I cast the ball with a blue plastic Chuck-it,
deep into the stretching field
and he runs, and runs, and runs
into his bliss. And when he tires,
he cools off in his favorite rushy puddle,
or just pants and pants and pants beneath a bush.

Ah, but when I BOUNCE the ball,
or toss it straight up, he LEAPS
and twirls, *three feet* into the empty air.
Then "SNAP!" and the spit flies
as he saves his darling from falling to earth once more.
And when he is UP there, all akimbo,
and my eyes do that stop-action thing,
that's when the Brown Dog achieves Nirvana.
I laugh, and I laugh, and I laugh, every blessed time.



AKIN TO AN ASP

Mason K Brown

I wonder, did he know, my father, how similar he was to the Aspen tree?

"Quaking Asps," he said whenever we drove past a stand of the white-barked beauties.

Daddy grew up in Colorado. The Rockies were his playground. The stands of Aspen which grow and thrive at higher elevations must have been very familiar to him. So, did he recognize his similarity to them?

Now, 15 years since his passing, I see it all so clearly; his resemblance and mine.

A stand of Aspen begins with a single tree. From that original tree, roots spread under the surface soil. Sprouts from the roots grow to become additional trees, yielding eventually dozens, then hundreds of trees, all clones of the original, with identical DNA. The threadlike petiole, which attaches the leaf to the stem, is so fine, the weight of the leaf causes a constant fluttering giving the Aspen the appearance of quaking.

My father, many years ago, was diagnosed with Essential

Tremors, a neurological condition that causes his hands to tremble. Like the leaves on the Aspen tree cannot control their quaking, Daddy cannot control the shaking of his hands. Like the wind blowing through the leaves of the tree produces a continuous whisper, the word-producing breath passing across my father's vocal cords emits in barely audible murmurs.

Did my father see his likeness in the stately stand of Aspen trees? I don't think so.

But I write now with the trembling hands of the offspring who inherited my father's tremors, passed to me through his DNA. Transmitted to him and his sister through the DNA of their father, my grandfather, advancing across generations to my cousins, my nephew.

Records don't reveal tremor's origins in my lineage, but we cluster together like a stand of Aspen, products of the replication of our DNA - limbs quaking, voices heard only in whisper.



ON A BEND IN THE WILSON RIVER ROAD

Travis T. Pott

The secret, forever heard, passed that way. **Swerving**
 across the bent line of infinite segment,
 in the skewed light. And no more. **A recent killing.**

None: not coy sacrifice, not stealth, not force of tide
 could keep the stain of silence from **turning red.**
 There, wanting back the legs that learned to share, and **swerve**

outward toward the wind. Carried off on that cold draught
 that takes the taker to the taken. Minutes
 stretched and stretched again to reverb, just make **more dead.**

Nothing, comes and stays there now. Nothing but Re-move,
 drafting a list to wish from, while wind song
 fills the boughs before the bring-back rise. **Traveling,**
 a tremble can scarcely be seen **through the dark.**



MY BUSY MUSE

Marilyn deFreese

Last night my Muse woke me, tapping in my head. Thoughts of poetry spun through my brain. And as if to nudge me along, my cell phone, although muted, lit up like a night light. A couple of early morning workers drove up the hill and sped around my corner, engines revving and mufflers choking. Added to this un-alarmed clock, the rays of morning breached my curtains from my east-facing windows.

Threads of poems chased me up the walls, around the bed, under the bed, lawd, they were persistent, until there was no place to hide. Gasping with the reality, I groped for my paper and pen, down some thoughts, knowing they would dissipate before morning if not relegated to hard copy.

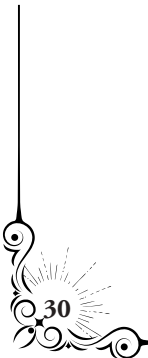
Completing a five stanza poem, I returned to my pillow, snuggled in the warmth of my comforter, and relaxed into the moment. The catharsis was good and left me feeling peaceful.

HowEV-ER, the next moment Muse again tapped me on my head and shouted, "You have more to do!" Well, I thought this was pretty tiresome, but I resolutely swung my legs out of bed once again, clicked on the light, and reached for paper and pen.

"If I wrote a song,
How would I sing it?
Would I make it in rhyme,
Or softly wing it?"

I thought, "Perhaps I should let words cascade like a waterfall from my pen, rushing and swirling like currents in the river, or slithering and surling snakelike, squeezing the life blood from me."

I think I can make it until morning.



WOMAN BECOMES TREE

Florence Sage

As the story from the ancient poet goes,
Daphne's father turned her into a tree
to save her the only way he knew
with maddened Apollo thumping
at her heels to have her, no time
for discussion, zap. Fathers do
what they can for frightened daughters.

Mountain naiad, running wild, a nymph stopped
in her tracks – skin gone to bark,
fingers to leaves, swift feet and flexing toes
to gripping roots, planted beside a stream,
her pursuer left clinging to her waist.

Maybe if she'd turned around and said his name
and the breath went out of him at just her look,
what might have been between them? But she
was one who ran alone so she took her fate.

Let's say she found a life inside her new skin.
There's rougher bark than laurel.
Maybe she came to love
stretching her roots into damp ground,
the sighs up her trunk each day from the soil,
the pungent aroma of bay on her arms.
Apollo would crown heroes with her branches
and we'd say her name and cook with her leaves.

As the gods of time with their determination
diminish my flesh and petrify my skin
and take away my family and friends until



I am spare and rough as a tree that stands contained
and the story doesn't sound so bad or strange,
if I get to choose how it goes for me, I'll opt for aspen.

Quake papery golden leaves in the gentlest breeze,
etch cryptic glyphs like poems on my bark as I grow,
converse with ancestors and kin below the ground
through our common root, our grove one chattering being
in a spongy bed – while out in the sun deer nibble my shoots
and nymphs hang catkins from my golden limbs.



Jessica Bahl
For Florence
Micron Pen



CARDAMOM TOWN

Jennifer Nightingale

When the town was new,
The Finnish sisters arrived
Armed with all they needed
To settle in and make a home by
By our dangerous but generous river

They had their family bible,
And a packet of cardamom pods
Sisu, a stalwart heart, dance steps
And an instinct for community

The holy book was written in the language of their ancestors.
On the flowery front pages, were faded names inscribed by a forgotten
hand
Memorializing long dead children and that unbroken line of those who
came before,
Yet with room
To welcome new world babies
Babies that would learn the Finnish lullabies,
And the comfort of cardamom

Today, at the old Suomi Hall
Kerchiefed Sisters of the Finnish Kaleva of Astoria
Squeeze themselves into the old communal kitchen,
Where their grandmothers once worked
And felt so at home.
Smashing cardamom seeds with mortar and pestle
Braiding and twisting dough into
Buttery loaves of yeasted goodness

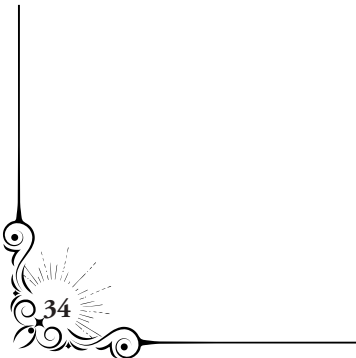
Today, each sister continues the tradition.



Wiping her oily hands on her grandmother's apron,
Infusing the cloth with essential oils of freshly ground seeds
Before she pulls the golden loaves from the common oven.

The baking ladies are warm, welcoming and cheerful,
Descending from a people deemed to be dour,
Collective baking celebrates the sacred
The stories, dances, dirges and lullabies

In a town where cardamom
Makes it impossible,
To forget why
They choose to persevere.
With bravery, resilience and with grace.



WINTER'S MIST

Marilyn deFreese

Gray overlay of clouds above
Drift like Tectonic plates,
Silently tumbling the sky.
I follow a narrow footpath, scattered
With pine needles and fir cones
Through stands of sparse trees.
Splashes of yellow violets and
White, pink or fawn-mottled lilies
Dot the underlay.
A clear spring burbles beside me,
Diamonds flash
Join with cool mist,
Lead me onward.

A dreamworld danced
In my head all night,
Led me upward
To a small cottage called "Winter's Mist."
It stood nestled in its own grove.
Maybe tonight the Tectonic plates
In my head will quake the door open,
Welcome me inside.



THE UNFINISHED JOURNEY

Tory'ana Aforporpe

The unfinished journey that leads you back to your dream
Where the sand has your footprints, the sky has your eyes,
The water has your tears
The unfinished journey that leads you to your own folds of mist
Where the leaves on the trees are dying, covered in charcoal
Leaving your hands in the dirt and your feet in the mud

The unfinished journey
Takes you back to the beautiful land of sunflowers and bees
The sun is shining and the water is flowing

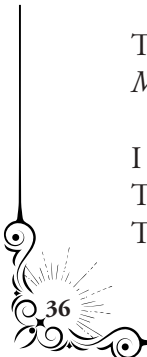
Something is chasing me
Or am I the one chasing it?
I can feel it

I turn around but there is nothing there
Am I supposed to be grabbing a dream?
I am in a dream

There it is in the sky, it's the stars
I am trying to reach the stars but they are so far away, out of my reach
I can never quite reach them
This recurring dream has me racing
To the water and staring up at the sky

The unfinished journey
My unfinished journey

I can never quite reach the stars no matter how high I jump
The stars are always out of reach
This is the unfinished journey



THANKS, MOM

Jan Bono

About a month after Mom died in March, I dreamed I was driving us somewhere, and she was sitting in the passenger seat of my car. As usual, she was carrying on with a constant chatter about nothing much in particular, and I felt oddly comforted by that fact.

The dream was a strange blend of fantasy and reality. I was consciously aware she had died, but I didn't want to spoil the illusion of having her there to talk to one more time. I pushed the reality to the background and intently studied the woman beside me.

When I was 11, she'd taken me to open a bank account where I could save half the money I made babysitting, or picking strawberries, for college. The bank cashier asked us the usual "security" questions. Mother's maiden name, Grandmother's maiden name, and then my mother's hair color. Confused, I turned to look at Mom. "L'Oreal Number Five," she said without hesitation.

I smiled at the memory. It was so... so... "Mom."

Now I tried super hard to memorize her features, speech patterns, and gestures. Sure, I had plenty of photos, but this was so much better. I hoped I could summon her back like this whenever I wanted, but I knew it might be the only chance I'd get.

"Mom?" I finally asked her softly. "You know you're dead, right?"

"Of course I'm dead!" she chirped. "You'd have told me to hush up a long time ago if I were still living!"

I chuckled. That, too, was so like her! For a while I was content to let things just evolve. I had the feeling we were in a hurry to get somewhere, but since the destination was unclear, I kept quiet and kept driving.

"Hey!" said Mom, interrupting herself. "Let's stop for pancakes!"



"Pancakes?"

"You love pancakes!" she said. "And we have to have some right away."

"Why?"

"Because it's snowing."

"It's what?" The sky was dark with clouds, yet I didn't think they looked like snow clouds. Not even snow clouds in a dream. But what did I know? I didn't even know where we were, or our actual destination, if we had one.

In my sleep, I wrestled with the idea of arguing with her or letting her have her way. Suddenly, a log cabin type of building loomed by the side of the road. The sign said, "House of Pancakes," so I pulled into the lot.

We went inside and sat by the window. Mom waved the waitress away. "We'll have pancakes," she said. "Buttermilk pancakes."

I looked deeply into her eyes. I could swear she was right there; I'd never had such a vivid dream. "I love you, Mom."

"I love you, too," she said. "Remember to eat your pancakes."

And with that, the dream faded. I awoke and immediately reached for my notebook to write down as much about the dream as I could remember.

The following weekend, I needed to drive several hours, and across a mountain pass, to get to a class I was teaching. I planned to arrive there a full day ahead of time, but I'd gotten a late start, and had skipped breakfast.

Just before the road started up the steepest part of its ascent, I spotted a log cabin type of building sporting a sign simply reading "Restaurant" to the right of the road. On a whim, I pulled off the highway.

"You're just in time," said the waitress, showing me to a table. "We're about to get slammed."

"Oh? Why is that?" I asked, taking the menu she offered.

"It's snowing heavily at the top of the pass and they've temporarily closed the road. Everyone will be looking for a place to hang out for a few hours until it's cleared."

"Snowing? In mid-April?"

The waitress smiled and shrugged,



then pulled her order form and pencil from her apron pocket. "What'll it be?"

I was deeply grateful I wouldn't be spending the next few hours in a cold car, hungry, watching the snow fall, and waiting for the road to be passable. "Pancakes," I replied, without hesitation. "Buttermilk pancakes."

In life, and in the afterlife, Mother always knows best.



Len Bergman
Makayda's Song
Acrylic



WITH OLD WEDDING CHINA

Donna Mendelson

blue glaze at the edge
gold band on the very edge
she sets her table

she stewed sorrel soup
snipped basil for the top
piped lines of yogurt over all

sliced zebra tomatoes
halved cherry tomatoes she grew
washed them in a flow of olive oil

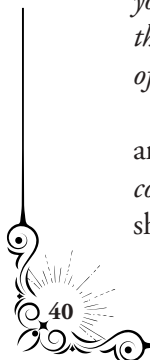
baked crusty potato cake in a ring pan
though it's just lunch
on the porch

the china is one of those
good things she does not leave
in the cabinet

*one of those things
you use who cares
if they break*

*you know she smiles
they'll just be part
of the yard sale*

and *lascia la spina*,
cogli la rosa,
she sings



TOO LOUD

Makayda Cloward

It's too loud.

Every sound being made is ten times louder than it should be.

I don't know how to turn it down.

Today is Mother's Day.

Everyone is attending.

We're late, so we have to sit in the overflow gym
because the chapel is full.

The speaker is preaching about
the importance of the "ideal family."

It's too loud and I don't know how to tune it out.

The room is stifling.

It's the middle of May in the Utah desert.

Why are none of the windows open?

Everyone is breathing and sweating,
suffocating anyone looking for reprieve

It's too hot.

The glaring fluorescent lights of the gym
reflect off of the floor.

It's too bright.



The windows are frosted,
blocking the freedom of the outside world.

It's too tight.

"Motherhood is the greatest gift and responsibility for a young woman,"
says the speaker.

"You need to have kids," he means.
It's too loud.

"All of our young women must be excited to marry a man and have kids.
It is their calling as members of the church," he says.

"Be the perfect STRAIGHT family," I learn.
Is there something wrong with me for not wanting what they are teaching?
How is it getting even louder?

Every child in the congregation is either screaming,
dropping their plastic toys onto the floor,
or babbling nonsense in a steady stream of clamor.
The speakers on the ceiling buzz just enough to be noticeable.
My dress is itchy and uncomfortable.
The fabric is too thin. My legs stick to the metal chair.

It's too loud.
I want to leave.
I can't.

I do the next best thing. I stand up.
"I need a drink of water," I say,
I scramble out of the gym, decorum abandoned.
As the doors close behind me, I dissolve into tears.



The rhetoric of “be the perfect Mormon girl”
bounces around my mind,
Dismantling any sense of self worth.

Am I not enough as I am?

The ringing in my ears begins to dissipate.
Footsteps are coming from the gym and
I turn to find my mom. I quickly wipe my face,
hoping she doesn’t notice. She does.

“What’s wrong?” she asks.
“It was too loud in there,” I replied.

Nodding, she says, “You can go and sit in the car until it’s time to go home”
She knows I need the escape.

I am grateful she knows.

I thank her by hugging her, and telling her I love her.
I go out to the car and as I sit there enjoying the quiet,
I know.

I never want it to be that loud ever again.

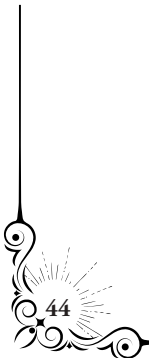
I have to leave.



TECHNICAL KNOCKOUT PSALM

Lauren Mallett

As if the news that escapeth would lead me
to the end of a cave, shake some waters...
Auroras and hymns follow me all my days.
I lack for nothing. I'm dressed gleaming
as a locust and drinking from a bull's horn.
I'm walking through the full streets with
cochineal-dyed wool tied around my knuckles.
I was summoned to exact the he who would not
have me. Who paid his mother for each of his sorrys.
I take in the storm of 10,000 feet, the howls
of at least as many bitches. Present be all us
sworn enemies. Surely a pew could be steadied
for this anxious pupil, this shepherd's boy.
May he anoint my head with the wine
of his hands, so that this chalice my mind is
forever spilling into the house of my shoulders.





Mahshid Gorjian - *Wisdom In Her Eyes*
Digital Painting

BERM WALKING

Rodney Merrill

In the early morning light, when the world is still waking—when I am still waking, too—I step onto the berm with my four little dogs frantically circling me. I have two miniature schnauzers (Sally good, Auggy evil). I also have two muttskies about the size and shape of Corgis, short legs included. Buddy is all blonde. Lily is black and tan. They are both calm and rock from side to side when they walk, reminding me of an Amtrak on old rails.

As we walk, I reach out and touch the leaves. The ground, a gentle friend, opens its arms beneath each footfall on soft grass, or it grinds out a soothing gravel beat.

I wander unhurried, lost in the gentle hum of life. Red-winged blackbirds weave penny whistle songs far out among the swampy cattails. Shadows dance away from the low slung sun on the Northern autumn horizon. Between shadows there are blinding streaks of sun on high beam.

Each elbow on the meandering berm opens new

sightseeing vistas—eagles sit high in the trees, necks swiveling to take in the entire panorama; red-tailed hawks sit atop the hurricane fence that separates the berm from the small airport. The fence keeps elk from wandering onto landing strips. (There is no winner when a small plane hits an elk.) The oddly proportioned Kingfisher patiently waits on lower tree branches, watching for fish to wander by. When it is ready, the Kingfisher drops like a stone into the water. It is so quick that it has a good chance of returning with a fish. Sometimes, I see an owl. You pretty much have to see them because they are amazingly quiet fliers. Whereas you will hear a dove, pigeon, a crow or raven wha-wha-whooshing by, you will not hear an owl unless it flies close to your head. Even then, all you will hear is a faint *frrrr* of its feathers.

With every step, I shed wasteful grumbly thoughts and concerns of the day ahead, the day before, or even the day before that. Worries drift away like maple copters and dandelion puffs on the



wind. In these moments, I am lighter in spirit, free of pointless backpacks, and a traveler with my own heart.

In these moments, my little dogs become the world's cutest. I speak their names so they will sit and look up at me with worshipful eyes that do not fool me for a second. Well, maybe a second. Or a minute. My heart grows mushy and fluttery, and I pet them until they shake it off.

When thoughts return, as they inevitably do, they are usually kinder and gentler—unlike phone tree thoughts or freeway thoughts. Here, in simple walking, I remember love stories wrapped in cotton balls and times when I accidentally said the *right* thing.

So, let me walk through *all* the seasons of sun, rain, wind, and hail—there are evergreen shrubs to umbrella the dogs in hail. When the trees drop their leaves, I am content to watch tidal currents in the river or the direction and speed of clouds floating by. Walking on the berm, I can breathe and belong, just me and my dogs—unless fellow walkers come along. Other people with dogs who are walkers are usually worth the stop to talk.



Max Crow

Mystic Melody

Digital Illustration





A simple box, hollow and waiting...
 The light seeps in and leaves its trace.
 They are not precise, not polished, but honest.
 This box reminds me to wait—
 to watch as light whispers with the world
 and becomes story.

