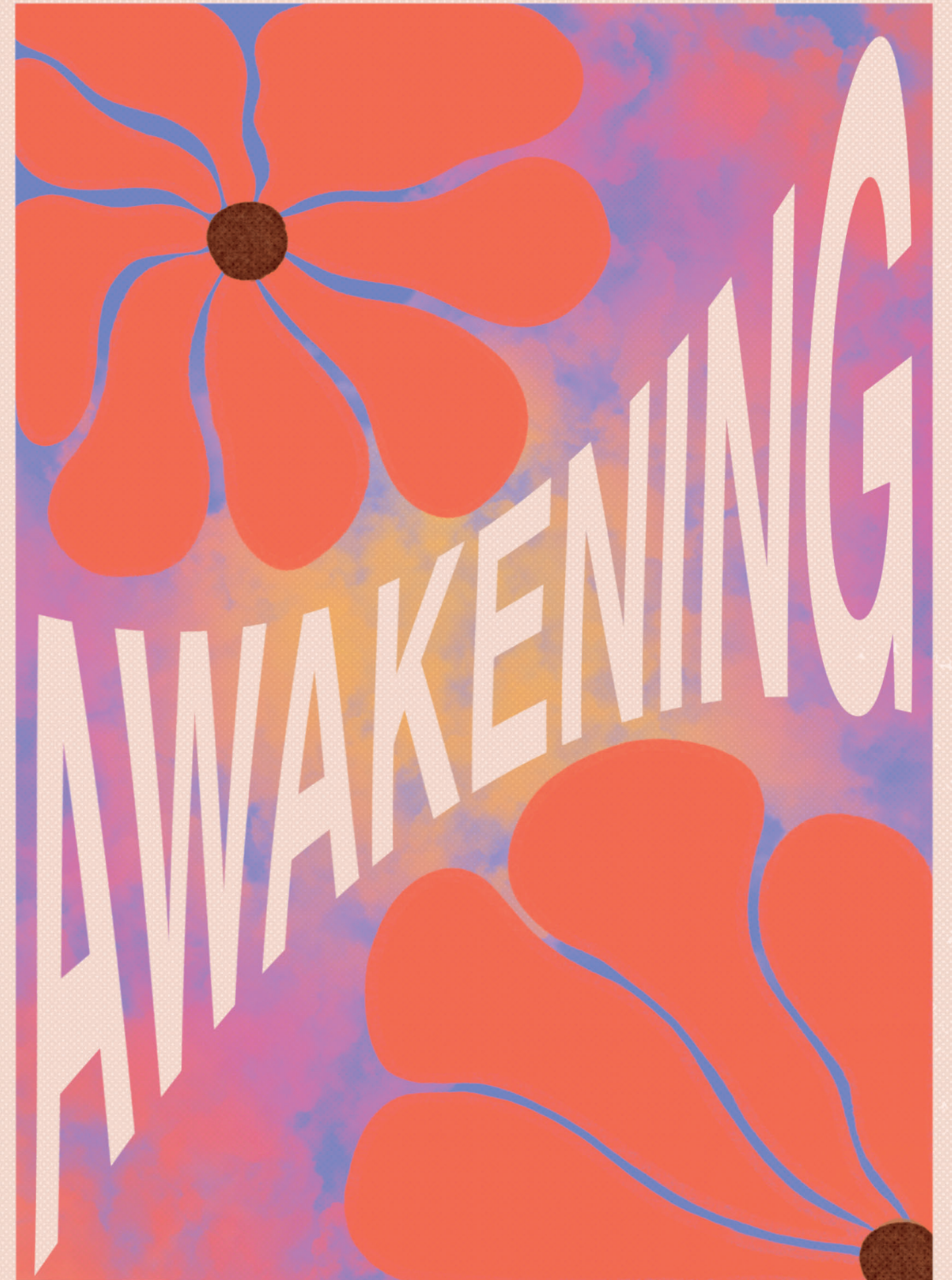


Cécilia Alain  
Mercedes Bacon-Traplin  
Ariane Bernard  
Noah Bishop  
Manu Bissonette  
Kendra Buchner  
Lucie Casinghino  
Sally Cunningham  
Sophia Cumming  
Morgane Davis Demers  
Sydney Davidson-Yee  
Judith De Poncins  
Donovan Faraoni  
Kaitlin Fitzgibbon  
Amie Godward  
Jean-Simon Guay  
Andrew Hutchins  
Haley Jameson  
Cameron Larocque  
Jolène Lessard  
Gracie LeTouzel  
Angela Leuck  
Emerald MacIsaac  
Linnie McGuire  
Linus Mulherin  
Tomas Peck  
Margaret Royal  
Jérémy Scotto Di Uccio  
Anastasia Stetsko  
Hailey Swift  
Frank Willdig