Light Box Camera project; Circa '23

John Cox - *Homemade Photography*
 Triptych Photography

NOCTURNAL DISTANCES

Logan Garner

Those three,
nephews, a niece,
are in a field,
feet all soaked and grass
growing up to their eyeballs.
The road between us
flows fast with traffic
and its ditches are filled
with black water.

My mother and father
are those stars above.
The clouds are conspiring
to obscure the impossible
distance between us,
are protecting them
from my quenching touch.

This woman
sleeping behind me
a mile distant is a speck
across this great bed.
We each turn, reach out.
We are touching air.



THE DAY TRAITOR

Jessica Bahl

The overhead wires buzz and crackle, carrying a steady stream of electricity to power the city. It hums like a thousand tiny birds taking flight. Beyond them, the sky bursts into hues of orange marmalade, unraveling into strawberry sorbet and polite swirls of violet cream. The colors hold my gaze, trapping me in their shameless brilliance. I snap myself back with a hard pull on my cigarette, the cherry flaring as I draw toxins into reluctant submission. Its flames lick at the cotton filter—burning my lip. Irritated, I flick the butt into the night. The glowing ember bounces once, twice, before fading into the dark.

Faint streaks of lava-bright brilliance hang in the sky, a final, feeble protest against the encroaching black. My boots shuffle against the pavement, the soles of my shoes grinding through bug shells, twigs, rock homes, and scattered remnants of weeds.

With a sigh, I turn toward home. One by one, the streetlights flicker to life, their sickly yellow glow stretching into grotesque shadows across the cracked sidewalk. Familiar shapes twist into strange caricatures under the warped light. As I pass Mrs. Gold's house, her silhouette quivers behind lace curtains. She moves through her evening rituals with precision, the scent of her cooking drifting through the cool air—a culinary siren call I resist with practiced indifference. When she notices my passing, her face collapses like a deflated pudding—*soft and sad*—before she pulls the heavy curtains tight around the window frame. It has been three years since Sam disappeared. I tell myself I have stopped searching, but the lie feels thin tonight.

My footsteps echo in the emptiness. The last vestiges of warmth seep from the



concrete, replaced by the night's chill, creeping into my bones. I pull my jacket tighter, warding off more than just the cold. The hairs on the back of my neck stand on end as an overwhelming sense of being watched washes over me. I quicken my pace, eager to escape the unsettling darkness that seems to press in from all sides.

As I round the corner onto my street, I see it. A figure, unnaturally still, lurking beneath the sputtering light of a failing streetlamp. My heart races, pounding against my ribs like a caged animal.

Is it her? Could it be Sam, after all this time?

As I near, I realize it isn't Sam at all.

It's a cat.

Its elongated body blends with the shadows, seamlessly stitched to the night. The only hint of its presence is the gleam in its eyes, shining like twin moons in the dark. My heart races as I inch closer, drawn by the mesmerizing glow of its eyes. Even my bones feel iron-dense, cold and heavy, yet something pulls me forward, unwilling to let me stop. The cat's eyes seem to grow larger as I approach, swallowing the night around them. A low, rumbling purr emanates from its throat, vibrating through the air and settling deep in my chest.

I want to turn away. I want to go home. I am scared. But I am transfixed.

"Sam?" I whisper, my voice barely audible.

The cat blinks slowly, deliberately. In that moment of darkness, the world shifts. The streetlight above flares brightly, then explodes in a shower of sparks. I shield my eyes instinctively, and when I lower my arm, the cat is—gone.

My heart jolts as I stumble backward, my head spinning.

Turning to hurry home, a sliver of silver catches my eye. There, on the ground where the cat had been, lies a small object. I hesitate, every instinct screaming at me to leave it, to run home and lock the door. With trembling fingers, I reach down and pick it up. It's a locket, tarnished silver glinting dully in the weak moonlight. My breath catches in my throat as I recognize it—*Sam's locket*.

I fumble to open it, my hands shaking violently. As the clasp releases, a folded piece of paper falls, fluttering to the ground like a wounded bird. The streetlamps, now steady, cast warm amber pools of light like islands in an ocean of shadow. Huddled between them, a ship seeking safe harbor, I unfold the paper with a mixture of dread and anticipation.

"Got a light?" A voice slices through the night—sharp and sudden.

Startled, I jam the locket into my jeans and struggle to find my feet. Beneath the pale island of light, a woman rises from the ocean of shadows.

I nod in response.

She lashes out, cupping the flame with long fingers adorned in silver rings. One ring catches the light—a pattern etched into the metal, identical to the shape in the cat's eyes.



"I'm Lena," she says, smoke fluming from her nose and mouth. Her amber eyes glitter in the dark, a smile coiling around the smoke that escapes her lips.

"...And you must be... Jack. Sam's Jack."

The name hits me like a blow.

"How do you—?"

"I know about you, Jack," she says, her voice barely a whisper but sharp as glass. "I know what you've been looking for. I know about Sam... and I know how far you're willing to go."

My mouth goes dry.

"What do you know about...? Where is Sam?"

The very fabric of the city seems to close in around us. Buildings stretch and twist in ways that defy reason, and even the black of the night leans toward us—*conspiring*. Lena studies me, smoke curving around her like a veil.

"Come with me, and I'll show you," she says, her smile widening.

A primal urge claws at me to run from her, my blood rushing to my limbs.

You don't follow strangers into the night.

Fingers trembling, I feel the weight of the locket in my pocket, and my eyes catch the silver gleam around Lena's thumb—*that same pattern, Sam's pattern*.

"Lead the way," I hear myself say, swallowing against the sharp sting of panic straining in my chest.

She grins then, a flash of teeth in the pale glow of the moonlight.

"Follow me."

She turns, walking with a purpose that folds the city into pieces of intricate, impossible origami. As we walk, alleyways bend at impossible angles, and buildings lean in to watch our passage. With each step, the pavement beneath my feet grows less solid, less real.

We arrive at a courtyard, its walls towering and curving inward, hemming us in like the edges of a dream. A streetlamp above casts a faint, trembling circle of light over a rusted fire escape, spiraling upward like a question mark—*leading nowhere and everywhere all at once*.

Lena ascends without hesitation, her boots striking the metal steps in a rhythm that sounds like a code. Fear swells in my contorted face—*part of me desperate to turn back, to return to the familiar*. Yet something tugs me forward, as if the night itself presses against my back. The iron of the fire escape bites into my palms as I decide to follow.

At the top, Lena lingers at the window. Her movements form a language—swift, deliberate, alive with animal electricity—then, suddenly, I remember. *The cat*. The idea materializes like breath on cold glass, not quite solid, but undeniably present. The floor below feels unnervingly near, as if the distance between me and the ground is collapsing.



"Almost there," she whispers—a sound that's more vibration than actual speech.

I blink, the thought slipping through my mind like a shadow as I follow her inside.

The apartment greets me like a maze, its cluttered corners and crooked stacks of books pulling me into a world that feels both chaotic and intimate. Paintings rest against every surface, each one a silent witness to the room's disarray. Lena moves effortlessly through it, pulling out a bottle of whiskey and pouring two glasses, her eyes never leaving mine.

"Sam isn't dead," she says, her voice cutting through the haze of the room.

"But she isn't exactly alive either. Not in the way you understand."

"What does that mean?" I ask, my mind racing with the implications.

"It means there are spaces between spaces, Jack." Her eyes gleam like yellow jewels, cutting through the murky light with an intensity that could have easily shattered glass.

"Places where reality bends, where time doesn't quite hold. Sam found one—no, maybe it found her. It's hard to explain. We don't belong to just one world, Jack," her voice heavy now. "Sam and I exist in the spaces between things—between time, between —" Her gaze sharpens. A ripple of distortion furrows around her.

The weight of her words sinks in slowly, like stones dropping into deep water. My mind drowns in uncertainty, flailing for something solid to hold onto.

"The cat," I choke, suddenly understanding.

Lena smiles, and for a moment, I see the feline in her features. I take a long drink of whiskey, letting it burn away my disbelief.

"Can I see her?"

Lena doesn't answer directly. Instead, she smiles—a satisfied, knowing curve in her lips.

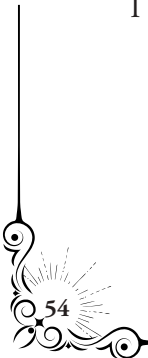
"Drink up, Jack. We've got a long night ahead of us."



FRIEND

Aubrey Bowers

We are the best of friends, you and I,
I always see you in the halls at school
You're always over at my house
and playing with the new toys we both got
I'll be your best friend forever
As we get older, you start getting new friends
that's okay, she can join the game too, I don't mind
Our friend group has now grown to three, four, five,
and it's even more fun that way
I wanna be your best friend forever
We get older still, and now we aren't as close,
but that's okay because I know
that I'm still your best friend and you're mine
Even if we don't always see eye to eye
I'll still be your best friend forever
Now we're in high school, isn't that crazy?
I never imagined that you'd leave me for someone else, let alone him,
but here we are for the third go-around
I hope he treats you well this time
I'll try and be your best friend forever
We're out of high school and starting our lives
I haven't spoken to you in years
What happened to the memories we made?
Did our friendship even matter?
I don't wanna be your "best friend" forever





Len Bergman - *Aquarium*
Digital Illustration



A PLACE ONLY I CAN SEE

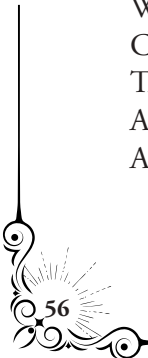
Tory'ana Aforporpe

A place that I can only see is far from one's eye
 There's a river in the sky
 You can only get there by dreaming
 A place only I can see
 No man or woman can travel to this place that only I can see

A place that I can only see is where the water flows and the birds chirp
 Where cats meow and dogs bark
 A place where the sun shines every day
 A place where everything is still but changing
 A place only I can see

A place that I can only see is far from one's eye
 A world that is only accessible in my mind
 A dreamscape where I can escape
 A dream that is only in my view
 A place only I can see

There's a boat leading to the dreamscape
 My eyes are shut
 My mind is wandering
 My pulse is quiet and my heartbeat stops
 There's a rainbow in my dream
 Cute little gnomes are running around
 Water flows and the birds chirp
 Cats meow and dogs bark
 The sun shines every day
 A place where everything is still but changing
 A place only I can see



THE BOOKSHOP TABLE

Jennifer Nightingale

I smashed my bedside table the other night. I shredded her gracefully curved legs. I examined the legs and could see that they were beyond redemption. I smashed this table in the middle of the night when I threw myself violently out of bed. You see I have something called REM sleep behavior disorder. It is a rare parasomnia in which you physically act out your dreams while you're in the rapid eye movement (REM) stage of sleep. It doesn't happen consistently. It happens enough though that I have pillows on the floor on my side of the bed.

I sat on those pillows in the dark shaking and wondering what I had damaged. My husband, Holt, turned on the light.

"Are you okay?" he asked.

"I am but the table's not, I replied. I could see it listing to one side like a sinking boat.

"Let's get you back in bed and deal with it in the morning," he said.

I crawled back in bed. Holt switched off the light. Our dog crawled between us. I heard Holt

snore. I couldn't stop thinking about the little table. I thought how my love of books brought her into our lives and how she had served me well.

This little oak table was well over a hundred years old and had once served as a bookshop table in a place called "Nightingale's Books, Used and Rare." The table did her best to sell books, keep our lights on and the rent paid.

This table only came to me because I loved old books and had a dream.

I met a man named Holt who shared a loved of used bookshops. We fell in love, married, and opened up our own neighborhood bookshop. Holt named it, "Nightingale's Books Used and Rare" My friend Helen created our logo. It was a bird with a book under his wings and tiny wire spectacles on his beak. The logo went on our bookmarks and store sign. Helen not only dreamed up the notion of a literate bird, but also imbued it with such character. Along with this erudite bird, we had seven different quotes



on each bookmark. We had quotes from Albert Camus, James Baldwin, Louis Pasteur, Florence Nightingale, Arthur Conan Doyle, a fortune cookie and another that I can't recall. They were chosen while we drank retsina at Yanni's café in the old neighborhood with our dear friends. I wish I had saved one of each bookmark.

The bookshop was dream we had and a dreamed we lived. We furnished the shop with old things. I got to create drama in our own shop windows, read stories to children whose father worked in the garage next door. We created a community, a place to come in out of the rain where old dogs were welcomed, and people explored the books on our shelves and tables or sat down to play a game of chess. It was a tangible dream with a worry that the month would end, and we wouldn't have enough money to pay the rent, the city taxes and have enough left over for coffee.

One rainy night, I got to the shop and it was so quiet that you could hear the clock tick. When the store was quiet and empty, you longed for the door to open and the bells on the handle to rattle.

In amongst all the old things, I had a favorite table. It

was an oak side table circa 1920. It was a warm honey colored oak. It stood on four gracefully curved legs. I decided to put it in one of our display windows.

I set the table in the window. I stacked a short pile of old books on it. Next to it I put a lamp with a frosted glass dome. I left out a pair of my dead grandfather's reading glasses and a pipe. Next to the table, I set Holt's heirloom rocker. It was the same shade of oak as the table. It all looked as if it was just waiting for an old man to sit in that chair and read.

I walked across the street and sat down at a covered bus shelter and admired my handiwork. It was lit up like a stage set waiting for the actors to arrive. I decided to sit there until I saw somebody walk by the window. From the glass bus shelter, I watched a woman with an oversize umbrella walk past the shop.' The lady and her big black umbrella stopped and walked back toward the bookshop.

She put down the umbrella shook off the rain left it in a corner and walked into the store. I saw Holt look up from behind his desk. I saw them talking and I watched her look around. When she left, I crossed the street and went in.

"Did she buy anything?" I asked.

"No, she didn't, he replied.

"Well, what did you talk



about?" I asked.

"She wanted to buy the table!" he said.

"So, what did you say to her?" I asked.

"I told her it was a bookstore and that we sold books not tables, but she was welcome to look around.

"Well at least it brought her in the door and we're not so desperate that we have to sell my little table!"

Holt smiled at me over the top of his desk. "Don't worry. I won't ever sell your little table," he said. It was time to close up and walk home in the rain.

That little scene in the window brought many people through the door and we sold enough books to pay the rent and treat ourselves to coffee from the espresso place next door. When we brought the table back into the shop and laid books on its surface, people were drawn to them. we sold whatever landed there. That little one-hundred-year-old table seemed proud to have landed a gig at a bookshop.

There are many stories still to be told about Nightingale Books. There would be good days and great days, disasters and disappointments but we lived that dream and have no regrets.

There came a time when we

had to wind up the bookshop. It wasn't easy. What do you let go of? What do you keep? How do you rehome twenty thousand titles? Of course we had the proverbial fire sale. Some furnishings and books were barged up to Alaska to a bookstore on the Kenai. Many were given away.

Of course, I kept the little oak table. I brought it down to Astoria Oregon and kept it by my bedside. It held my lamp, radio and whatever book I was reading, as well as multiple pairs of reading glasses and my nightly meds. Sometimes, I looked at the table and lovely memories of that time at Nightingale's came flooding back like a dream that you just don't want to wake up from.

I wish I still had the bookshop table with me with its four strong legs to hold up everything I needed at the end of a day. I am grateful that I had it for a long time and that it served me so very well.





Kristin Shauck

Study Of Young Woman With Eyes Closed, after Camille Claudel

Watercolor and oil pastel



AURORA BOREALIS

Logan Garner

The heavenly storm breathes
down over it all, bestowing.
And I drink it in.

Far off, in a country
in the lower hemisphere
a friend carries on,
lonely and alone.

Closer, much closer,
a woman sleeps curled
beneath a wimpled blanket
around a feline form.

I message my friend,
telegraphing warmth.
Wake the woman to share
in this prismatic spectacle.

When both have left me—
one for distant work, the other
for half a night's sleep—I visit

alone with the bats, erratic,
all feeding silhouetted
against the glow,

my heartbeat filling the silence,
deafening.



ON NIGHT DRIVING AND MENTAL ILLNESS

Len Bergman

It is the middle of a cold, dry winter. I drive to rehearsal and back in the dark, music pounding from my speakers and filling my car's interior until I can feel it on my skin like hot steam.

The emotion swirling around in my head mixes with the music and doses me with a feeling so strange and intense that it makes me dizzy. I realize my shoulders are tense, back hunched, and I try to relax, turning down the heat a little. The strangeness is all-consuming. It makes me angry that I can't tell what I feel or what to do. Am I grateful or bitter? Am I elated or bursting with despair? Am I finally growing back the flame of life in my chest, the beginning of a new journey, or am I burning up in anguish at the days going by, the beginning of the end?

I live my life with death behind a thin curtain, tantalizing and ever-present, so close to me but yet incomprehensible. I live with pathetically intense longing holding onto me with white-knuckled hands. The cravings follow me—for death and for life,

for friends and for isolation, for stimulation and for rest. It all comes in one big, unlabeled package, and I can feel various parts of myself gripped and yanked until I'm inches away from tearing apart like the flesh of an apricot.

I understand that it is a requirement of being a person to experience bombardments of emotion like this. Everyone knows what it's like to cry, to feel hopeless, and to burn red-hot with anger. Mental illness is another matter entirely, though, something that causes physical pain in your chest until the only thing in the world you desire is the ability to rip your own heart out. I often find myself trying to guess how much of my struggle is the human condition and how much is due to the poison that has intertwined itself with my consciousness. It has made the chemicals go all wrong in my brain, and embedded thoughts and beliefs that I can't let go of even though I've been told they are not true. I hope one day I'll figure out where the morbid darkness ends and my *self* begins.



This is happening, all of my dysfunctional synapses hurling electricity at each other in a deadly game of tag, and now I'm sitting at a red light with my thoughts all scrambled up. I half-expect all the lights and alarms to go on in my car at the same time, or the engine

to fizzle out, or the whole thing to blow up in a white and yellow blazing spectacle. But it doesn't, and instead there's a neon green glow across the dashboard, and I find myself letting off the brake as if nothing happened.



Len Bergman - *Night Drive*
Digital Illustration



I HOPE IT'S RAINING WHEN I DIE.

Rodney Merrill

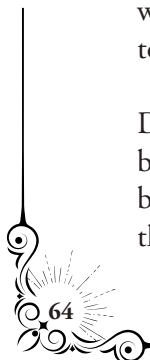
I hope it's raining when I die.
I want to see it and hear it as I go,
to imagine green grasses growing,
flowers and trees sprouting in my wake.

I want to leave believing life goes on
after I'm gone, not for me, of course,
but for sparrows, spiders, and scorpions,
elephants, emus, and eagles,
owls, ostriches, and ospreys.

Oh, and bees, badgers, and beavers,
wolves and wallabys,
pandas, partridges, and pine,
alder, aspen, and spruce,
daisies and daffodils.
And, for dogs, not only life but love.

Wheel me out to the rain, if you can.
I want to feel washed and forgiven
for feigning ignorance and impotence
about so much suffering,
so much passive savagery
in our so-called civilization,
waiting for old age
to excuse me of responsibility.

Dying in the rain will make the going sadder
because I will miss it, not after, of course;
but in advance, just knowing
that I will never see it, hear it, or feel it again.



It will be easier dying in cool forgiveness
than in punishing bareness and drought.

So, I hope it's raining when I die. If you can,
wheel me out to it. If I can't see it,
can't hear it anymore, let me feel
its soft fingers touch my face.