# THE MITRE

THE MITRE

130<sup>TH</sup> EDITION





# THE MITRE

## *Awakening*

130<sup>th</sup> edition

Eds. Elisha Davidson-Yee and Leo Webster  
Bishop's University  
2023

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130<sup>th</sup> edition

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## LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

As a staple of Bishop's University since 1893, *The Mitre* would like to acknowledge the Unceded and Traditional Territory of the Abenaki people and the Wabanaki Confederacy on whose land it is produced. It is on this territory that we are grateful to have the opportunity to work, play and learn.

It is only in 2017 that we have begun to acknowledge the traditional stewards and protectors of the territories we occupy. By engaging in land acknowledgements, we are taking the first step towards accountability and reconciliation. It is important to remember though, acknowledgement is just the beginning. For 130 years, *The Mitre* has amplified and preserved creative voices. We can only hope to do the same with the voices of those affected by systems of oppression.

In institutions of higher learning, we have a responsibility to honour spaces for emerging and established voices to engage in productive, respectful, and sometimes even uncomfortable conversations where individuals are safe to speak truth to power, explore and challenge dominant ideologies, as well as call out injustices and inequalities in order to imagine new ways of existing.





## DEDICATION

Thank you

To Cécilia Alain and Linnie McGuire, last year's editors, for guiding us through this process and sharing their enthusiasm for the project.

To Luke Munro, our graphic designer, for being creative and open to our ideas, which gave us so many possibilities.

To Dr. Shawn Malley, for your support and assistance throughout the year.

To Dr. Steven Woodward, for your enthusiasm and collaboration for the launch of this year's edition.

To G.L., my butch awakening – Leo

To my family, for opening my eyes to a world of beauty and discovery – Elisha

To our contributors, for inspiring us with your work.

In memory of Zoé Fortier





## EDITOR'S NOTE

Opening one's eyes and facing the world has long been a fascination in art and literature, as if by looking more closely we can see life more clearly. As it came time to workshop the theme for the 130<sup>th</sup> edition of *The Mitre*, we were drawn to Awakening; a concept of transformation, rebirth and discovery. This was entirely for the contributors, for the possibilities of what they might submit. As we worked through this project and our final year of university, it turned out to be a time of discovery for us as well.

This collection saw some of the most emotionally raw pieces in the recent history of *The Mitre*. We received illuminative pieces concerning the transformative aspects of nature, sexuality and gender, as well as intimate pieces about mental health and personal crises. The thematic consistency of depression, eating disorders, and familial estrangement speak to the issues that are at play in this moment, especially for our generation.

As a culture that prizes sameness and functionality over everything else, we repress the things that we find unacceptable in ourselves. Art is one of the ways that people fight back, by sharing their lives behind closed doors. Overly emotional poetry tends to be seen as a trope, but it still hurts to be vulnerable and to share our souls. Our resounding applause for everyone who has stood up and spoken, everyone who has put their art in a venue where it is seen by the public. Someday it will all be worth it.

*Elisha Davidson-Yee & Leo Webster*

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**BODY**

“I’ll hold your popcorn hand at the theatre”  
— *Mercedes Bacon-Traplin*



**Befallen Gorgon, *Cécilia Alain***





## ASTERION

*Lucie Casinghino*

The midwives screamed when they saw him  
Dripping in amniotic fluid,  
Still wet from the womb,  
The strange creature they had just helped birth  
Half bull half boy  
The baby, minotaur they would later call him,  
Lay wriggling on the bed

He called out, a bleating sound,  
Crying for his mother,  
Who took his small strange body in her arms  
Cooing at her baby  
Delirious from the pain,  
She flattened down errant tufts of his fur  
Her thighs bore scratch marks from the nubs of his horns  
Sweat plastered hair against her face,  
Queenly airs abandoned first in anguish then joy  
She cradled him gently