Bob Bogar - *Amigo*
Photography



LAST POEM

Mimi Maduro



clear water is cool

fireflies vanish—

there's nothing more

—Chiyo-ni

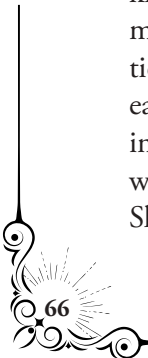
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JAPANESE DEATH POEM



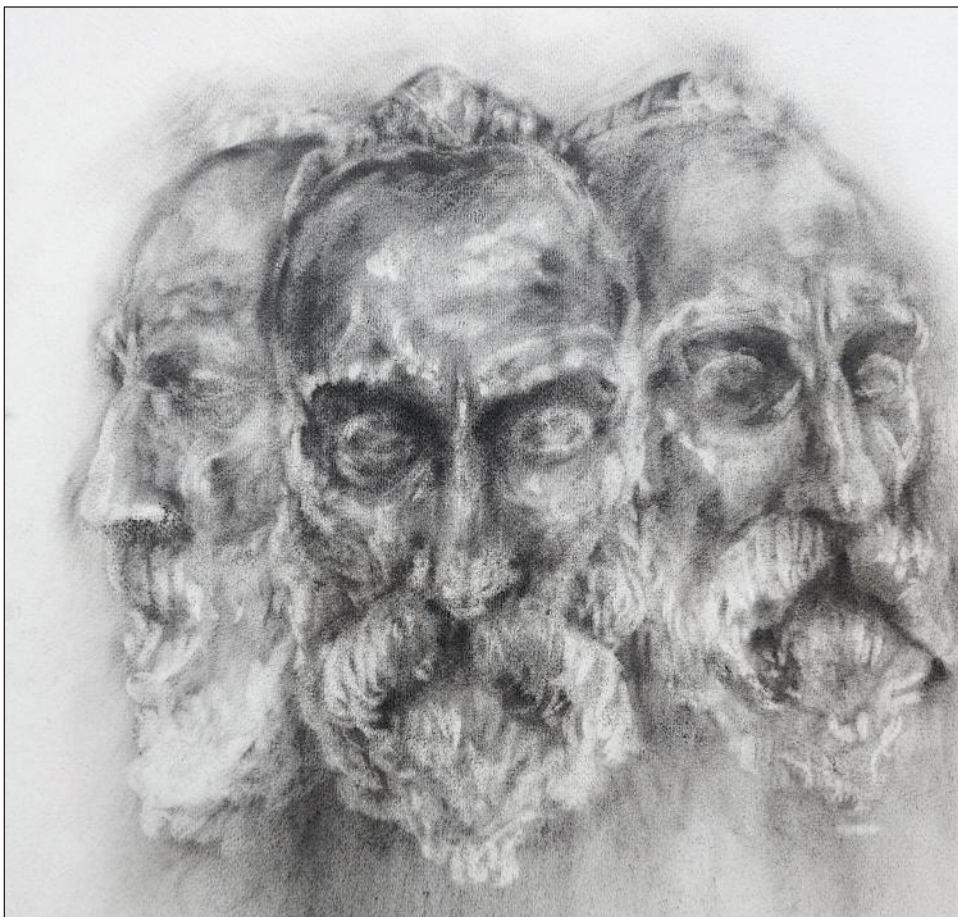
Should I die before I wake
 know there are some poems I didn't get to write
 about the binary system
 the hallowed world of zeros and ones
 that New Year's Eve dinner in Todo Santos,
 about the night I learned to play canasta
 from the ladies on the Heights
 about the Bering Strait, sliver of an ice bridge
 migration path of mystery that haunts my dreams
 how I find solace in color:
 pale yellow, Chinese red, aquamarine.
 And a poem to capture the words
 carried around in my pocket these many years:
 cahoots, savannah, moxie, adventitious.

Should I die before I wake
 know there will be a packet under my bed
 my poems wrapped in smooth brown paper
 tied with beargrass
 each sheet laid carefully under the other
 in the order you must read them
 while sipping Chianti on the porch in autumn twilight.
 Should I die before I wake



then I won't get a chance
to write that last poem
the one I long to write

three lines that say it all
slipped in at the bottom of the stack
before I wrap the bundle.



Kristin Shauck

The Three Faces Of Rodin, Study after Camille Claudel
Charcoal on Paper

FUEL

Isabel O'Connor

I find it funny; sitting down to write a piece that's supposed to be a nonfiction "how-to" type piece, and trying to find a way to make it meaningful. Adding in metaphors and helping readers relate and not get bored halfway through. I find this funny because I have absolutely no idea what I'm doing. I mean, it's hard. It's hard digging through memories trying to find the perfect representation of something I was taught, which was what the prompt for this story was.

The truth of the matter is, I can't remember a lot of what was taught to me; in fact, I had to surf the web to find my answer to this prompt. I desperately searched for anything I could use to – *pardon my language* – bullshit my way through this piece. Sure, I could make up memories: “*My mom leaned down towards me, a smile on her face, telling me to make two bunny ears, cross them over, loop them under, and then pull tight.*” See? It's easy. But that's not real. That's not nonfiction. That's not *ME*. So, after careful deliberation with my inner self, I decided to be real. Yes, my mom taught me to tie

my shoes. But how? What did she tell me? It all feels like second nature now; like I was *born* knowing exactly how to do it, knowing how to read and write and speak. But does anyone remember exactly how they learned how to speak? Can anyone remember a time they looked at a word and their minds didn't immediately read it and make sense of it, without seeming to ask the body if that was okay? If they can, I would like to meet this person.

This story is, to put it simply, about how to fill up your gas tank. Which was something my mom *did* teach me how to do. I know that much. I can vaguely start to picture her standing next to me, or maybe behind me, telling me to push the fuel cap inwards to open it, and then to choose my method of payment. I didn't have any money. I was probably about 10. Any money I had was her money at this point. It still sort of is. I'm 16 and just now starting to look at getting a job, after talking about getting one for years. Anyway, I can't remember much more. I know how to pump gas, but *barely*. I've only done it twice now.



I know how to do it from what looking it up online told me, but I cant – no matter how hard I dig into my brain – link it deeper to the memory with my mom.

It's really pretty simple. You park the car next to the gas tank with the gas tank facing the pump, then you put the car in park and turn it off (this is important if you do not want to blow up). Open the gas tank in whatever way is available (every car is different). Get out of the car if you haven't already and select your method of payment and the type of gas you would like. Now, open the fuel lid and remove the gas cap on your car, insert the pump, and pull on the handle to start pumping the gas. The pump should be able to rest independently against your car so now you can step away and wait. When you are done, there should be a clicking noise when the gas is finished pumping so when you hear that, remove the pump part way and tap it against the fuel hole to let any excess gas drip. Remove the pump fully and re-attach the gas cap and fuel lid. Return the pump to the pumping station, get back in your car, start it, and drive away.

Now you know how to pump gas. But what you don't know, because of my lack of memory, is how meaningful that one moment can be, and how fast those moments

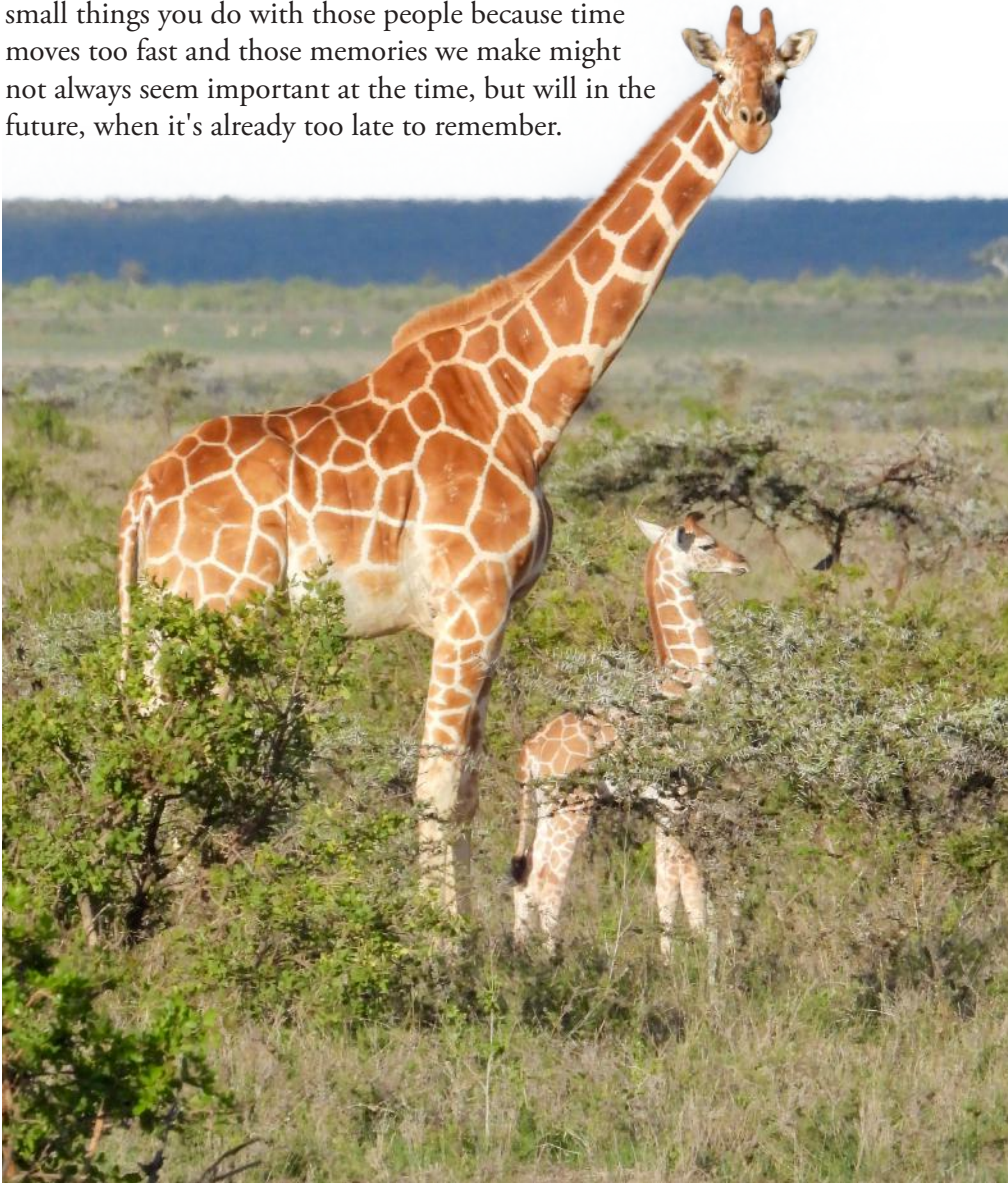
pass. My mom and I talk about “last moments” a lot nowadays. Allow me to explain. If you're a parent, when was the last time you took your kid to the zoo? Was it the *last time* you'd ever do that purposely? Sure, you might go again randomly but how old will your child be then? Will they enjoy the experience with the same wide-eyed wonder they used to? At the moment, you didn't know that those were the “last times” until it was too late. Maybe you're reading this with enough time to appreciate other things now, but there's bound to be *something* you'll never do unironically again.

My mother and I lost somebody important to us recently. This person died suddenly and at the worst time. Any time would have been horrible, but this truly was *The. Worst. Timing.* It really made me think about the things I take for granted and let slip out of my mind soundlessly. She'll never get to teach her daughter how to pump gas now. Will never get to have that memory with her, and I'm sitting here just trying to think of *any* lesson my own mother taught me, and not being able to think of anything.

There's no real purpose of this piece other than to teach you how to take a step back. Tell the



people you care about that you love them. Appreciate the small things you do with those people because time moves too fast and those memories we make might not always seem important at the time, but will in the future, when it's already too late to remember.



Michael O'Connor - *A Mother's Love*
Photography

HEARTSONG

Crystal Sager

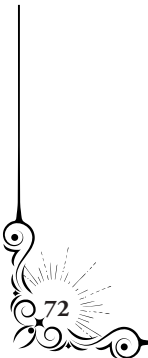
The ocean is playing with my heartstrings.
Like a harp.
A song on the wind.
It caresses your face.
Gently caressing your ears.
You hear my heart being played to you.
Over the ocean blue.
The song you hear brings a tear and a smile to your face.
Feels just like a warm embrace.
There will be times when you want to run away.
"This heartsong is hard to hear," you say!
Times when you dance and sing with the moon.
Times to sit quietly and patiently and understand.
Through the years you will see, my heartsong always starts at the sea.
The ocean's churning will draw you in.
A beautiful melody carried on the wind.



THE POEM OF SOMETHING UNKNOWN

Aaron Roberson

How many stars are out there, really?
Twinkling in a sky we can never touch—
Are there worlds like ours, or nothing at all?
I wonder if we'll ever know.
What's love, really?
Is it just a word, or a feeling so deep
It makes us do things we can't explain,
Like the search for meaning in everything we see?
How far does our mind go when it drifts,
To places we can't name or even imagine?
Does it wander like the ocean,
Or stay rooted, afraid to leave?
What's the sound of silence?
The kind that sits heavy, like a thought you can't shake—
Is it peace, or just the absence of noise?
Can we ever really know, or is it just a question we're not meant to
answer?
Maybe it's not about finding the answers,
But living with the questions,
The things that make us wonder,
And remind us we're still looking for something.



IGNORING MY OWN ADVICE, I SCROLLED NEWS BEFORE BED

Linda K. Hoard

Somewhere between peace talks, ICE scares at farmers'
markets, rising egg prices, and advertisements
for fuzzy anti-anxiety dog beds, I quieted the phone

to sleep in my own anti-anxiety bed. I dreamed
I taught preschool, land of untied shoelaces,
tricycle races, tinker toys, where four year olds

fly cars down cardboard ramps, squish Play Doh,
cheat at Candy Land, slip on and off a balance beam
above the world map carpet. Fueled by graham crackers

and belief in leprechauns, they are astronauts, fire
fighters, princesses, caped wizards, super heroes.
They listen to dolls' hearts with stethoscopes,

draw dragons, rainbows, snap magnetic tiles
into houses, schools, cities, rig card games,
cut in recess line, chug trains on plastic tracks.

The clean up song played while two boys rammed
dump trucks into a block castle. Kids threw dolls,
dinosaurs, uncapped markers into bins, crawled

under tables for runaway horses. As parents lined
up at the door, I chatted with a mom who was going
up north for vacation. I warned her of bitter windchills,

opened my phone for weather, but saw only
photos of a huge puffed bomb cloud,



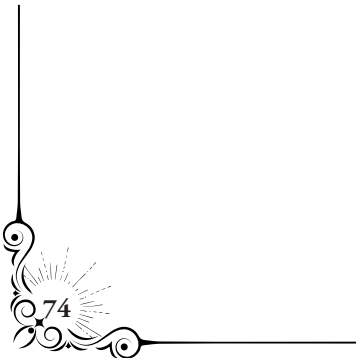
5000 killed in retaliation. Every app the same:

poisonous gray smoke and death count.
While my neighbor talked to another mom,
her son came up to me crying, said he was scared

he'd be killed too. I told him he is safe, and zipped
his jacket. I helped kids wiggle arms into coat sleeves,
hoist oversized backpacks on shoulders.

Next morning, I check the apps: ceasefires broken,
windchill twenty below. Soon, preschoolers put together
the solar system puzzle, build lego towers to kick down.

On the playground, tricycles smash, one boy watches
from atop the playhouse, another hogs the soccer
ball, as rain washes away a girl's chalk rainbow.



Waves spume,
the wind cuts me
I tug on my cap and plunge
into sky

THE DAY AFTER THE ELECTION, 2024

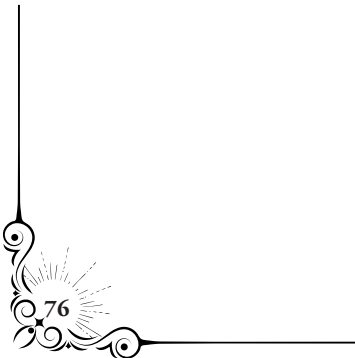
Constance Waisanen

Pouring tea
The kettle hot
Releases a silver arc of water
Into the jade green teapot
Crafted by unknown hands

I am present
In this slow space
On this dark November morning

Hot water baptizes the herbal blend
Rooibos and rose,
mint and ginger
Calendula and amaranth
Slow steeping
Steam rising
Releases sweet summer notes
That seep into my heart

Quiet joy in the kitchen



THE CHOOSING

Beatrice Michel

Poisoned soil
Tainted root
Yellowed leaves curl
Bitter fruit

Spark of sunshine
Clean water flows
Bird on branch
Flower of hope grows



Jessica Bahl

Stubborn Sidewalk Bloom

Micron Pen



DAPHNE

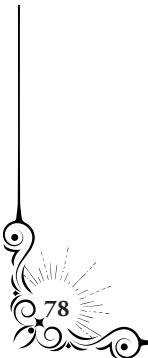
Kiley Grantges

Daphne had developed a distaste
for the direction she was headed
and could feel the need to investigate
certain antiquated habits quite embedded.

So began a succession of new experiences
rocking her to and fro,
discombobulating, uncomfortable, and challenging,
that left her wishing for detective Hercule Poirot.

But the deepest answers could not be found
within the mind of another;
it took her a while to learn
she was her own conductor.

“Don’t give up.” were the words whispered
through invisible cupped hands,
thus cultivating self-determination
to turn her dreams into plans.





Max Crow - *I Felt, Home.*
Photography



A GARDEN OF WORDS

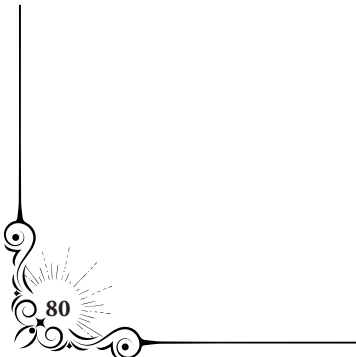
Aiden Lippy

In a Garden of Words many flowers blossoming
A gardener reaps a bountiful sow
The bliss of a kiss, of hands entwined, flesh of love

My Flame, My Joy, My Confidant
With words you are named, but your nature is not tamed, not contained
So I will have to acquiescently poeticize

Your smile a simile of a blooming lily
Nature a dandelion of windborne dreams
A daisy in my eyes
For they open to you in the morning and close to you at night
My dear rose you are not best expressed in prose

So I gather a bouquet of these words unspoken,
But one sentence I must utter
In a Garden of Words, *you* are a beautiful flower
Forever unwilting in my eyes



A LOVE POEM FOR AMERICA

Marianne Monson

I here admit to you, my darling,
I've been a less than perfect lover.

It's the same old story, I *know*—
Too much a critic, I fell at times into
Wishing you could be
More like someone you are not

Why can't you have Sweden's fjords, I wondered
Could that really be too difficult?
Or Italy's joie de vivre—can't we have just a bit more
Singing to each other through open windows
Now and then?
And please don't let get me started on France's food...

Like so many lovers, I wondered if I could
Remake you just a bit
Do something about coming to terms with
Those dark chapters we'd all like to forget

Yes, my sweet, you know *exactly* what I'm talking about

But here, on this Valentine's Day in the year 2025,
I admit that like so many before me,
I'm realizing a little too late
Just exactly what we had together

No one does amber grains like you, my dear,
And despite all your flaws, this whole globe
would be so much more imperfect without
the bold swagger of your creativity



the strains of your sweet jazz winding
as it does from sea to shining sea

Your politics that once seemed dull,
how alluring that sounds to me now—
I miss you, America, where else could I go?
There is no one else, *my darling*, quite like you.