Two of the midwives rushed from the room  
To tell the king the terrible news  
This act of divine vengeance against him,  
A newly born bastard  
The other women stood around the bed, unsure of what to do  
Staring at the queen, face alight with love at the sight of her son  
She nursed him, started humming a tune  
Her mother had once sung to her as a child  
She inspected his small pink hands,  
Delighting in the way his little fingers curled into a fist  
She whispered his name over and over  
“Asterion, Asterion, Asterion”

## **A HOT BACKYARD BURIAL**

*Haley Jameson*

It was muggy  
out  
but the men worked  
hard  
digging that hole  
while mom  
looked  
on at the scene  
and the dog  
slept inside  
not  
knowing it was  
for her

She was  
scheduled  
to go at 4:30  
today  
and the son said it  
always  
rained when they  
buried a dog  
and it had  
rained  
this morning and  
there were  
clouds  
hanging over us now

The cicadas sang  
with a  
crescendo  
and a  
decrecendo  
a loud mournful  
tune  
of hot summers  
and short lives  
above ground

Some of them  
would also die  
today

The truck  
was ready in  
the driveway  
and the driver sat  
cigarette hanging  
white tank drenched  
in sweat  
and the young one  
worked  
hard by himself  
digging that hole.

## THE TEMPEST'S DIALOGUE

*Ariane Bernard*



## PLUVIAL ORCHESTRA

*Noah Bishop*

A legion of them sings their song to all with open ears. Each lasting only a second, uttering a single note, but when combined a daylong symphony erupts. It can be a quiet one to lull us to rest. Or one to shake the earth itself.

## I SAW YOUR BODY DISAPPEAR

*Judith de Poncins*

I saw your body disappear  
Like the moon behind the clouds  
I saw your body disappear  
Like ink on old paper,  
The books that crumble in our hands

And I couldn't hold it  
Your skin was getting looser  
As your flesh was getting thinner  
I wanted to keep your bones from becoming visible.  
The circles under your eyes from appearing

But I couldn't

I wanted to be a shelter for your voice when it was fading  
To erase your invisible tears, gathering inside of your eyes

But I couldn't  
Your face was behind the wall  
Of this white hospital

A stream of sorrow was drawing on the pane  
*Please deliver me from myself*  
You weren't the same  
Weren't you?

You were someone between the present and the past  
Amid the line of life and death  
You were a call begging for help  
Crying at night, a smile on your face  
I wish I could have drawn on the window

I am here

I wish I could have protected you from the world

I don't believe in miracles  
But, step by step, you came home  
From now on, the well was only a hole  
I saw your body disappearing  
And I thought you would never come back

But you did



## **STOUT BANANA MAN**

*Linus Mulherin*

We miss you, stout banana man,  
And not a day goes by  
We do not sit and contemplate  
Your wilted peel and cry.

Your tacky flesh is gone from us,  
Naught but your peel remains.  
And we will work to keep it pure,  
And fresh, and free from stains.

For you the hardest among us  
Can't keep their tear ducts dry.  
Gazing upon your dwarfish frame,  
Rainclouds form within our eyes.

Our memories are full of you,  
Our darling young plantain,  
But our hearts are over-flowing  
With dagger-falls of pain.

Go forth, our stout banana man!  
Go forth, just newly freed,  
To join angelic choir bunches  
On that great banana Heaven-Tree!

## **MAN MANGO**

*Linus Mulherin*

Man Mango  
I love you so,  
As you scream out double-time.  
So go ham man, go,  
Give me a show,  
Now's your time to shine.  
And while going ham,  
Man Mango, man,  
I'll shout out, go man, go!  
And go-man Man Mango  
Goes ham, man!  
The Man Mango man goes.

## IF WE WERE A SMOOTHIE

*Haley Jameson*

I made a smoothie of our lives, blended all the fruits of our memories. I used only the freshest produce, rinsing them in cool water and soaking them in distilled white vinegar, then freezing them, tucking them into the back of the freezer. But I don't like banana in my smoothie, and we didn't keep any frozen, anyways. So it didn't taste right, but I still drank as much as I could. Did you sneak in some coconut milk, too? My stomach have kept drinking it, but if I didn't try to be happy and enjoy it, you would be upset, tell me it's all my fault. Now that we're separated, how do I take back my strawberries, which have blended so well with your blueberries? There is such an absence without you. We had been so perfectly blended. Now my hands are stained by the berries, as I try to pick us apart, seed by seed.

## **A LOVER A DAY KEEPS THE DOCTOR AWAY**

*Anonymous*

I want to show the world how much I love you  
I want to illustrate intimacy  
A painting filled with poetic prose  
I want you to know how much I value you  
I thought I was just a person who craved a body  
It turns out I was a soul who needed another soul  
I did not know what hunger was until your lips first touched mine  
I feel so inadequate writing this, my love  
All I can remember are vignettes of us  
Heaving breaths  
Sacred nights  
Beautiful daze  
Entangled limbs  
Primal screams  
Springtime sweat  
The first taste of forbidden fruit  
Peaks, valleys, dips  
Hushed whispers  
The sweetest of nothings;  
the cruellest of everything  
A ride that felt like it would never end  
Daylight pouring in your bedroom window  
Uncovering the secrets from the night before  
You are the resurrection and the life.  
I cannot truly tell you how alive you make me feel  
I fear if I tried, I will shatter into a million pieces  
I can bare my skin, but I cannot bare my soul.  
You no longer fill me with want but need.  
So, my love, I will tell you this  
You are my disease. You are my cure.  
I will be eternally yours.  
Doctor's orders.

**RESPONSE TO “FAREWELL: EATING DISORDER”**

**BY DANZHU HU**

*Noah Bishop*

Liquid rejection  
coats a time-worn toilet bowl.  
At last, acceptance

**RESPONSE TO “FAREWELL: DERMATILLOMANIA”**

**BY DANZHU HU**

*Noah Bishop*

Memory and skin  
Connective, but often torn  
Stitched back with much care

**RESPONSE TO “FAREWELL: DEPRESSION”**

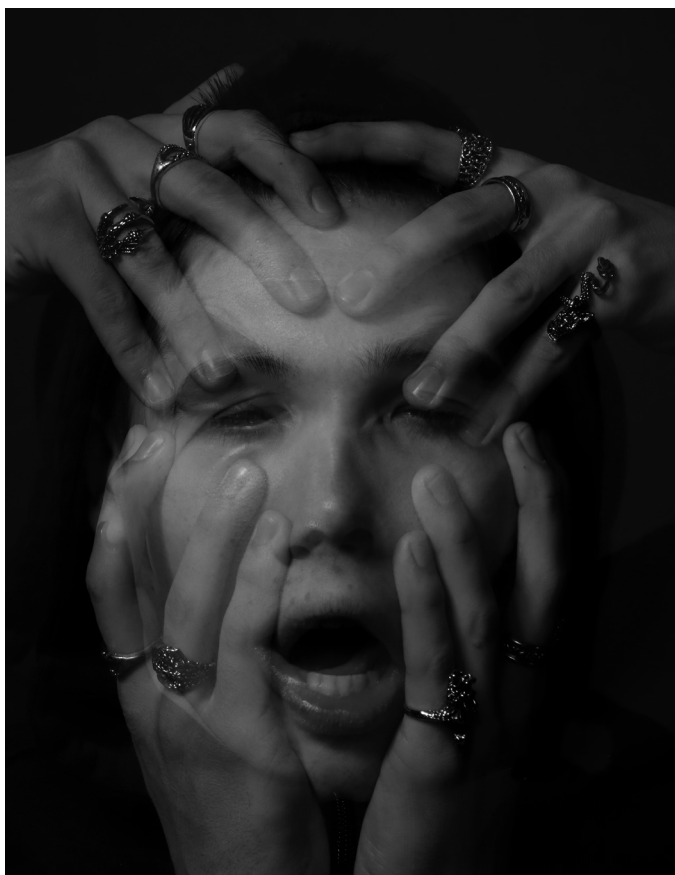
**BY DANZHU HU**

*Noah Bishop*

Withering cinders  
pulsing with electric grief.  
Bitter memories

## **DARK EMOTIONS**

*Andrew Hutchins*



## INSIDE OUT

*Kendra Buchner*

If you cut me open  
You will see  
Squishmallows  
Rose quartz crystals  
Tarot cards  
As they fall on the floor  
And once you think this airbag of nonsense is done  
You will be bombarded by barbie dolls  
The sound of rock 'n' roll  
Clothes that look like they came from your grandmother's closet  
An explosion of gunpowder and glitter  
Vodka in place of blood  
Endless bottles of pharmaceuticals  
You will hear the sounds of laughter mixed with the sound of tears  
As they escape my lifeless corpse  
What you will not find  
Is my heart nor soul  
No one will be able to cut those parts open  
I've hidden them away where no one can see