Yes, lovers come, and lovers go, but
249 years is a long time we've had together
And I find myself thinking that we might need
another 249 to get this freedom thing right

Say we can have them, America, my dearest,
say you will stay—
and I promise I'll *never* take you for granted again



YOUR WORDS

Katrina Hunt

Sticks and stones may break my bones,
but words—
your words will forever haunt me.

Your words: You look so much prettier with a smile.
What I hear: Your face, as it is, is not enough.

Your words: Should you be eating that?
What I hear: You take up too much space.

Your words: You look anorexic.
What I hear: You are never the right size.

Your words: She was asking for it.
What I hear: Her pain is her own fault.

Your words: That outfit is too revealing.
What I hear: Your body is a problem.

Your words: Ladies don't talk like that.
What I hear: Be quiet. Stay small.

Your words: Big girls don't cry.
What I hear: Your feelings don't matter.

Your words: You run like a girl.
What I hear: Being a girl is a weakness.

Your words: Girls just want to have fun.
What I hear: You are not to be taken seriously.



Your words: Act ladylike.

What I hear: Shrink yourself to fit their mold.

Your words

They do not break my bones,
but they carve themselves into me,
etch themselves beneath my skin,
haunting, lingering, lasting.

Your words.

And what I hear.

But I will not stay silent,

My voice will be heard,

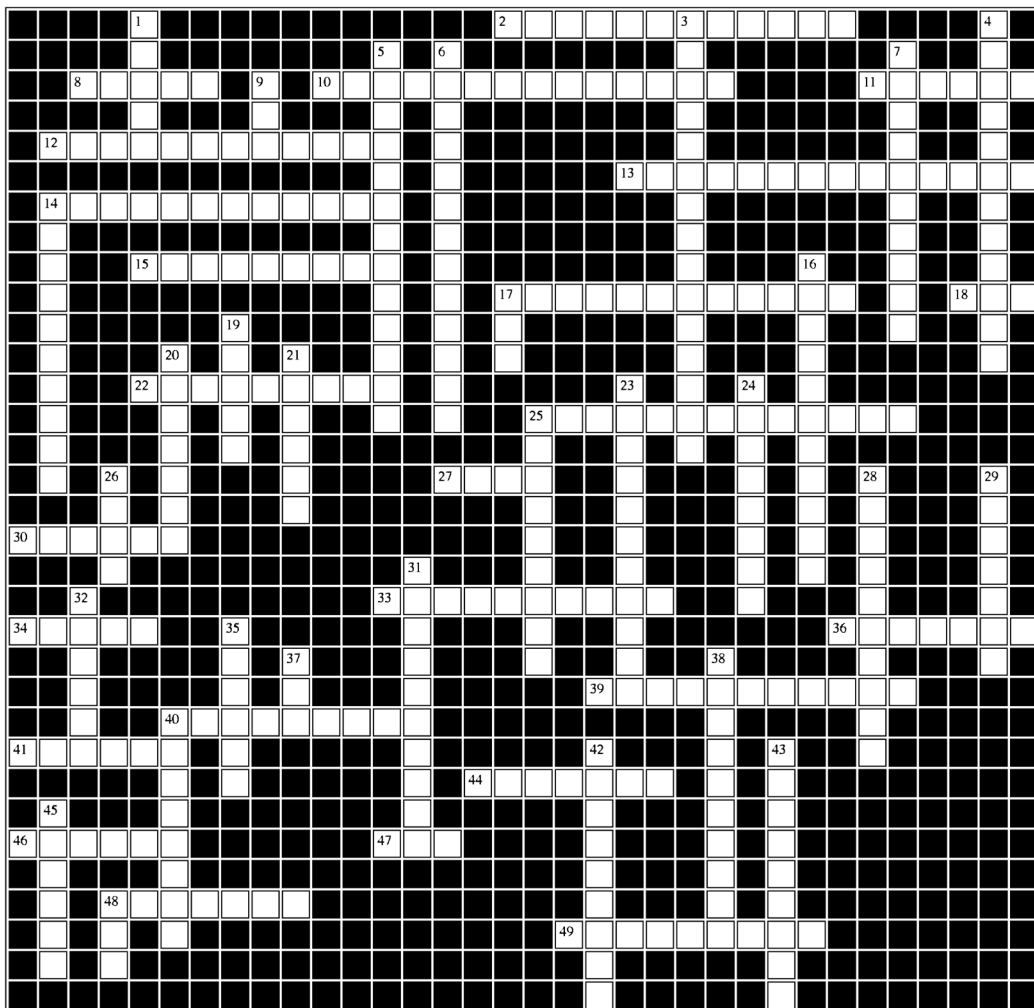
I'm reclaiming and redefining Your Words.





Anastasia McClure - *Reach For The Stars*
Watercolor





ACROSS

2. Community offerings and gatherings between October and May (2 Words)
8. Another word for path.
10. You can find views of the Columbia River, access to knowledge, and a wizard. (2 Words)
11. One who never dies; or says.
12. The indigenous group whose name means "the people of the sea". (2 Words)
13. A repository of academic needs and preparedness. (3 Words)
14. A literary publication that gives voice to emerging writers and artists. (2 Words)
15. Oldest community college in Oregon; Est. 1858. (2 Words)
17. Famous shipwreck with remains still visible today. (2 Words)
18. The spark behind every dream.



22. Not a tsunami, but what happens when your coffee tips over in the morning. (2 Words)
25. Iconic scenic viewpoint near Astoria. (2 Words)
27. Airwaves on the coast.
30. The missing piece that many overlook.
33. Popular Astorian street with historic charm.
34. The western edge of Oregon.
36. Local beach resident that will steal your fries without regret.
39. The iconic video game that has made its mark in pop culture. (2 Words)
40. Whose knowledge and leadership were key to the success of the 1804-1806 expedition.
41. The cutest mascot literally ever; we're bias.
44. The only class where you can drop something and call it an experiment.
46. A college students best friend.
47. The only subject where making a mess can make you a genius.
48. A historic town at the Columbia River's edge.
49. The powerful result when individuals unite.

Down

1. To gain knowledge, often through experience.
3. Writer responsible for chronicling his travels in the Pacific Northwest; and a key member of the Lewis and Clark Expedition. (2 Words)
4. Something every writer faces at some point, often solved by a good cup of coffee. (2 Words)
5. Astorian caffeine fix destination. (2 Words)
6. The fuel that keeps you moving forward when obstacles arise.
7. Oregon coastal park with batteries. (2 Words)
9. The original SFO, PDX, or SEA; way before planes.
14. First Tuesday at Wine Craft. (2 Words)
16. A Victorian-century Astorian residence. (2 Words)
17. The abbreviation that stands for the answer to this clue, but also "perpetual need for wet-weather wear."
19. The first step toward making your dreams real.
20. A genre that brings imagined worlds, characters, and adventures to life.
21. The scenic route. (2 Words)
23. The graveyard of the pacific. (2 Words)
24. RIP, former retail giant in Astoria, now closed. (2 Words)
25. Annual February exhibit at Royal Nebeker Gallery. (2 Words)
26. A frequent muse for Oregon poets and a nuisance for campers.
28. The other Astorian caffeine fix destination; With no order or best. (2 Words)
29. The fearsome predator that startled Lewis and Clark's men in 1804.
31. The most iconic towering evergreen... maybe ever. (2 Words)
32. Common fish at the end of the trail on the Columbia River.
35. The most important thing to bring to class, besides your brain.
37. Astoria's version of morning sunshine, but it's more of a vibe than a view.
38. Transforms reality into compelling narratives.
40. Those dedicated to a lifetime of learning, exploring, and creating.
42. Famous for cheese.
43. Pacific Northwest's elusive forest dweller, always just out of frame in photos.
45. The written art that plays with rhythm, emotion, and imagery.
48. A Boolean operator.





“YOU CAN'T GO BACK AND
CHANGE THE BEGINNING BUT
YOU CAN START WHERE YOU ARE
AND CHANGE THE ENDING.”



C.S. LEWIS

WHAT A POWERFUL THING TO DREAM

Kama O'Connor

with eyes closed to the burning world
heat scorching
forests razed
children in cages

and yet
a wish asked, ephemeral and pleading.

Dreaming is a fickle thing, rooted in a fickle organ
or set of organs
details take up space near the border, the liminal, the nebulous.

The part that floats is strung to hope, I think

a dandelion in the wind
white stardust made of yearning

who's to say where the individual parts go once separated from the root
do they carry memory of home with them
or only the dreams of the one who
blew intention into the world

what sustains us when all else is lost—
the root or the wind filled with promise?

To go back or forward is to search for something other than
what is



I'd like to think that when I look back on my life (well lived)
there will be pieces of home and truth sprinkled with enough white stardust
to hide the cracks in the veneer when I was too cowardly
to take the path I dreamed of

when I was just a child
holding onto a dead flower



Azaria Damghani- *Underwater Dreams*
Ceramic Stoneware



DREAMS BY THE WINTER STREAM —GO SOFTLY

David Campiche

Winter
Cold and Dark
What part does snow play

What part do I play
Me, the joker

Let's keep this simple
No big expectations
It's the wind, fool
Ghostling calm water

Love is frail
Fear to forget
I'm folly—you can tell
Big sad eyes

A doe stepping from the haunted copse
Her hoofs weave deep involute tracks
Beside the cold winter stream
Parts still covered in ice
Parts now running free

Say "free" four times
Four holy incantations

In your dry Tsinuk mouth
Turn the word over slowly



Pretend you are salmon

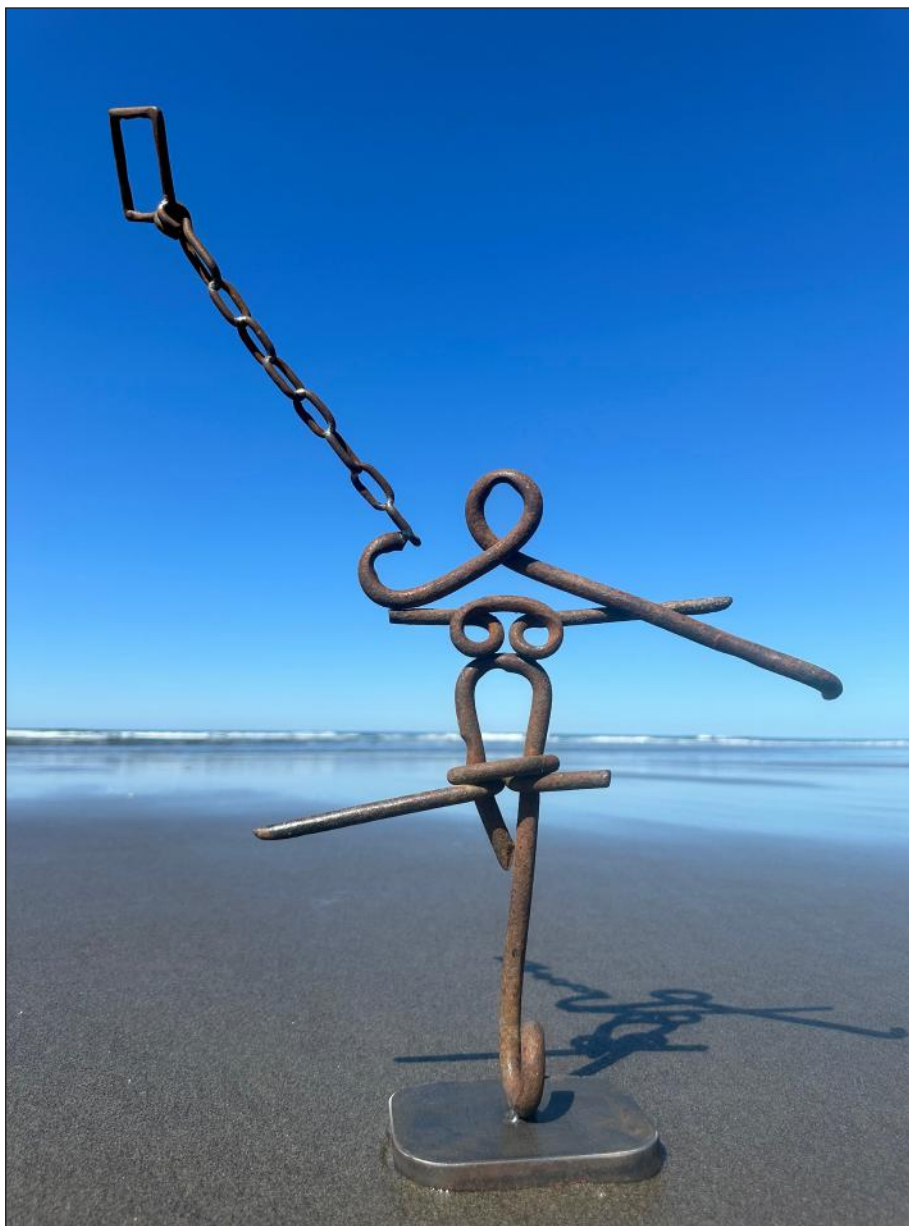
Anyone can follow
Dream tracks trace
Tumbling water

But ask me who shapes
Those shiny stones

They scatter like speckled bird eggs
While the snow, the snow
Swirls and dapples

A dream
A song
A kiss





Jeremy Furnish - *Someday*
Medium: Found Objects



DREAMS

Patrick Daly

When it's all said and done
when this corporeal world
has passed

when all that remains
are the fibers
of my soul

what difference does it make

touching, holding,
kissing, or dreaming

invisible, perfect

touching me
inside
in the same way

as every lover dissipates,
as every morning rises

I feel the comfort
both ways

every way.



THE GOLDEN CITY

Jim Dott

Dreams can get so weirdly complicated. I was my younger self trying to reach my love, my wife who was also her younger self but her younger self before she met me. I was coming to dead ends, making wrong turns, glimpsing her in the distance, and stepping over people seated at a concert then in a restaurant then on a tour boat when suddenly that dream veered off, a river bending away.

I was strolling through a golden city. The walls of the buildings and the streets were made of golden sandstone. The windows were amber as if each pane were reflecting sunset but there was no sun or sky just the walls reaching up and up.

I walked with crowds of women and children on a wide avenue. No men. At first I thought I was in a Muslim country because the women all wore dark headscarves and long loose robes — gold fabric streaked and striped with lapis blue. All the women wore the same large thick-framed glasses and they each had a sheathed dagger that rode at the small of their backs on a narrow belt. Some carried yellow satchels. The children wore white calf-length smocks. Everyone was barefoot.

I began to wonder about the lack of men, fearing a dark secret behind their absence, worrying what it meant for me (those daggers). A child took my hand as if to say, “There is nothing to fear. This is how it is here. You are safe.”

As I walked along I noticed a low hum from the the walls, the pavement. At first it seemed just *humming* but the longer I listened the more it sounded like chanting. Then it came clear:

The queen is dead. Long live the queen. The queen is dead. Long live the queen.

I saw no tears, no anguish on the faces that passed, but felt a deep accepted sadness. A woman brushed my right arm and I thought this, “At death the egg is hatched.”

The avenue entered a wide plaza, other streets entered like the spokes of a wheel. At the hub was a huge round hole. A deliciously sweet, earthy smell rose from it. People were entering and exiting from the hole, funneling in, fanning out. There were two lines ascending, descending on a spiraled walkway. The lines rubbed shoulders as they passed one another. There was a different hum from the hub:

She sustains us, we sustain her, we sustain her, she sustains us.

Here and there in the plaza women were dancing, each with a circle of others watching. They reached out and caressed her when she finished. I noticed



fine yellow dust clinging to the hairs on the back of my hand. A woman took my left arm and I was swept along out of the plaza. The pavement, the walls became an earthen tunnel. It was only women now around me, gently, persistently moving me toward an exit.

Long live the queen. The queen is dead.

I woke in the dark quiet of our bedroom, our bed. My wife, my love slept beside me, breathing softly. I closed my eyes again and the river of that other dream swung back to me. I slipped in.



Joshua Martin-Schlicting- *Heaven Burst*
Photography



NIGHT RESCUES

Reba Owen

A night terror woke me,
I was in Bangkok without a ticket
or a passport, when really the Oregon rain played a safe sonata on the
bedroom window. Or the night, deep in REM sleep,
a gaboon viper bit my hand, my scream sending the cat soaring off the
bed, and into the soft patterns of the moonlight on the rug.
How many times a childhood dream revisits: on the river bank by a huge
fir tree,
a crack forms behind me, the tree shudders and
starts to fall I awake, saved because
starlight is sparkling in the hemlock branches outside, and the
quip-quip of a night hawk is
calling me.



DREAM JOB

Jim Dott

I quit my dream job. I know, I'm already retired, have been for years. This was a job I have had in my dreams since retiring. An elementary teaching job like the ones I had in my waking life. I taught at several schools in this dream school district as a kind of floating resource helping my dream colleagues with science lessons and small group reading and math. The kids were great, we had fun! There were no meetings, not testing, no grading, no parent teacher conferences to slog through. Great resources, new desks, large windows. Even the administrators were a dream to work with — since they didn't often appear in these dreams. Of course the usual motifs would arise: the rowdy class that couldn't be calmed, the necessary books or supplies that, no matter how hard I looked, couldn't be found. Hurrying down an endless hallway searching for my classroom.

I kept the job for years. I went to work, not every night but often enough. Eventually I asked for, and got, my own classroom again. On the first day I got hopelessly lost finding the school, woke in a sweat. Thankfully, the next night I had

found the school, the classroom, and the students. All went well, a dream school, a dream class. No bullies, no future psychopaths, no helicopter moms. I can't tell you anything about pay or benefits; this was all on the astral plane you know.

COVID came but had no effect on my dream school. We all still met in person, no masks. Maybe a bit more angst with curriculum, more nights when I woke relieved that the job wasn't "real." And then suddenly, last week, it was over. I was done. I'd resigned. I'd like to say there was a wonderful retirement party — Cake, toasts and roasts, hugs and tears but I just woke up at three AM one night and knew the school dreams had ended.

So, I have time for dream vacations with my dream family, friends. Since I'm fully retired let's meet up for a cup of coffee, pint of beer, or a glass of wine some day-dream soon.





Joshua Martin-Schlicting - *Just Keep Swimming*
Photography



JELLYFISH TRANCE

Francis Opila

Translucent ivory, pulsing harmony
you float among spiraling sunlit kelp
and awakened starfish, your undulating
tentacles drift behind, you touch me
lightly until biting pain rivets my flesh—
spins my earth-feet headfirst into
saltwater trance, carried on swells,
tidal pull through deception pass,
descent to dark offshore canyon
as the ocean heats up, we're lost
among rafts of plastic shards,
my thirst upwells, I find breath—
who rescues the sea? songs of faraway
whales proclaim aqueous truths.



DREAMS THAT SPEAK IN COLORS

Tory'ana Afornorpe

Dreams that speak in colors are determined to shine
Dreams that speak in colors are red, blue, green, purple, grey, orange
Each color has a pattern
Blue can represent the sky
Red can represent the land
Green can represent the trees
Purple can represent the clouds
Grey can represent the house
Orange can represent everything, the color of your skin, the color of your
Eyes, the color of the crabs picking at your feet

These colors are determined to shine in your dreams
These colors are there to speak to you from their point of view
These colors can symbolize anything and everything you want them to

Blue can mean happiness
Red can mean joy
Green can mean disguise
Purple can mean life
Grey can mean love
Orange can mean friendship

Dreams that speak in color are meant for you
What colors in your dreams speak out to you?
Dreams speak in colors



WHISPERS OF A DREAM

Calandra Frederick

Olivia had never had one dream that turned out the way she had hoped. Not one. At every stage, she had dreamed big and made goals, only to be left disappointed when she eventually achieved them.