## LOUISE'S MOUNTAIN

*Gracie LeTouzel*



## WINTER WARMTH

*Noah Bishop*

It is the time of the whitening of beards and the shifting of years. The time to take out the storage bins full of old, frayed toques, mismatched gloves and woolen warm socks for our toes. For indulging in filling soups and heating our homes with passionate baking; for relatives to knit cozy sweaters for loved ones; For children to leave their temporary marks on the frosty meadows. To wish it was warm when we had just wished it was cold; To hold outside gatherings centred around frost-bitten flames; To tell stories around the pleasant heat where many have once been told. Marshmallowed hot cocoa to be drunk while playing old board games, most missing few if not half of their pieces. A time when the streets glisten like a frosty mirror. We may become tired of the cold, of the shoveling, and of the shortened daylight, but we will always look back fondly on the warmth found within winter.

## THE BECOMING OF THE LIVING DEAD

*Cameron Larocque*

Sloppy gurgles rattle through your chest  
A reminder of the malnourishment within  
Proper meals are unattainable  
When you are caged to your hostile bed  
A house arrest  
Six o'clock arrives: your feeding hour  
Cramming down another deep freezer dinner  
The real secret to losing fifty pounds

Gazing upon your skeletal hand  
You notice a deformity  
A wicked hangnail, the first in years  
Lethargy prevents the use of proper clippers  
The nail is thus torn with blunt teeth  
And the finger becomes a crime-scene  
A moment of reprieve; it's over now  
But soon the broken nail finds its twins  
On the dusty, untampered floor below

Sleep brings no comfort to daylight's nightmare  
Upon awakening, there is a startling discovery  
Strands of hair shroud your icy pillow  
Having been plucked by the cousin of death  
"Old man take a look at my life,  
I'm starting to look just like you!"  
A hairless sod made miserable by time  
But going bald is the least of your worries  
When you haven't a penny to feed your soul

Nothing but skin grafted to a bundle of bones:  
The epitome of a hollow life  
Decomposing because you await the harsh strike of six  
To eat the minimum to keep yourself alive  
A brittle shell of your former selves  
The mirror's image divorced from memories passed:  
A mere reflection of the zombie in your heart  
Every night is dedicated to the living dead  
And every morning... a repetitious curse

## **SOUTHERN DISCOMFORT**

*Kendra Buchner*

He told me he loved me  
With that intoxicating voice  
He loved me because I made him feel drunk  
The best damn whiskey he ever had  
I could knock that man on his ass  
Still, he couldn't get enough  
I am his sin and his salvation  
I was top-shelf liquor in a Busch Light kind of town

I was a breath of life in a suffocating summer  
He was mine too  
But only for that summer  
I wanted a tall drink of water  
He wanted to drink Southern Comfort while taking in the comfort  
of a southern belle  
Being tied down to a man in this godforsaken town is my idea of a southern hell

When I said I love you  
It wasn't the same as his  
His was solemn and strong  
All-consuming and certain  
Mine was for the moments we had together  
It wasn't forever  
He wants a wife  
I wanted a beau

He stared back at me under the scorching southern sun  
All is fair in love and war  
I guess he lost and I won  
He didn't ask me to say anything  
He knew how I felt  
He didn't shake his fist at the sky  
Cry over the cards that he had been dealt  
He held me instead  
And said  
Goodbye  
A tear fell from my eye  
He walked away like the last lingering patron at a bar  
He didn't want the party to end  
Neither did I  
Falling in love with me is a rookie mistake  
Unfortunately, there's no twelve-step program for heartbreak.