Sitting quietly on her back porch, she sipped her tepid coffee and looked out over her backyard, gently tucking her long, grey tresses behind her ears. The morning fog dusted the garden in a gentle haze and seeped around her, chilling her skin. She gripped the mug wishing it was still hot, but the only warmth she got was from the white cat curled on her lap softly purring. In this quiet moment, the birds did not chirp, the neighbors' cars were not yet started, and life seemed suspended with the fog. Only the tugboats' blowhorns sounded deep and low from the river.

Olivia thought back to when she was younger and just graduating high school. She had spent her senior year dreaming of leaving this small river town for somewhere more exciting. Portland, she had decided would be better. She dreamed each night of all the new things she'd be able to try. Concerts and plays. Fancy cafes and shops. It was going to be better than here. There would be new people to hang out with and somewhere other than diners to eat. She would be happy and feel content. She just knew it. And so, she dreamed. For 41 weeks. It was a dream explored each night in her sleep and carefully planned out in her spare time during the day.

The summer after her high school graduation, she packed her car with what would fit and left what wouldn't. Her parents waved from their yard as she backed her car into the road. They willed their goodwill upon her. They hoped she'd find that her dream of the city was what she really wanted. Except after five years of living in Portland, she had to call them and admit it had not been. She had gotten her dream and now she hated it.

She hated the clogged-up roadways and always feeling late to where she was trying to go. Olivia was working three jobs to pay for her rent in an apartment she never wanted her family to visit. And after the bills were paid, she never had enough to explore the promised dreams the city held. She had never seen a play, never went out to eat, and never had time to meet the people she thought would understand her. The first year of hustling had felt exciting with its potential, but the next four had worn her down. The city was a dream that never grew into the bloom she had planned for.

The day before she turned in her two week notices, she had looked in the mirror and had admitted to herself that either dreams turned into curses or she



didn't know what to wish for. She had packed her car again, returning home, this time with less than what she had come with.

Olivia carefully picked up the cat, stood, and then placed her back on the chair. She carried her empty mug back into the house, the screen door rap-tapping behind her. Inside her kitchen, she placed the mug in the dishwasher before placing some of her homemade bread in the toaster. When it sprung up, warm and golden, she smeared her blackberry jam over the gluten rectangle. She bit into it, the taste blossoming on her tongue, and stared out the window. She still had it. She was still a great baker. Her enjoyment in the kitchen only recently returning.

When she had returned home, there were limited jobs available. It was her mother that had pointed out that Olivia loved baking. "We haven't had a great bakery in years," she had mentioned one morning. "The previous building is still vacant. What if you opened up your own shop?" It sounded like a dream worth tending.

"Why not?" Olivia thought. And so, she threw herself into it.

She spent what money she had fixing up the old building. She woke up each morning in the darkness kneading her doughs and glazing her pastries. She started small and watched this dream grow. And she loved it, until she didn't.

Every year, the hours grew. She never took time off; she couldn't. She made money as tourists added it to the favorite pit stops on their way to the coast, but never found the time to spend it on anything. And then there were the few complaints and bad reviews. Not a lot, but just enough. Each one made her soul wilt under the pride she had for her food. Each negative post chipped away at the dream, until one day, she put the business up for sale. The dream had been beautiful when she first picked it, but it didn't last.

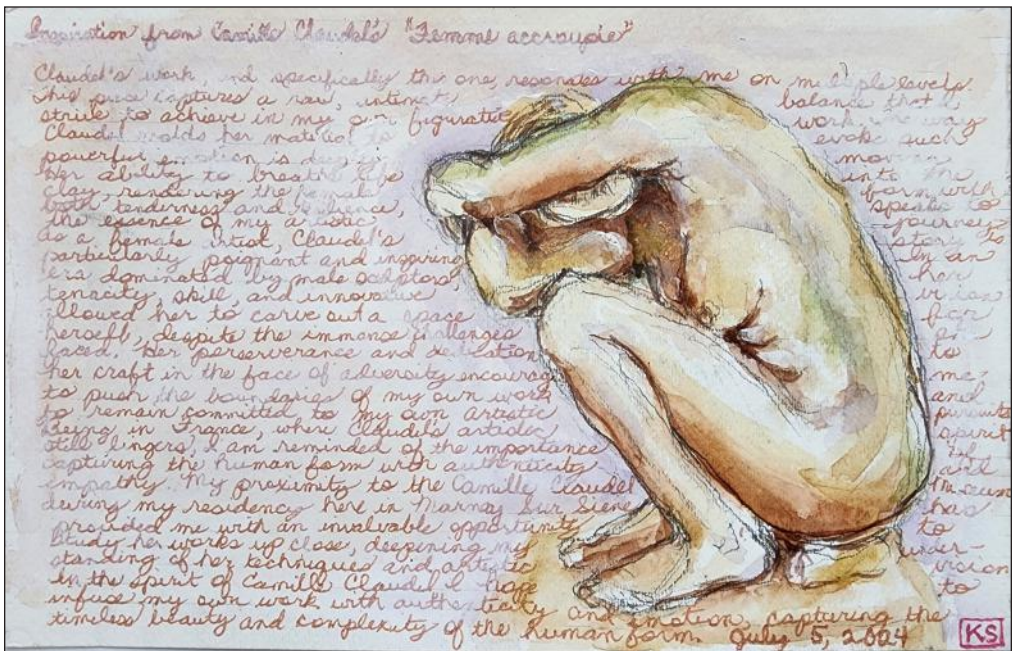
Olivia wiped her hands together, clearing any remaining crumbs from them. Turning from the window, she walked towards the back porch. Her purple gardening apron hung from a hook on the wall. She took it, and lifting it over her head, felt the leather gloves tucked into the pocket. The cat still lay curled on the chair giving her the briefest of purrs as Olivia walked out the door and into her backyard. The sun warmed her skin and burned the tentacles of fog away to reveal her garden. She saw the pink rose heads and purple bleeding hearts, the columbine's bold red petals, and wide, yellow blooms of her Black-eyed Susans. Her tools were laying beside the flowers' gentle beds ready for her necessary pruning. Quietly, she pulled her gloves out. She slipped her right glove over her hand, but paused just briefly before doing the same on the left. There, almost tattooed on her ring finger, was the white outline of a ring she no longer wore.

She had met him here in town, shortly after returning from Portland. He had smiled shyly, she had grinned back. Theirs was a love that had grown wild and fast. She had dreamed it to be some cinematic love story of smiles and stolen kisses, a lust that never was extinguished. Fifteen years they spent grafting their lives together, their dream coming to fruition. Until one day he left. And with him, Olivia's dream of love died.



Olivia kneeled over her flowers. She spent the day weeding and cutting. Tilling new dirt to the surface while her cat slept under the butterfly bush. There was an irony here, planted among her seeds. Dreams are what she used to cling to for happiness, but it was the quiet whispers of life that had made her years livable. The rescued cat and the homemade jam from a glass jar. Her evolving garden growing and wintering with each season. In the silent void of her prayed dreams, happiness was seeded. It had grown unbeknownst to Olivia. It grew unassuming among her life's big dreams. Just little invisible shoots, nothing to stop and look at. Her attention had been elsewhere. But when they had finished flowering, these unknown hopes were what she loved.

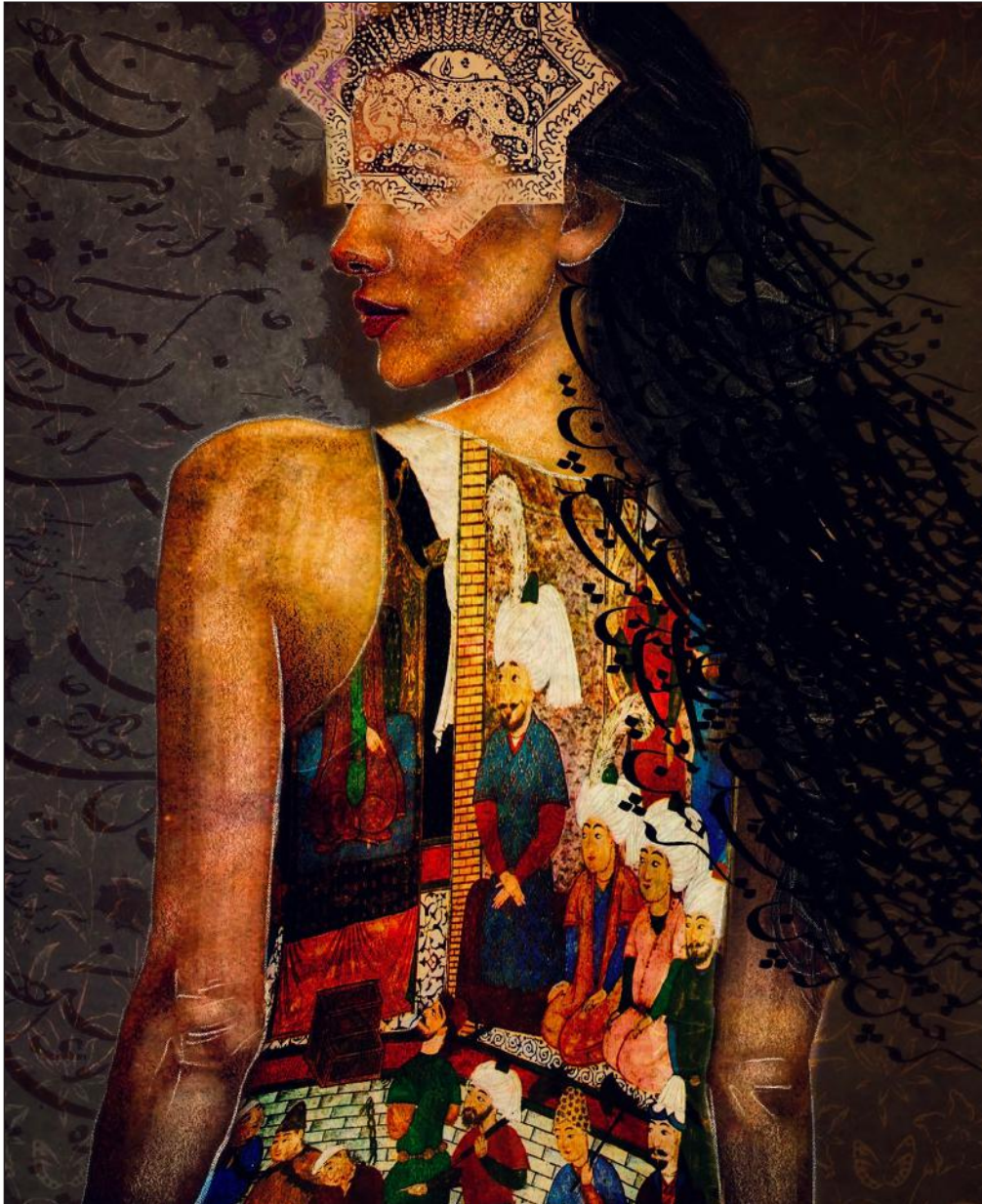
Looking over her garden, Olivia conceded her past dreams. Dreams weren't lists or plans. They were rays of sunshine that suddenly hit at the shadowy voids of her life and warmed them. Placing the trowel down, Olivia leaned back. Olivia no longer dreamed, instead she just lived.



Kristin Shauck

Study of Femme Accroupie, Camille Claudel
Charcoal, Pen and Watercolor on Paper





Mahshid Gorjian - *Woven Memories*
Digital Painting



OTTER WOMAN DREAMS

David Campiche

Otter Woman dreams songs
Along flooding tidal waters
She with moon eyes

Up the mountain, fog
Weaving through ancient spruce
How proud they stand

Imagine deep woods
How confused winds become
Singing to no one

Song wraps the mountain
Native peoples lived here
Big cedar remember

Little stream, tell me
Which way the water goes
Oh! Wily freshet

Eagle flies north
Long black wings, silver sky
River silent below



DREAM OF STARTING OVER

Janet Ebert

I dream of starting over
Under a red eraser sky.
To screech white chalk on the board
And watch dust kick alive.

I dream of starting over
Under a blue canvas sky.
To flush the nesting sparrows
And slash the sun's blonde hair,

I dream of starting over
Under a foreign fuchsia sky.
To laugh in my second language.

I dream of starting over
Under a yellow permissive sky.
To watch the world walk backwards
Down a one-way flight of stairs.

I dream of starting over
Under a gray pin-striped sky.
To flee red ruled margins
And crinkle verbs and nouns.

I dream of starting over
Under a beige drab sky.
To box decurum on its nose
And watch time tick by.

I dream of starting over
Under a purple accepting sky
To paint the ocean green
And not ask why.



ASYLEE STATEMENT

Anonymous

ESCAPING WITH OUR LIVES

In October 2023, I decided to leave my country with my seven-year-old son, my husband, and his family. We sold all our material things for an uncertain future, but especially for peace of mind and security. My stepfather had had my mother killed and confiscated her property. We could get no redress from the courts and I was warned that persisting in looking for justice would endanger our lives. I had no choice but to leave my country.

We took a bus to the border of the nearest country, and went to the embassy of yet another country to apply for a transit visa. We were told that they would give us an answer in a week, so we stayed in a hotel and waited for the answer.

THE HELLISH HIKE

After a week, they still had no answer, and at the hotel, they charged us \$100 each night. We decided that we could not continue waiting because we were spending too much money. At that moment,

we decided to give away our things and take a bus, and then a boat that took us to the Darién Gap. The Darién Gap is a rugged mountainous jungle path, 60 miles of mud and venomous snakes with no cell service or shelter. We were not prepared to go through everything we went through in that jungle. We were charged \$100 each to go on the path. Criminals shot guns in the air to scare us. My husband saw skeletons by the side of the path.

After three and a half days through the mountains, we took canoes to the UN camp. There we boarded buses to a stop near the border and we walked into the next country. We needed to rest and we begged a lady to rent us a room in her hotel. She was reluctant to rent to people from our country because others had destroyed her rooms. She finally relented and we were able to rest before continuing.

The next day we took a bus to the next Central American country;



and the day after that, another bus north. We went to immigration authorities and requested safe conduct to be able to travel without problems; we then took a bus where we paid a group that took migrants to the Mexican border. We were told they were the only people who could get us through safely. We rested at a hotel before the night trip to the border.

VIOLATING HUMAN RIGHTS

In that country, they do not let migrants pass through without consequence. The authorities are monsters, and human rights are routinely violated. We were on a bus that the police, through roadblocks along the entire route, boarded, then searched all the women, including their private parts, looking for valuables. They beat the men to take their money. Every person on the bus had to pay \$20. "Cooperate," those were their words. I hugged my son and cried because it was so unnerving; we were just traveling, we weren't hurting anyone.

THREATS FROM THE CARTEL

After we got to the border with Mexico, we had to pay to be able to pass through. We got

to a house where there were many people who would take us to a transit terminal. The people in charge were from a Mexican cartel; they were all armed, and when we got there to the transit terminal, my husband's uncle was told that if he didn't pay blackmail, they were going to kidnap one of the children who were with us. He had to agree, and we quickly left the terminal.

SO MANY LIES

The immigration officers said that they would help us by giving us safe-conduct to travel through the country and get to Mexico City, where we could request an appointment with US immigration officials to enter the United States legally. After we gave them all of our documentation, it turned out that everything was a lie: they held us in a shelter; they separated the women and children from the men and didn't let us leave; they took the men to another place far from us. Then they moved us all to another place.

They finally explained that we actually could leave but that the safe-conduct passes were not being issued. We could continue through the country, but only on foot. Afraid, we quickly left on a bus route with no checkpoints.

The next day, we were told that there



was a bus that would take us to Mexico City. We paid \$90 for each person, and they assured us that yes, it would reach Mexico City, that they always got through the checkpoints without problems. We confidently got on the bus at 8 p.m. But the first checkpoint appeared at 11 p.m., and when they checked us, they asked us for identification, and we only had passports, so they made us get off the bus. We lost all our bus fare money while the bus drove on and left us there with the police.

The police told us to “walk and be thankful that we did not send you back.” We had to walk to Arriaga to figure out how we were going to continue. We had to walk past checkpoints without being seen, because if we had been seen, we would have been sent back. We took buses and taxis and walked until we were finally able to hire some motorcycles.

The motorcycles made three stops, and we paid more money at each one because they did not go on the highway but through the haciendas [farm country, ranches]. After taking more taxis and buses, we finally got to Mexico City.

TAKING ADVANTAGE OF MIGRANTS

When we arrived, we requested a CBP ONE appointment on November 19, 2023. [CBP One is an online appointment scheduler from US Customs and Border Patrol.] We went to a small town where there were not so many migrants, and we were able to relax somewhat. We rented a house from a man who, because we were migrants, rented it to us for \$90 per person per month instead of what they charge normally, \$90 per month for the entire house. We then found work to pay our expenses since we had run out of money. On December 17, 2023, they gave us the CBP ONE appointment for January 6, 2024.

We kept working until January 5, 2024 and then went to the airport. Mexican authorities often detain migrants to ask for a significant amount of money for their release, and if they do not get said money, they lose the appointment. This is the *modus operandi* with almost all the authorities in Latin America: migrants must be prepared to pay bribes all along the route.

We arrived at the airport, and an immigration officer detained us, checked our appointment, and then



released us so we could board the plane. At the entrance gate, we and applied immediately for asylum. We flew to San Diego.

A foundation took us to a hotel where we could rest, and they gave us food and basic toiletries. The next day, some of our family group bought plane tickets to South Carolina. My family and I decided to make our own way, and the three of us traveled to Portland to live quietly as an independent family.

THE END OF THE ROAD

We arrived in Astoria at the house that my husband's cousin had rented and added our names to the lease. We enrolled my son in elementary school, and immediately after that, we began looking for work. But there was a language barrier because we did not know how to speak English. My husband got a few hours work in a local restaurant. We found Clatsop Community Action who helped us and advised us to go to the community college to take English classes. I continue to study in the college, improving my ability to speak and understand English. My plan is to join the Medical Assisting program. My

family prays the courts will protect us and grant us asylum. I appreciate the safety and tranquility of the Astoria area and am optimistic about my future. We still have nightmares, not about the horrible journey, but that we are back in our home country, scared and having to escape all over again.



Jessica Bahl

For Asylee

Digital Illustration



TOGETHER IN MY DREAMS

Katrina Hunt

I closed my eyes by the light of the moon,
And slumber took me to a sacred place,
A place where I could see your face—
Not the one the world last knew,
But the one you had before your body grew tired.
We sat together,
We loved each other,
I felt a peace I have never found with another.
No words were needed, no time was lost,
Just us, untouched by what was lost.
I wish I still had you here by my side,
My only true ride or die.
I long for the night when you meet me in dreams again,
When I can
Sit
With you, my long-lost best friend.



FROM THE WINDOW

Asher Finch

She takes a long drag from the cigarette that rests at her waist, dangling between her fingers. Her lungs cut the smoke short, finishing the breath with cold wind on the back porch. The burning cherry droppings between the floorboards. Her father watches from the half-cracked kitchen window, his grey hair and tired eyes cast only in silhouette through the back-lit glass. She knows he is watching her, studying her shoulders as they rest in a deep exhale. There is a slow curl from her waist to her lips, her fingers dancing with the trailing smoke lines. When she pulls them back, the plush filter is stained a deep merlot, stamped from smudged lipstick and bleeding gums.

Her father pulls the window closed, nauseous from the warm tobacco. He starts a kettle and scavenges the cabinets for any remaining tea. When his wife died, he had stopped putting honey in his tea, the scent too close to the stale smoke lacing her blouse. Often, he would tuck his nose into the crook of her neck, and they would waltz through the kitchen, no music, moving to the soft hum of the old refrigerator. He would inhale from her skin, *you smell like honey*, his voice dripping down her spine. Were it not for the warmth in her blouse and the ashtray on the porch, it would have been easy to forget she was a smoker. If not for the thick coughs or scarlet-stained tissues, maybe they could have ignored it. The kitchen blinds snap shut, as if the action could seal off his memory along with them.

She fingers the foil of the red-lined pack and pulls another cigarette from its paper box. *The last*, she had promised herself, *was the last*. But she, like her mother, was never able to stop herself. Her father draws the blinds. She cannot force herself to speak to him tonight.

The thick cardboard urn, indifferent to its weight, arrived this morning, carrying what remained of her mother. Her mother died nearly a month ago. Over their coffee in the early morning, her father said it was her responsibility— that he could not see the body of his late wife, that he was in protest of her death.

"This could have been avoided," he whispers in a tired breath, nodding to the pack she left on the dining table.

He never raised his voice, not even when she was a child. But the full day passed, and those were the only words spoken between the two. Their thick tension catches in the wisp of smoke from her next drag. She turns away from the house, staring beyond their yard. If he were to look now, he would see only her silhouette, backlit by the full moon.



The kettle screams, and he pulls himself from the window. He shuts the heat from the stove, and gently pours the water into their mugs. Although *it was his ritual*, his wife was always the one to choose their tea. She favored chamomile—*light, floral, soothing*. It softened the edges of the evening, filling their home with the same warmth she possessed. This morning was the first time he had to choose his leaves, having brewed the last of his wife's chamomile the night before. He bought two ounces of Russian caravan instead—*dark and heavy with the weight of aged embers*. He brews his first cup, but it sits untouched on the counter, cooling. Its smell sickened him. Too sweet or too warm, almost like the burning rings of tobacco, woven into her blouse, falling from fingertips to between floorboards.



Dallas Hughes - *Untitled*
Medium: Tempera

GROUNDHOG'S DAY

Janet Ebert

Alone at a sidewalk cafe.
Me, a table and three empty chairs.
A foreign city—not sure where.
Been here many times in past lives.

Me, a table and three empty chairs.
This dream plays out like Groundhog's Day.
Been here many times in past lives.
Sounds of soothing chatter and clatter.

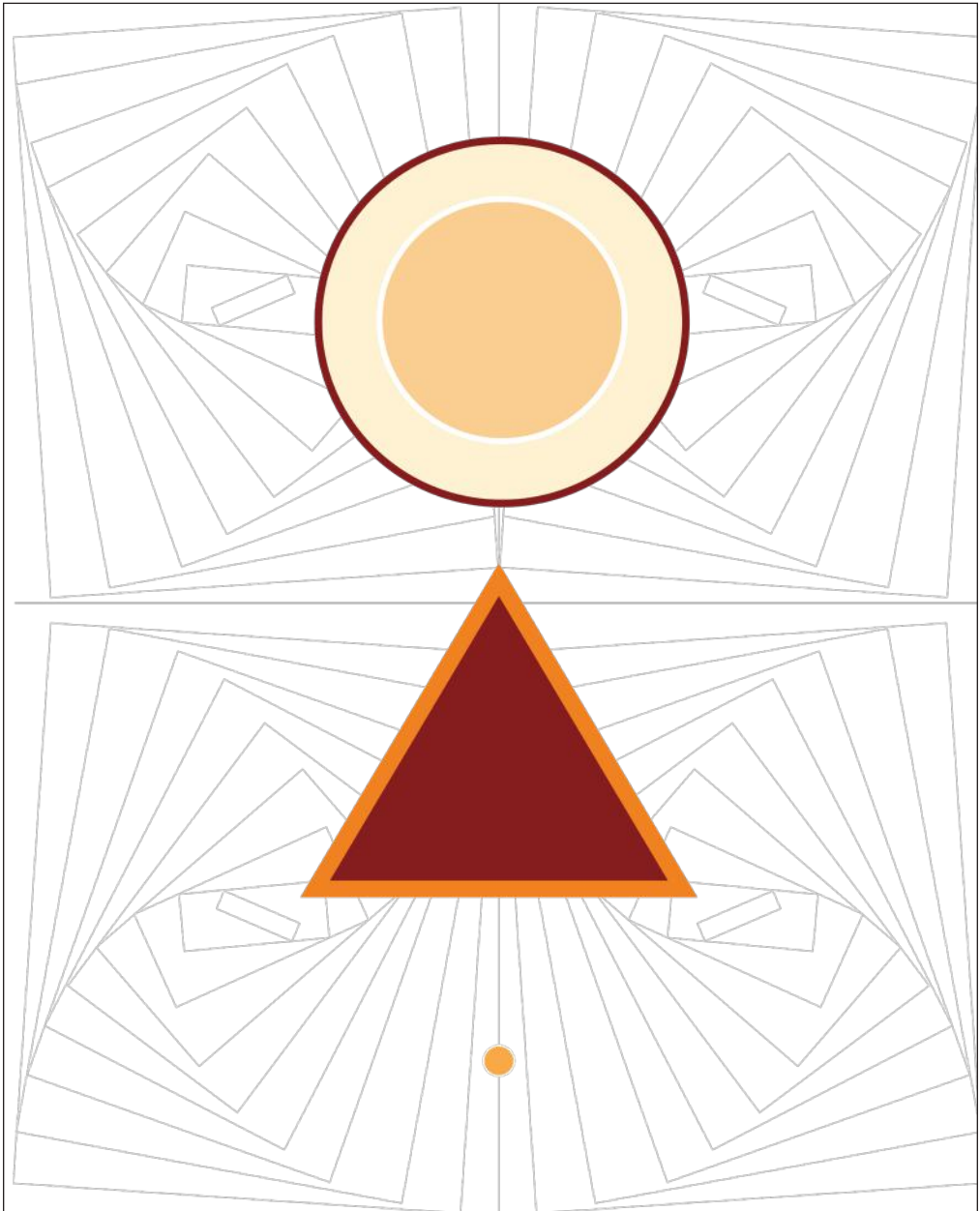
The table and chairs once enamel white,
Now, rust speckled gray like me.
This dream plays out like Groundhog's Day.
My waiter brings coffee—he knows my needs.

Hold my coffee with two firm hands.
Bread plated with triangles of real butter.
Precise triangles like mitered bed sheets.
The butter sits complacent as I once was.

Spent years perfecting mitered bed sheets.
The butter sits complacent as I once was.
Ponder who will fill the three empty chairs.
My waiter tops off my coffee—he knows my needs.

Alone at a sidewalk cafe.
Me, a table and three empty chairs.
This dream plays out like Groundhog's Day.





John Cox - *No Information*
Digital Illustration



THE GREEN ROOM

Reba Owen

They were all there but one
to celebrate a wedding feast,
athletes, classmates, brothers, sons,
from where they had spread to seek
lives and loves, the least still fit,
laughing as each punched midriff,
tested biceps and brawn,
the unforgotten wrestling holds,
which the women called "heavy leaning." Many were divers like him,
trim as seals in those days
when they gorged on clams and beer
during final week.
He died in the green room
five miles from shore.
He could have lasted while the Coast Guard searched a grid.
Because of the current
and a sudden sou 'wester,
the wrong grid.
I can breathe underwater. It's true,
I have dreamed it.
If he had been sleeping
he too could have dreamed air,
and his mother's quilt
would have held back the hypothermia.
None of us can ever recover
with the injury wrought
deep in the green room,
that kept him from dancing with the bride today.



URSUS SOMNIUM

Mike Francis

Even as I prepared to send the bear to the emperor, I knew it wouldn't change anything.

How many times through the eons have I done something similar? How many portents, visions and omens have I conjured for people small and great — and a few times, even to animals? And to what earthly effect? Upon awakening, people invariably shook their heads as if clearing cobwebs, got up and went about their days mostly as they had planned.

But we have our charge, we dispatchers of dreams: to sprinkle these ephemeral warnings from time to time among erring humans. We do it, and then stand aside. Nobody follows up with after-action reports: Did the warning work? Were pathways smoothed, people comforted, lives saved? It seems like an obvious and helpful step.

But far be it from me to suggest such a process improvement. That kind of critique is heeded only when it comes from the angelic consultants. They swoop in, drop bomblets of advice, then flit away to their next clients. By contrast, my job is simply to deliver nighttime visions, and I'm good at it.

In this case, I have a weighty one: I am to deliver a warning to the emperor of France, who is armed with great earthly ambition and considerable military force. The assignment came up today because the emperor is in Erfurt, where he is courting the Russian Tsar, his great counterweight in 19th century Europe. He is focused on Russia; he is weighing the future; he is contemplating great maneuvers. The time is right.

The emperor has attended a play tonight with the tsar. It is "Oedipus," which happens to revolve around a chilling prophecy of its own. Perhaps the emperor will have a receptive attitude.

I dispatch the bear, and the effect is vivid and memorable, just as we strive for. Listen to the way Louis Constant Wairy, his valet, described it later:

About two o'clock that morning, when I was sleeping very profoundly



when my ears caught the sound of muffled and plaintive cries such as might be uttered by a man who was being strangled Suddenly it occurred to me that they were assassinating the Emperor. I sprang out of bed

Advancing toward his bed, I perceived His Majesty stretched across it in a convulsive attitude, his sheets and coverlets tossed to one side, and his entire person in a frightful state of nervous contraction. Inarticulate cries were escaping from his half-open mouth, his chest seemed greatly oppressed, and one of his tightly closed hands lay on the pit of his stomach. It frightened me to look at him. I called him and he did not answer; I called him again, and yet again At last I gave him a gentle push. This roused the Emperor and he awoke with a loud cry, and saying: 'What is it? What is it?' Then he sat up and opened his eyes wide.

*I made haste to tell him that, seeing him tormented by a horrible nightmare, I had ventured to waken him. 'And you did well, my dear Constant,' interrupted His Majesty. 'Ah! my friend, what a frightful dream! A bear tore open my breast and was devouring my heart!' Thereupon the Emperor got up, and while I was remaking his bed, he walked about the room.'*¹

I must say, it was one of my better ones.

For a time, which is a silly way to divide existence, it might be said that I was hopeful I had changed the course of human history. I mean, what portent could be clearer: the Russian bear, the emperor's helplessness in the face of attack, the devastating outcome? Surely he would put it together.

But these are humans with whom we're dealing. And this is a particularly vain and confident human who thinks he sees more clearly and knows better than his fellows. Of course he would dismiss the warning, no matter how vivid, as a mere subconscious fantasy. It would take the gentle advice of a trained therapist to talk him through the implications; needless to say, the emperor was not inclined to seek gentle counsel from anyone.

So history unspooled more or less as we foresaw. The emperor poked the bear.

Later, that is to say, after a calamitous sequence of ill-advised choices, misjudgments and a persistent lack of imagination, the emperor realized his advances in Russia had cost him most of his army, its troops fallen victim to

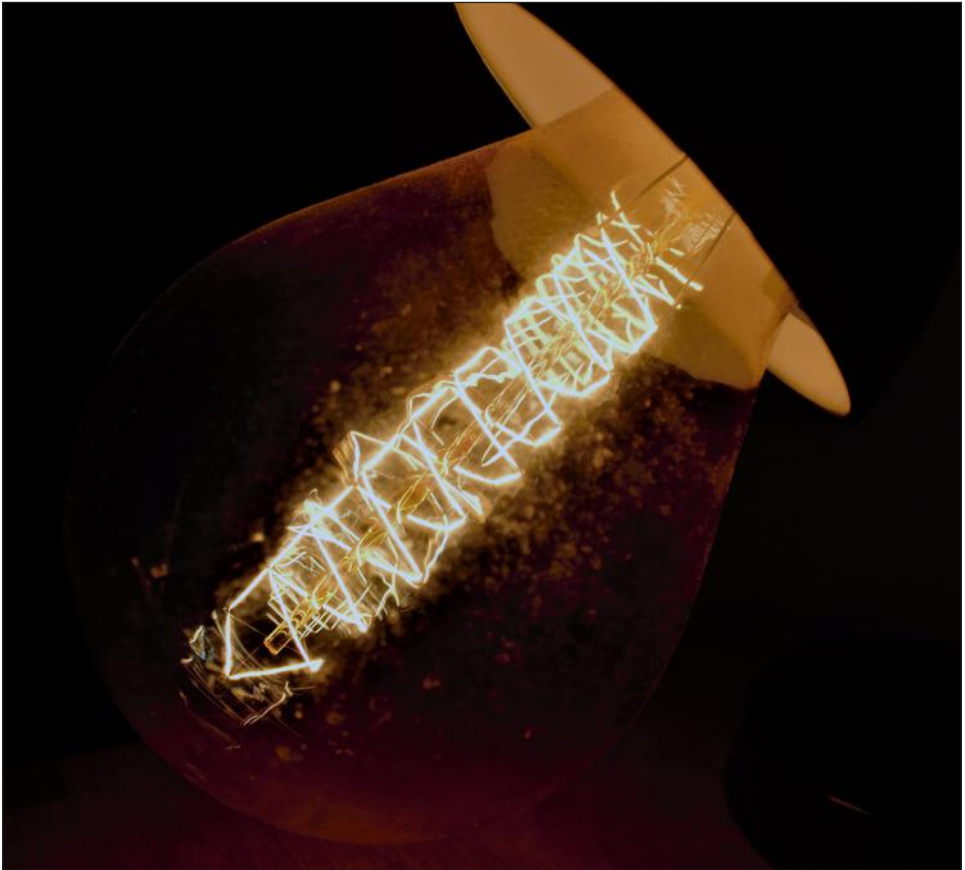
¹ *Memoirs of Constant, valet of the emperor; about his private life, his family and his court, Chapter 12.*



combat, typhus and the bitter winter cold. Stalled after his advance to Moscow and troubled by developments in Paris, the emperor abandoned the Grand Armée at Smorgon and galloped back across Europe to the Tuileries palace.

On the way, he had a lot of time to think. I like to believe he reflected on a certain nightmare, delivered to him at a time of peace, but forgotten until the end of a disastrous military campaign. Perhaps he even recognized that Heaven had taken an interest in his ambitions — and did not bless them.

That is what I'd like to believe. But then, I traffic in dreams.



Joshua Martin-Schlicting - *Light*
Photography



SEVEN DREAMS IN WINTER

Mimi Maduro

Each night for seven nights in a row
I awake from a dream:
a different person I've known
over the past thirty years
comes into full, closeup view
in fluttering light
(not people in the inner circle
further out at the periphery)
a pulsing love for each of them
bubbles up, unbidden.

It's not retro-love
nor memory
it's a flow of feeling
catching up with itself
as if there were a delay;
the pause button pressed back then
some essence of each of them
held back or misfiled
the message (I see you; love you)
delivered & registered
in future time.

I go about my day
it's still winter
though the ice is melting.



REMEDIAL DREAMING

Rodney Merrill

I sink into a silken pillow, slip down
into the Space Mountain roller coaster
and hurl through a web of closely knit specters
spun of Pink Floyd thread.

Screaming, high-speed high-definition
neural connections streaming
end-to-end encrypted murmurs
from friends and family across the universe,
long-lost to the unstoppable deformations
not of clock time but historied story
and storied history.

I wade knightly knee deep
through galaxy dust piled high
on pavers formed of curated laughter
that always leaves tears in its wake.
I wonder, will it be worth it?

Composted memory, knotted beads of story,
and the cement of traumatic love
extrude what it—the whole of it—means.

Maintaining momentum
against headwinds of doubt is daunting
on the dark side of the moon.
But I must.

I want to fix everything, you know,
make everything right at the speed of light.
But can you really fix everything,



let alone at the speed of light?

Can anything once done be undone
or only smoothed over,
patched up, plastered in?
Still, complacency, surrender
are not options.

I wake
to figments, fragments, filaments
still flickering like fireflies in a fallow field,
flashes on Cinderella's midnight disco ball.

I wake to the soothing sound
and scent of hard rain beating
on warm pavement.

I wake to the woolen warmth,
the gentle snore and twitch
of a little gray schnauzer.

I wonder: Have I managed to pull it off?



SHOPPING TRIP

Florence Sage

I have to confess, I fell asleep in Costco,
way in the back of the store, deep into sleep
as if in my own room. Some mornings
it can be hard to tell where you are.

I was intently seeking certain paper products,
paper towels, tissues, panty liners, TP,
a domestic supply emergency,
and found them all on aisle fifteen, bulky
plastic packs stacked row on narrow row
so high I tipped my head back to see the top

and maybe then I gave in to the tilt
and went all the way flat *whomp* on my back
as in a judo throw and rolled myself
into a big bath sheet from my basket,
aisle four, and fell into dream on the floor.

The way bears might dream,
as other mammals must,
about their own concerns, of hunting
through a perilous landscape
as a matter of life and death
and then a welcome cozy den,
so maybe I did as I slept.

No clerk came by aghast to roust me
from the paper aisle, I slept alone,
my head by the tubs of laundry soaps,
my feet pointed to my paper prey,
that's how I slept that day.



My hound rushed in like a St. Bernard
and licked my face with his sloppy tongue
and got me up and home and making coffee
from the five-pound pack dark roast, aisle ten,
a half-gallon of cream from seven,
a splash in his bowl for his joy and his service.



Tory'ana Afornorpe - *Life Or Death*
Medium: Color Pencils & Ohuhu Markers



AFLOAT IN A LIMESTONE QUARRY

John Ciminello



Every day you play with the light of the universe.

Subtle visitor, you arrive in the flower and in the water.

PABLO NERUDA



I float on my back toward an island
of small brush, sand, kudzu,
I trust the warm water and you to bring me
back to our beginnings,
the sweet chords of summer,
and the diamond lights more precious
than a bucket full of promises
from people filled with contradictions,
and if I close my eyes,
I can remember the magnetic north,
the reception of strangers in good company
and the natural lines of your smile.

Shadows inch their way toward a time
when we pretend to sleep,
like friends who drift away
and then return when the air fills
with honeysuckle, roses, and star jasmine,
even when I forget the specifics of
where and when the glow first burned,
I know your fire broke the spell of
a thousand years of silence.

I close my eyes to better float
away from voices on shore



complaining about children,
the price of eggs and how
money changes everything,
and with your hands, a gesture of trust,
you guide my shoulders through water lilies
and floating dogwood petals.

And I try to sort out my own contradictions
like coal and diamonds,
the sign of the cross,
or a vow of silence,
and every unspoken message
bends across water
like the court and spark of a dance,
the feel of a hug after a month apart,
and the tender play of light on water.

Afloat on our backs in a limestone quarry
we stare into the deafening silence
of stars where the past reflects
an uncertain future
and the chemistry of water
holds the memory
of you and I.



UNMAPPED

—REDACTED FROM THE *XANAX DIARIES*

Jessica Bahl

Our dreams refuse to be mapped

like constellations shifting

in perpetual rebellion

we drift between stars as

starlight through closed eyes

piercing through the *certainty* of our calculated existence

our dreams persist in beautiful rebellion

defying the cartographers

who would chart

our consciousness

we *dream*,

we *dream*,

we *dream*,

therefore we escape

in this unmapped space—we are infinite.

Undefined by

daylight's

desperate need to name us.

we dare to

dream

regardless —

therefore we escape.