## VANITY

*Sally Cunningham*

What's this  
This frantic need to be the most  
desired in the room  
I sit in my car before class *please god*  
*Let me have the fattest ass in this marxist seminar*  
And I mean it

I'm sent a picture of a cake  
Pink icing, red fondant  
"For the biggest slut in the antique store"  
*Thinking of you!*  
And she means well

After that party when  
I thought I'd won  
When he walked me home, our  
voices echo down midnight intersections until  
*I have a girlfriend back home*  
And he isn't trying to be mean

I was finally at ease, glass mask dropped  
on the pavement. Pretenseless. Shattered  
under thin starlight, freed edges  
glittering with the things I am not  
But the broken mirror still sings  
*tirra lirra—*  
And I still heed the call of Camelot.

Now, later, today, last year,  
boat sunk, blood froze, born into another poem,  
I'm shaken by how distracted  
Long sleeves pulling over biceps  
muffles everything to orange light  
and lurching bass

When you call my name,  
In front of them all,  
It doesn't sound like a curse, yet  
when you ask for a definition  
I'm dumbstruck  
Delayed synonyms spill out  
*hesitant, suspicious, cautious*  
Things I'm not, things I'm learning to be



## **OH, HOW SHE LOVED THE SNOW**

*Sydney Davidson-Yee*

Oh, how I wish she could know

No more will cracked skin be felt  
Pinpricks of frozen fire with each flake's touch  
No more will eyes be closed  
A barrier to the stark alabaster sky

Oh, how I wish she could know

As clouds cry forth a powder white blanket  
The fabric embracing the earth  
As the flora wither, as roots are shown  
Beautiful is a barren landscape, fit for rebirth

Oh, how I wish she could know

Alive is the world  
It is spirit that waltzes with the wind  
Alive is the girl  
For she is connected with creation

Oh, how she loved the snow

## **BACK TO ME**

*Mercedes Bacon-Traplin*

You will feel unclean when you come back to me  
When I sink my claws back into your flesh  
When I touch the notches of your spine  
And hold you close to me in bed

You will feel unclean when you haven't showered in a week  
When your hair knots at the back of your neck  
When you can't find the strength to deal with it  
And I tell you how much I love you like this

You will feel unclean when you hate your reflection  
When you can't smell your own sweat anymore  
When your gaze averts from others with shame  
And I make you look me in the face

You will feel unclean when you scream at your mother  
When I wrap myself around your anger  
When you cry with rage you don't understand  
And I tell you to somehow feel justified

You will feel unclean when you burn bridges  
When you cut ties with your connections  
When you have no one left but me  
And even I don't keep you company at night

You will feel unclean with the acne on your chin  
When you eat without tasting just to feel full  
When I stick my fingers down your throat  
And force you to lean over the toilet bowl

You will feel unclean when you haven't felt the sun  
When I've made your world consist of four walls  
When I've locked your doors and windows  
And I've sewn you to the mattress

You will feel unclean with the dishes in the sink  
When your floor is hidden under your life  
When the bathroom reeks of cat shit  
And you can't even change your shirt

You will feel unclean when you've slept until evening  
When you wake only to turn over, back into sleep  
When your mouth is sour and gummy  
And your toothbrush is dry and unused

You will feel unclean when I brush your tears away  
When I turn your pain into numbness  
When I drain you of every colour in the world  
And I leave you to drown in the grey

You will feel unclean when I have you  
When you're tight between my hands  
When I am your sun, moon, and stars  
And I have you right where I want you

You will feel unclean when I love you  
When my love is all you feel  
When my love smothers you slowly  
And when I love you so hard you love me back

## THESE SMALL CREATURES

*Frank Willdig*

These small creatures who cling to the earth  
and scurry across the barren ground,  
meek and humble, without a sound,  
are fearful things from the day of birth.  
Each life is dust, such tiny grain,  
that just like us, they suffer pain.

And to see that the smaller one  
may have a soul, it's worth the thought  
that all must live with what they've got  
and live those lives till day is done.  
So let them be, let kindness reign,  
for just like us they suffer pain.

## **GOOD GIRL**

*Kaitlin Fitzgibbon*

She loved the way they looked at her,  
and they all looked at her the same.  
With a fiery hunger ready to devour her,  
stretch her wide open and  
bury themselves deep in her warmth.

She was born with an obedient nature.  
They admired this and fawned over her,  
obsessively.  
They loved her:  
bright begging eyes,  
her sweet young face,  
and her sly seductive smile.