ANIMUS

Janeen Phillips

Not again; no, not again.
The same black and white film noir, only the scenario changes. Sometimes I am on a forest path hemmed in on each side by bushes and trees or in a stalled car on a dead end road, or endless open field of tall grass. Running, always running away from a man with no face, alone with no one to help me.

The pressure of my own heartbeat throbs in my ears. Electrical tingling of sheer terror courses through my body and up my neck. He's close behind me. *Hide. I must find a place to hide.* Acrid scent of fear, hard breathing, blue light from my activated digital watch; he finds me. Strong hands push me to the ground; faceless rage above me. Flash of a knife blade. The stifled scream of a small animal who has lost the chase.

Replay. Try again.

Crawling through the wet reeds, I come to a darkened river. I quietly lower myself into the cold rushing

water hoping to conceal myself in the undercut of the bank. The rustling of reeds and sucking sound of heavy boots in mud above me: footsteps of my assailant. *Stop breathing, he's going to hear you.* Underwater, scorching fire of air held in lungs too long. *Downstream, go farther downstream.* Jolted awake, still holding my breath. This time I got away.

Predatory nightmares invade my sleep, leaving me unsettled and vulnerable. Are they foretelling future events, a reminder to be vigilant or a vestige from past traumas? I detest feeling helpless; I detest feeling like prey.

The residual of the nightmare stays in my subconscious as I go through my workday, pushing around papers and placating a tyrant. I was lucky to find this job. They either believed my heavily embellished resume or were relieved to find someone hungry enough to take it. Although the salary barely covers living expenses, at least I am no longer on the receiving end of prospective employers' "Dear John" letters with their cheerful letdowns,

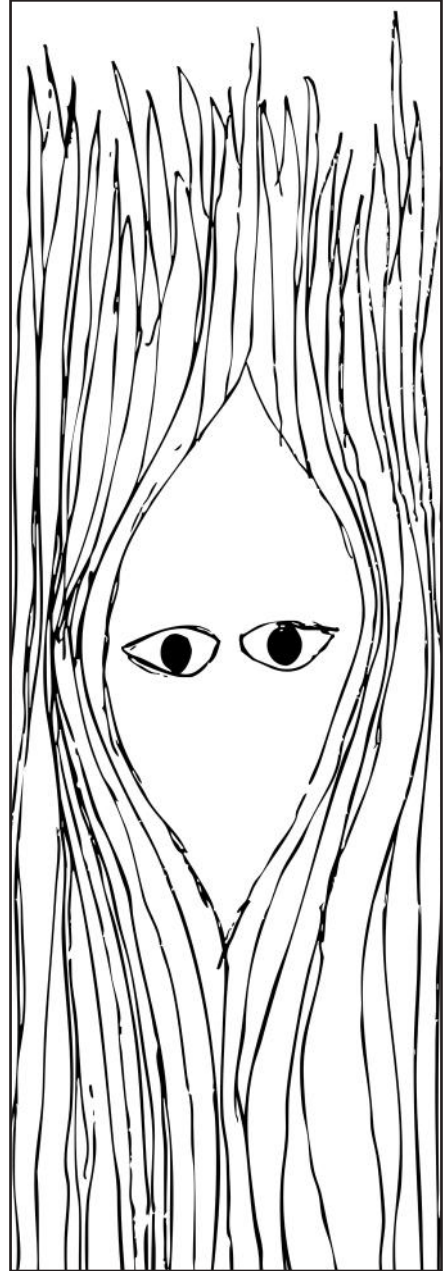


"Thank you for your interest but..."
 However, it is a high price to pay for a paycheck, exacting a "pound of flesh" and whittling down my self-esteem weekly.

What fresh hell will I find when I enter the house I share with my husband and two children. I am growing weary of dancing around landmines and maintaining silence to keep the peace. My repressed rage is passed down to others not in control, and I carry that burden like a heavy weight as I watch their childhood erode.

My body remembers and never forgets what I try to deny. Painful bone spurs develop on both heels. Why did you stay so long? Uncomfortable nodules form on my vocal cords. *Why did you remain silent? Speak your truth!* Preoccupation with death is both a symptom of my discontent and option for release.

Thankfully, I reach a turning point and slowly I re-awaken. Empowerment builds on tiny successes and wisdom is gained from losses. I learn to embrace the light and dark within me. I am the alchemist of my own transformation. A powerful integration occurs with the understanding I am both predator and prey. The faceless man, my animus, is calling me to action. I no longer fear him.



Makayda Cloward
For Animus

Pen



[YOU CALLED ME MAMA]

Martha Ellen

Last night I dreamt of you my lost
child now grown. We were on
a long night journey. Cold.
No stars. With mufflers and
coats pulled tight around.
You wore those yellow mittens.
My silly Christmas gift before
the break. Trudging on and on.
A new path. Snow crunches under
foot. I lead. Your steps in mine.

We came upon a small cabin
alone within the vast landscape.
Shivering, exhausted we
entered. Stomped the snow
off our boots. Tossed our coats
in heap on the chair. Silent.
Warm and cozy. Heated by
the old Jøtol stove stored in
my basement unused since
you left and I did not know why.

A lush green velvet upholstered
sofa with a cozy woolen afghan
to wrap around knitted in my
favorite pattern - "Mended."
Your pink froggie there resting
on a pillow. [I had thought it lost.]
My mom's crewel embroidery
hung above the door with
summer vines and flowers



and birds. Love One Another.

I prepared hot cocoa with
the heavy whipping cream you
always loved. A cup for each. We
are sitting on the sofa now. You
hold my frail hand in yours.

“Mama, do remember your
dream of the millions of luminous
threads joining all living things
within our garden and without?”

“Yes, I do, my baby.”





Kendra Bracey - *While The Body Rests, The Mind Is Awoken.*
Watercolor



A GRAVEYARD OF DREAMS

By Aiden Lippy

I share my dreams with ghosts
 Children the most
 They are the dreamers drinking the poisonous nectar
 A paradise where all are kind
 All are altruistically inclined
 An illusion—a hopeless specter
 The World a better place?
 You jester

You thought you could be anything
 An artist, astronaut, a hollywood star
 But you're just a child in a boxing ring
 Against a Nightmarish Tyrant
 You're aspirations—smithreen

Dreams die young
 This place is a graveyard of them
 Yours may rest here if you like among the unsung
 For dreams are such awfully fragile things
 They break and shatter far too easily

These endless nights
 Will know no dawn
 But a world beyond cruel
 Is not beyond Hope
 Yet ever still
 I Dream No More



A DREAM IN THE HAND

James Gainey

If ego was a person,
It would look like a backhanded dream,
or the lack of.

How dare you, close your eyes,
thinking you can have a piece of the good white folks dream.
Picking yourself up out of the dirt, putting your armour back
together Remembering your self worth.
EVERYBODY IS CREATED EQUAL!

That was a lie
Oh are we still talking about dreams?
That's such a pseudo synopsis of a
scene that claimed to be diverse.
When diversity is worn better as a gimp mask, with no room for
words.
How can something that steals everything to build a transparent
culture
without a beat of a drum or one step marched
Or hymn being sung without a Dream In The Hand?



DREAM OF PASSING

Dan Hubner

1 As though two cosmonauts
from green and raining worlds
unfathomed by one another
would meet by chance
while mapping cold halls
on a derelict station
of unknown construction--

(at my best or weakest
times I believe
it is all so shocking
that the world comes coherent
in waves so long)

--if we were honest
on this earth
we would meet
just like those cosmonauts.

2 "My good god it's great
to see you, I'd believed
I was alone here, but now
to find you in this pit
of blank nothing and meet?
Can you believe it?
It is all so very strange."

3 Daybreak comes and feral
cats slink up and down my street
like cosmonauts passing.

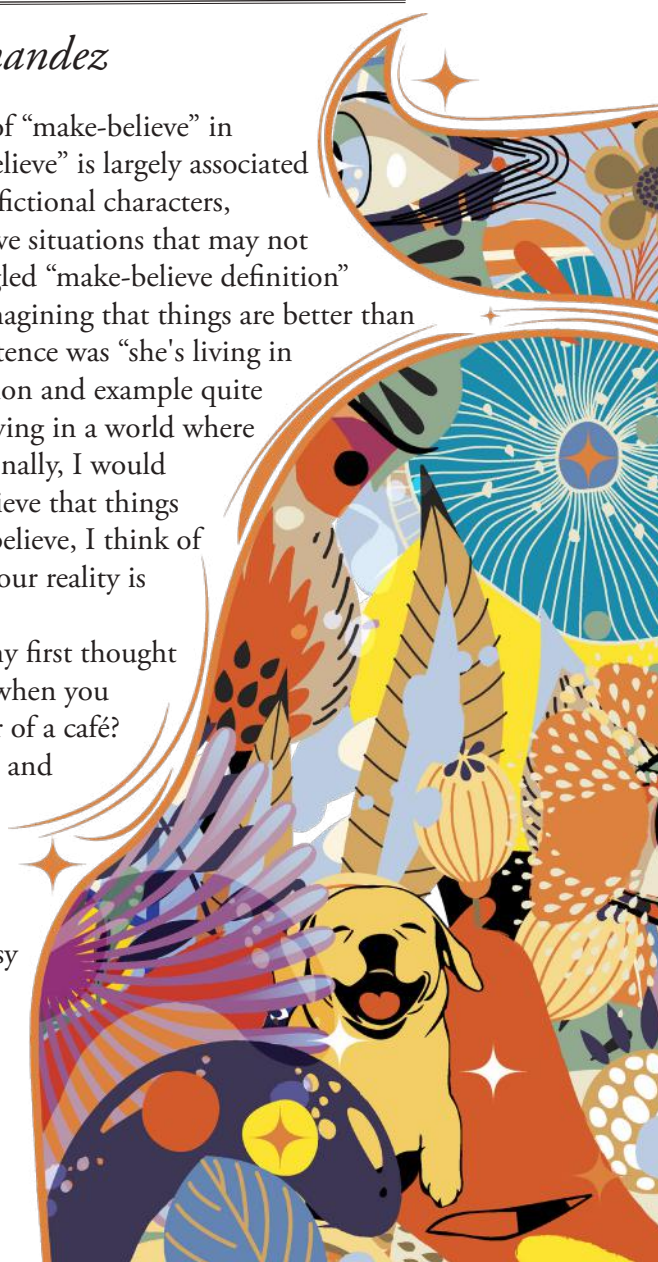


I BELIEVE IN MAKE-BELIEVE

Alan Hernandez

I believe in the term and implementation of “make-believe” in every day of our lives. The term “make-believe” is largely associated with children and their ability to imitate fictional characters, create fantasy worlds, or develop other creative situations that may not necessarily be real. Interestingly, when I googled “make-believe definition” this came up: “the action of pretending or imagining that things are better than they really are.” Even better, the example sentence was “she’s living in a world of make-believe”. Taking this definition and example quite literally, is it wrong for someone to believe living in a world where things are better than they actually are? Personally, I would love to live in a world where I am able to believe that things are better than they are. When I hear make-believe, I think of the phrase fake it ‘til you make it. Or even, your reality is entirely your perception of life.

When I say fake it ‘til you make it, my first thought is dreams. What was it that you dreamed of when you were little? Were you an astronaut? An owner of a café? A football player? There are countless dreams and scenarios we created as little ones that were often “make believe” or “dreams”. It’s all fun and games until we get to a certain age where our parents or other authority figures often tell us we need to stop living in a fantasy and come back to the real world. Well, if our real world isn’t such a happy place why would we want to go there. I say live in your fantasy and become that astronaut, an owner of a café, a football player. All your dreams are attainable, although some may be more difficult to achieve compared to others. Even something as outlandish as being a princess



that has a pet dragon could simply be you working for Disney, becoming an actress, or participating at a medieval fair. Better yet, we can all obtain a pet dragon by having a lizard or other domestic pet that you name Dragon and get a costume for. When you fake it 'til you make it and you have these dream world scenarios as a youngster, you just start doing things that are directly in line with that dream

throughout your formative years. If you work hard enough and are committed to it, eventually you'll make it your reality.

For this reason, I would never curb someone's creativity or beliefs. Some of our greatest inventions were once make-believe and took someone daring enough to ignore what was realistic to accomplish something great. When you think about the world once being considered flat, I bet there was a time that someone said "no, it's a spherical body that orbits the sun." That person was most likely ridiculed for living in a fantasy "make-believe" world. The concept of flying in an airplane was surely make-believe until someone figured out how to do it. The list goes on and on. This begs the question, what is currently make-believe in your mind that with enough creativity and persistence could become real. I encourage you to sit down, visualize and write out your dreams or inventions. Create it on paper and witness it



manifest in your life.

Then we consider reality and our perception around it. I once was taught that reality in regard to time and existence is something that does not change. We are all naturally changing daily whether it be our beliefs through experience or our look from aging or exercise. We are constantly evolving, going through seasons and cycles of our lives just like the nature that surrounds us. With that in mind, can any one reality truly be the real or correct one? It's up to our perception of what we are taking in that forms our individual reality. A compliment to one person could mean something entirely different to another. Something in the news could be devastating to one group but a victory to another. History is funny that way. While the Civil War was a victory for the Union, I guarantee the Confederacy didn't feel they won anything. So, should we allow anyone's perception of reality become or affect our own? I passionately say no. Especially as we embark on a different chapter of our lives, we are constantly getting more liberty to make our own choices and responsibility to follow through. With this, we get the opportunity to shape our own reality.

With playfulness and commitment, we can make-believe any reality. Even if your instinct is to disagree and get upset about someone's opinion if it is different than yours, just make believe something else. Viktor Frankl, an Austrian neurologist and psychologist, once said "between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom." Practice make-believing that you are not upset or triggered temporarily to hear them out to develop a deeper understanding of their position. Then you can respond with a level head. Practicing make-believe is like anything else, the more you do it the easier it'll become. In this example eventually you won't be phased by others differing opinions and instead be more open minded to topics that would typically trigger you. This I believe is a step in the right direction towards healthy conflict resolution, negotiation and compromise.

An extraordinary man named Larry Schultz, the yoga teacher for the Grateful Dead, once said we all need to live in the question and approach life with a childlike sense of awe and wonder. I feel that as we grow older the world loses that sense of awe and wonder as we start forming our assumptions about



how things are and who we are supposed to be. Some of the happiest, most fulfilled people I've come across never lost their sense of awe in day-to-day tasks. They kept magic in their pocket and constantly made

simple tasks fun and encouraged creating something every day. In my life, playing make-believe has gotten me out of some dark places and made the mundane far more entertaining. When we are open-minded, constantly imagining like a child, we open ourselves to learning and appreciating so much more. So, play make-believe, practice make-believe, and make whatever you believe real.



RAIN



Jessica Bahl
Power Within
Digital Illustration

CONTRIBUTORS

TORY'ANA AFORNORPE

Tory'ana Afornorpe is in her first year of college, this is her first non-fiction publication. She has been published before and her first book is called *I'm Glad I Lived* and it's available on Amazon. She is currently pursuing a psychology and art degree to become an Art Therapist.

JESSICA BAHL

Jessica Bahl is the Editor in Chief for this year's edition of *Rain Magazine*. She is a musician, a writer, a dog mom, and an artist. In the creative process, hours dissolve like sugar in rain, as if the act of creation itself suspends reality. She will attend Portland University's Honors Program for Graphic Design in the fall of 2025. She strives to create work that connects, inspires, and invites others into the *timeless space* where art resides.

KENDRA BRACEY

CHARLIE BECKER

Charlie Becker is a Mandolin player and a singer of songs in jam sessions and wine bars. He writes for the ear, looking for rhyme and rhythm in the words ... looking for where a piece of writing might breathe and where he might breathe while reading at open mics. He is an avid listener to stories and a teller of stories. He views songs and melodies as poems.

LEN BERGMAN

Len Bergman, managing editor of *Rain Magazine*, is a current student at Clatsop Community College who has entirely too many hobbies, including reading, writing, drawing, and playing the upright bass.

BOB BOGAR

Mr. Bogar is a geologist and avid hiker, runner, and amateur photographer. As part of his professional responsibilities Mr. Bogar takes his black lab Bristol

along to conduct wetland delineations and asbestos projects. He says of his dog, "it's really handy to have a mobile lab for the asbestos work."

JAN BONO

Jan Bono has written a 6-book cozy mystery series set on the SW Washington coast. She's also published five collections of humorous personal experience, three poetry chapbooks, nine one-act plays, a collection of 12 "murderous" short stories, and one serious novel. Most recently she has completed two "Hallmark-type" Christmas screenplays and is pursuing the ever-present hope of production. Jan is in the top 5 contributors, world-wide, to *Chicken Soup for the Soul*, with 57 acceptances to date.
www.JanBonoBooks.com

AUBREY BOWERS

Aubrey Bowers is a second-year Clatsop CC student who enjoys reading and writing. She is an editor in *Rain Magazine* who very much enjoys impactful words. This is her first published piece and she hopes it isn't her last.

MASON K. BROWN

Mason K Brown lives in Forest Grove, Oregon. An author, speaker and storyteller, she writes primarily inspirational non-fiction and humor with a smattering of fiction keyed in. She is widely published in anthologies and devotionals. Mason was winner of the 2020 Media Associates International August writing contest and runner-up in Cascade Awards published devotional category, 2015. Mason travels the world collecting water and fodder for her stories. She can be reached at masonkbrown47@yahoo.com.

DAVID CAMPICHE

David Campiche has recently published *Black Wing*, a saga that takes place in the deep wilderness of Haisla country in British Columbia. He writes for the *Daily Astorian*, the *Chinook Observer*, and



is currently drafting a second novel called *Crow Boy*. A poetry collaboration with Jim Tweedie called *Sidekicks* was published in 2022.

JOHN CIMINELLO

John Ciminello has appeared in various publications including *The SUN*, *Mentor*, *ANALOG*, *Salal Reader*, and *Rain*. He is the author of *Shrine Above High Tide* (2009) and the founder of Uncle John's Books in Naselle, Washington.

MAKAYDA CLOWARD

Makayda Cloward is a second year student at Clatsop Community College. This is her first year as an editor for *Rain Magazine*. This is her first time being published and she is anxious for another opportunity.

JOHN COX

John Cox is a versatile creative based on planet Earth. He combines the intricacies of coding with the vivid imagery he absorbs. Creativity serves as both an outlet and a means of balance. He plans to, one day, watch the towering tidal waves of Mars.

MAX CROW

Max Crow is a figment of imagination, a convenient alias, and an irreplaceable confidant. A character both invented and inevitable, Max exists somewhere between reality and artistic necessity—sometimes as a whisper, sometimes as a storm.

PATRICK DALY

Patrick Daly is a writer living in Massachusetts with his wife and three sons. A 2002 graduate of Emerson College's Master of Fine Arts program, Patrick's first novel was published in 2023. In addition to writing, Patrick serves as a K-12 school superintendent and adjunct instructor, teaching graduate courses in education.

AZARIA DAMGHANI

Azaria is an Oregon native with a passion for sculpture and functional art. As a ceramics student at Clatsop Community College, they use texture, form, and natural elements to express the beauty they see, crafting pieces that reflect the natural

essence of the Pacific Northwest.

MARILYN DEFRESE

Marilyn deFreese grew up on a Kansas dairy farm. She retired to the Pacific Northwest fifteen years ago. She enjoys hiking, playing piano, and writing. As a teen, Marilyn wrote rhymed poetry and a play that won 1st place in her church synod. After attending a poetry workshop 62 years later, she resumed her writing of poetry, memoirs, and fiction.

JIM DOTT

Jim Dott is a retired elementary teacher. He lives in Astoria where he gardens, writes, walks the river and hills. Jim is a programmer at *KMUN* and occasionally appears onstage in local theater productions. Jim has been contributing to *Rain* since 1996. He is the author of two full-length poetry collections, *A Glossary of Memory* and *Another Shore*. His new collection of tree poems, *Touch Wood*, is due out in 2025. For more information please visit jimdott.com

CHRISTINE EAGON

Christine Eagon's original watercolor artworks are created in and around Astoria. Chris enjoys plein air as well as working indoors at local coffee shops. She is an active member of Astoria Visual Arts Gallery and the Astoria Draw Group. She will open her studio to the public July 26-27 during Astoria Open Studios Tour 2025.
www.ChrisEagon.net

JANET EBERT

Janet (Janny) Ebert RN, MSN, Nurse Emeritus. She is an Adjunct Instructor at Clatsop Community College who teaches prose poetry, Autobiographical Life Sketches, Short Stories (Flash Fiction), Writing About Aging, and the Lost Art of Letter Writing. She is also a private writing coach who lives in Astoria.

MARTHA ELLEN

Martha Ellen lives alone in an old Victorian home on a hill on the Oregon coast. Retired social worker. History of social justice activism. MFA. Poems and prose published in various journals and online



forums. She writes to process her wild life.

ASHER FINCH

Asher Finch can recite most of the Twilight Saga from memory, and there's nothing you can do about it. They are a Ford Foundation scholar, blossoming writer, and professional loiterer, Asher attends OSU in pursuit of the BFA in creative writing.

MIKE FRANCIS

Mike Francis is a semi-retired journalist who lives in Astoria. He traffics in prose and poetry.

CALANDRA FREDERICK

Calandra Frederick has a B.A. in English from Oregon State University and a M. Ed. from Portland State University. She thinks that while consistent participation inspires your life and reading lets you escape it, writing is where you explore all the hidden meanings within it. She has previously had eight short stories published in *Rain Magazine*.

JEREMY FURNISH

Jeremy Furnish is an artist native to the Pacific Northwest known for his works with found objects, public installations, and lighting design. His recent AVA artist residency highlighted his talent for creating simple, emotionally evocative pieces, blending innovative material use with profound expression.

JAMES GAINES

I was born in 1969 in Tuscaloosa, Alabama USA. The youngest of seven children and raised by my mother after my father passed away when I was one year old. Poetry has always been my first love. Poetry is left for one on one interpretation.

LOGAN GARNER

Logan Garner is a Hoosier/PNW poet residing in Warrenton, Oregon. Winner of the Neahkahnie Mountain Poetry Prize, his work has been featured in *Orca Literary Journal*, *The Elevation Review*, *The Salal Review*, *Flying Island* and others. He is the author of collections *Here, in the Floodplain* (Plan B Press, 2023) and the forthcoming *The Sin of Feeding Wild Birds* (Broken Tribe Press, 2025).

MAHSHID GORJIAN

My work is deeply rooted in the exploration of human expression, blending cultural narratives with diverse artistic techniques. Through expressive traditional techniques such as oil paintings, intricate line drawings, dynamic pencil-charcoal sketches, and digital paintings. I strive to capture the depth of personality, emotion, and thought.

<https://mahshidgorjian.artstation.com/>

KILEY GRANTGES

The writing and illustration work I create harkens back to copious youthful years spent making up stories for my dolls, playing dress-up, and an endless interest in human behavior. Each poem/story, and oftentimes accompanying character illustration, is a curiosity for and celebration of the multitudes we hold within us.

ALAN HERNANDEZ

Alan is a first-year student at Clatsop Community College aiming to obtain a master's degree in social work. He believes in healing and rehabilitation through animal and human connections. When not working at Clatsop Behavioral Health, Alan explores the wonders of the world with his dog and best friend Xena.

LINDA K. HOARD

Linda K. Hoard is an award-winning poet, substitute teacher. She visits the North Coast in all seasons with family, birding at beaches, estuaries and forests. She's published in the *Oregon Poetry Association Pandemic Anthology*, *Verseweavers*, *Rain*, *Clackamas Review*, *The Astorian*, *The Oregonian*, *Our Coast Magazine*, and others.

DAN HUBNER

Dan Hubner lives in Astoria. He is an ecologist by education, a state worker for a living, and a writer and musician by inclination.

DALLAS HUGHES

My name is Dallas Hughes. I am 16 years old. This was my sophomore year of high school and my first art class.



KATRINA HUNT

Katrina Hunt, a lifelong Clatsop County resident, graduated from Astoria High in 2002. She ran her family restaurant until a 2022 fire created a need for a career change. A mother of three, she began at Clatsop Community College in fall 2023 and will complete her AAOT degree in winter 2025, in her pursuit of becoming a teacher.

GRETCHEN KEEFER

Gretchen Keefer has always played with words and scenes. Now, after teaching English to adult speakers of other languages for a long time, she writes short fiction for fun. Her work has appeared in *Chicken Soup for the Soul*, *Rain Magazine*, *Particular Passages: Decked Halls*, *CommuterLit.com*, *ArielChart.com*, *Academy of the Heart and Mind*, and local anthologies.

AIDEN LIPPY

Aiden Lippy, pre-med student. He is an aspiring author who dreams of flowers in a decaying land.

MIMI MADURO

Mimi Maduro is a poet, and member of the 29th Street Writers. She moved to Cape Meares a year ago after living in the Columbia Gorge and Portland for the past forty five years.

LAUREN MALLETT

Lauren Mallett's poems appear in *Poetry Northwest*, *Puerto del Sol*, *The Seventh Wave*, *The Night Heron Barks* and other journals. She lives on Clatsop land of Oregon's north coast. www.laurenmallett.com

PHYLLIS MANNAN

Phyllis Mannan lives in Manzanita, on the North Oregon Coast. She has published a memoir, *Torn Fish: A Mother, Her Autistic Son, and Their Shared Humanity*, and a poetry chapbook, *Bitterbrush* (Finishing Line Press). Her poems have appeared in *Cirque*, *Cloudbank*, *North Coast Squid*, *Rain Magazine*, *Willawaw Journal*, and elsewhere.

JOSHUA MARTIN-SCHLICHTING

Joshua Martin-Schlichting is a brave transplant of a small beach town in central Oregon to the big

city of Astoria and second year student at Clatsop Community College. He is studying for his AGS and this is his second year at *Rain Magazine* as photo/art editor. He has his photos shown in the *Rain Magazine*, AZA Art Gallery, and the Royal Nebeker Gallery.

STEVEN MAYER

Steven Mayer, PhD, MBA, started writing after he retired from the University of Oregon and an extensive business management career. His education and professions matter less than the amazing people who have touched his life. Steve and his wife Linda moved to the North Oregon Coast in 2016. He has published three books, the *Finding Heart* series, of memoir, nonfiction, creative nonfiction, and poetry, and his writing appears in various Northwest literary journals. He enjoys being an armchair philosopher, storyteller, adventurer, sports enthusiast, and beach wanderer.

ANASTASIA MCCLURE

Anastasia (Annie) McClure is a 9th grader at Warrenton High School. She enjoys reading, writing, drawing, painting, playing music, singing, and dancing. She has been in dance her whole life and in the beginning wanted to be a professional dancer. She quickly learned that was not realistic, while it is an escape from her daily life it also plagues her with doubt on whether or not she can do it. "Reach for the Stars" is her putting her dreams on paper and letting them go.

DONNA MENDELSON

Donna Mendelson taught at Binghamton University and the University of Montana and is a faculty affiliate in the Davidson Honors College at the University of Montana. Her poetry has appeared in *Camas*, *San Pedro River Review*, *The Fourth River*, *Windfall*, *Cirque*, *Modern Haiku*, and *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*.

RODNEY MERRILL

I am a nerd who reads textbooks for fun. Favorite subjects are poetry, creative nonfiction and memoir, and philosophy. Interests are dogs, reading, writing,



dogs, movies, dogs, and walking dogs. Retired. Working on a Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing. I practice Transcendental Meditation and Buddhist mindfulness meditation.

BEATRICE MICHEL

I am a human that lives with my favorite human and a happy Havaneese. I'm old enough to be grateful for peace and tranquility. And young enough to still surprise myself.

MARIANNE MONSON

Marianne Monson is an American author of women's history and children's books and a teacher. She is the founder of a literary nonprofit, *The Writer's Guild*.

JENNIFER NIGHTINGALE

Jennifer Nightingale is a poet, novelist, and short story writer. She is also a regular at Ric's Open Poetry Mic in Astoria and has read her work in Seattle, Vancouver, BC, Longview Library, Wreccam Wales, FisherPoets Gathering, Cannon Beach Library Writers Read, The Hoffman Center for the Arts and Trash Tales in Tillamook County. She lives in, Astoria Oregon with her husband and dog.

ISABEL O'CONNOR

Isabel O'Connor is a sophomore at Astoria High School. She has been drawing and writing her entire life, but this was her first attempt at creative nonfiction. The art she submitted to *Rain* this year won the Fine Art Supply Award and "Best of 2D." These are her first publications.

KAMA O'CONNOR

Kama is a new Astoria implant who can't stop taking pictures of the sea, river, and elk in her yard. She teaches creative writing at Clatsop Community College and when she's not in the classroom, she can be found on local trails with her daughter and dog. She dreams in color and just found out that not everyone has a mind's eye. Her published work can be found at *HarperCollins*, *O-Dark-Thirty*, *Military Spouse Magazine*, *Zone 3*, and others.

MICHAEL O'CONNOR

Mike O'Connor is a retired physician who has been capturing photos of the fauna and flora encountered during his many years of travel. While topside photography has produced an assortment of interesting and beautiful land images, underwater photography is his real passion. From giant pelagic ocean dwellers to the smallest inhabitants of the coral reefs, he enjoys sharing his photos as much as he enjoys creating the images of these amazing animals.

FRANCIS OPILA

Francis Opila is a rain-struck, sun-loving poet who lives in the Pacific Northwest. His poetry collection *Conference of the Crows* was published in 2023. He enjoys performing poetry, combining recitation and playing North American wooden flutes. More of his creative work can be found at francisopila.com.

REBA OWEN

Reba Owen is a north coast writer, artist and ukulele blues player. She is a graduate of Oregon State University. Her subjects tend to be nature and out of Fell door scenes that often show the foibles of human behaviors.

JANEEN PHILLIPS

Janeen Phillips believes writing is akin to having an intimate conversation with a trust-worthy friend; uncensored, heartfelt and touches the sacred space of healing. She is currently editing a memoir which she hopes to one to one day publish, adding it to the lexicon of women's experiences.

TRAVIS T. POTT

Travis T. Pott is a woodcutter from the north Oregon coast hills.

ROBERT MICHAEL PYLE

Gray's River writer Bob Pyle has lived in the Willapa rain for 45 years. His book *Wintergreen* is considered a Northwest classic. His others include ten nonfiction titles, eight butterfly books, four poetry collections, and one novel, *Magdalena Mountain*, with a sequel in progress. His latest collection, *The Last Man in Willapa*, has just been



published by Texas Tech University Press.

AARON ROBERSON

FLORENCE SAGE

Florence Sage is MC and a regular reader at the monthly Ric's Poetry Mic at WineKraft in Astoria, has been poetry columnist for *HIPFiSH* monthly and a poetry presenter for dozens of area literary events. Her full-length poem collections are: *Nevertheless: Poems from the Gray Area*, 2014; *The Man Who Whistled: A Polish-Canadian Story*, 2021; *What to Do with Night: Poems*, 2023, at local book sellers and libraries.

CRYSTAL SAGER

I am a 39-year-old mother of one, super sweet young man. I am going to Clatsop Community College to earn my AAS in Business. I have been making art and writing since I was a young girl. I find inspiration in found objects, nature and places that capture my heart.

KRISTIN SHAUCK

Kristin Shauck is currently in her twentieth year at CCC, where she teaches design, drawing, painting, art history, and oversees the Royal Nebeker Gallery. She also serves as the founding director of the international competition *Au Naturel: the Nude in the 20th Century*.

SCOTT T. STARBUCK

Scott T. Starbuck's *Trees, Fish, and Dreams* *Climateblog*, *riverseek.blogspot.com*, has readers in 110 countries, praised by editors of Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University and University of Wisconsin. He taught ecopoetry workshops at Scripps Institution of Oceanography in the UC San Diego. His books are available at *RiverSea Gallery*, and a painting of his former charterboat Starfisher is in Astoria Public Library. He recently donated his *Clay Salmon Poem* into the art collection at Lower Columbia College, and his other clay pieces to libraries

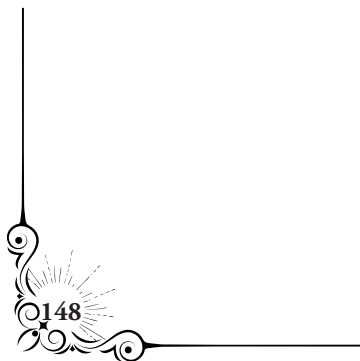
CONSTANCE WAISANEN

Constance Waisanen is an artist, poet and gardener

living in Knappa, Oregon. She loves the beautiful languages of math and music, and delights in her connection to nature. Her favorite roles are mother and grandmother.

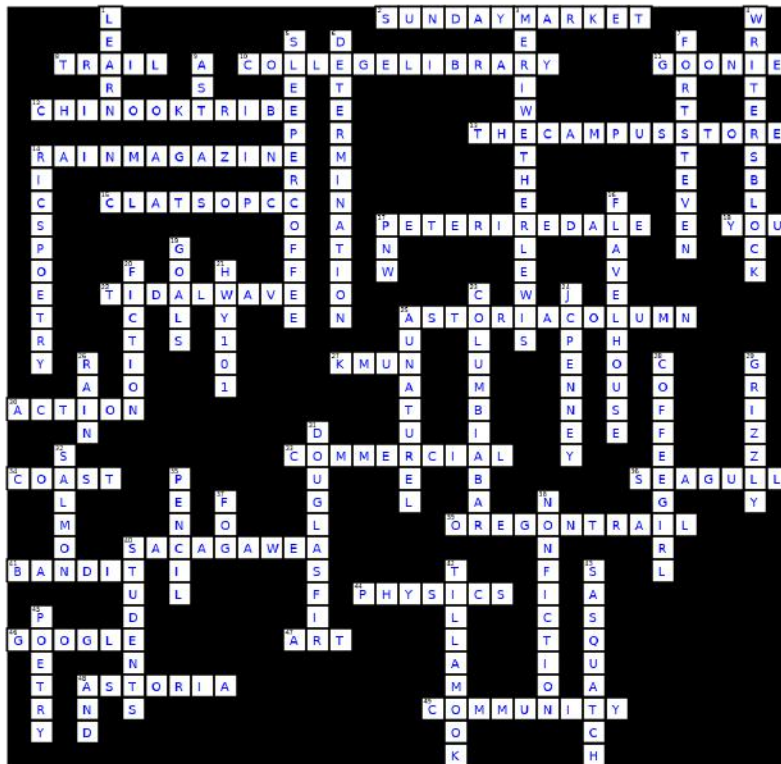
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RAIN

Class of 2025 Rain Magazine Crossword Answer Key



- | | | |
|----|--|--|
| 2 | Across | Down |
| 3 | Community offerings and gatherings between October and May (2 Words) | 1 To gain knowledge, often through experience. |
| 4 | Another word for path. | 3 Writer responsible for chronicling his travels in the Pacific Northwest; and a key member of the Lewis and Clark Expedition. (2 Words) |
| 10 | You can find views of the Columbia River, access to knowledge, and a wizard. (2 Words) | 4 Something every writer faces at some point, often solved by a good cup of coffee. (2 Words) |
| 11 | One who never dies; or says. | 5 Astorian caffeine fix destination. (2 Words) |
| 12 | The indigenous group whose name means "the people of the sea". (2 Words) | 6 The fuel that keeps you moving forward when obstacles arise. |
| 13 | A repository of academic needs and preparedness. (3 Words) | 7 Oregon coastal park with batteries. (2 Words) |
| 14 | A literary publication that gives voice to emerging writers and artists. (2 Words) | 8 The original SFO, PD, or SEA; way before planes. |
| 15 | Oldest community college in Oregon; Est. 1858. (2 Words) | 14 First Tuesday at Wine Craft. (2 Words) |
| 17 | Famous shipwreck with remains still visible today. (2 Words) | 16 A Victorian-century Astorian residence. (2 Words) |
| 18 | The spark behind every dream. | 17 The abbreviation that stands for the answer to this clue, but also "perpetual need for waterproofs." |
| 22 | Not a tsunami, but what happens when your coffee tips over in the morning. (2 Words) | 19 The first step toward making your dreams real. |
| 25 | Iconic scenic viewpoint near Astoria. (2 Words) | 20 A genre that brings imagined worlds, characters, and adventures to life. |
| 26 | Airwaves on the coast. | 21 The scenic route. (2 Words) |
| 30 | The missing piece that many overlook. | 22 The graveyard of the Pacific. (2 Words) |
| 33 | Popular Astorian street with historic charm. | 24 RIP, former retail giant in Astoria, now closed. (2 Words) |
| 34 | The western edge of Oregon. | 25 Annual February exhibit at Royal Nebeke Gallery. (2 Words) |
| 36 | Local beach resident that will steal your fries without regret. | 26 A frequent muse for Oregon poets and a nuisance for campers. |
| 39 | The iconic video game that has made its mark in pop culture. (2 Words) | 28 The other Astorian caffeine fix destination; With no order or best. (2 Words) |
| 40 | Whose knowledge and leadership were key to the success of the 1804-1806 expedition, often overlooked in history. | 29 The fearsome predator that startled Lewis and Clark's men in 1804, marking the first of many encounters. |
| 41 | The cutest mascot literally ever; we're bias. | 31 The most iconic towering evergreen... maybe ever. (2 Words) |
| 44 | The only class where you can drop something and call it an experiment. | 32 A common fish at the end of the trail on the Columbia River. |
| 46 | A college students best friend. | 35 The most important thing to bring to class, besides your brain. |
| 47 | The only subject where making a mess can make you a genius. | 37 Astoria's version of morning sunshine, but it's more of a vibe than a view. |
| 48 | A historic town at the Columbia River's edge. | 38 Transforms reality into compelling narratives. |
| 49 | The powerful result when individuals unite. | 40 Those dedicated to a lifetime of learning, exploring, and creating. |
| | | 42 Famous for cheese. |
| | | 43 Pacific Northwest's elusive forest dweller, always just out of frame in photos. |
| | | 45 The written art that plays with rhythm, emotion, and imagery. |
| | | 48 A Roanoke perpetrator. |





Photos by **David Homer**







ASG is a student-led organization that advocates for student needs, supports extracurricular activities, and upholds student rights and responsibilities. Our mission is to **represent, serve, and empower every CCC student.**

Elections are held to select the ASG President and Vice President, followed by a campaign period and student voting. Elected leaders begin their term in Fall.

Position Requirements

Enrolled in 6+ credits per term
Minimum 2.5 GPA
Able to attend in-person meetings
Commit 40+ hours per term

Perks: Tuition waiver (12 credits for President, 10 for VP).



Josie Kero
President



Emily Bates
Vice President



Morgan Bates
Treasurer



Terra Wolden
Secretary



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Make a **difference.**



Jessica Bahl
PR Coordinator



Miriam Alcala
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