They especially loved her eagerness to drown  
herself in their torturous desires.  
She was a surreptitious siren whose wicked  
secret lay at the moist mouth of her arousal,  
waiting for curious tongues to lap up every  
ounce of her shivering body's silent demands.

Her sultry submission captivated men with ease.  
As she knelt on her knees she searched  
every pair of dominating eyes  
for everything she needed –  
but was never certain she deserved.

She let them forcibly wrap their rough hands  
tightly around her creamy neck,  
like serpents strangling suffering prey,  
until the warm choked breath slowly escaped  
her restrained throat through muffled moans,  
and salty tears rolled down her flushed cheeks.

She let them play out their animalistic fantasies  
and appease their instinctual voracious appetites  
through her whimpering painful pleasure –  
leaving lustful bites and amorous bruises.

She so badly wanted to be loved,  
to be seen and to be heard.  
Her cold caged heart froze to metal bars  
like a prisoner of her own despair –  
writhing in her agonizing loneliness.

She wanted to be known for her dark witty humour,  
her unwavering loyalty and ambitious creativity.  
Not for her large, perky, milk-white breasts,  
her firm, well-rounded bottom, thick thighs,  
or her little wet mouth and generous pouty lips.

She allowed herself to please them fully  
and be used like their little play doll –  
in hopes they would show her affection,  
care for her and protect her.

She longed to feel that energetic touch  
that would send pulsating ripples of loving  
desire through her soft, supple porcelain body.  
She wanted a touch that would complete her,  
that would feel like the euphoria of a warm embrace.  
She craved gentle kisses, the slip of fingers filling  
the gaps of her hands and strong arms pulling  
her body closer in the middle of the night.  
She craved a love strong and encouraging.

She yearned to feel completely herself  
in another's arms, to be vulnerable,  
build the ability to trust again.  
To share her darkest fears and weaknesses,  
all of her mysterious inner thoughts,  
her boisterous laughter and wild spirit  
without the daunting gaze of judgement.

She didn't believe she would ever find it;  
a certain someone who would see past  
her unfortunate flaws or her layered walls.  
Someone who would understand her complexities.  
She didn't believe she could be loved anymore,  
or that she was even worth loving anymore.  
She sought out temporary validation of men  
who told her she belonged to them.  
She felt wanted and needed  
when she was owned.

Such power and liberation  
comes from another's desire  
and control over you.

She felt like she mattered  
when she could leave her body in their hands.  
She was trusted with their pleasure  
and that gave her a sense of power; liberation.

For brief moments she could pretend that  
hearing the words "good girl" and "you're mine"  
would be enough to fill the loveless void inside of her.  
For brief moments she could pretend that she was enough.

But she never really would be.  
Not until the day that she decided  
she no longer needed their approval.

She was enough on her own,  
and once she found that love for herself,  
all else would fall into place.  
She now knew,  
a man could never fill that void.



## PRETTY LITTLE THING

*Cécilia Alain*



## MOVIE THEATRE MAYHEM

*Mercedes Bacon-Traplin*

I'll hold your popcorn                      hand at the theatre  
You'll finish      shovelling the kernels      past your lips  
Swallowed whole,                      swallow me      whole  
Your fingers      will be greasy                      between mine  
I will                      lick                      the scent from the air  
Drink melted butter                      from your laugh  
As the slapstick-comedy      plays on the      screen  
I am not watching                      through my      donut glazed eyes  
Instead I am      clutching your      popcorn fingers  
Fingers I have felt                      on me,                      in me,      through me  
You could                      lean down and      suck      the diet coke  
Right out of my      aspartame veins  
Or I could                      wrap your hands around my face  
Until the                      theatre popcorn      fills my throat  
And the butter      from your fingers drips down to      my stomach  
Making me sick enough      to puke in the                      handicap stall  
Movie theatre girl make love to me  
And we can stay in the      slightly sticky seats  
Dance naked in the almost                      moon-light of the                      projector  
We can watch the                      pre-show in                      orgasmic ecstasy  
And you'll eat popcorn  
And I'll drink diet coke  
And my breath will                      paint you with chemicals  
And your hands will                      coat me in grease  
We will live                      stupid movie theatre lives  
I'll hold your                      stupid movie theatre hand  
You'll fuck my      stupid movie theatre body  
And we'll share a                      stupid movie theatre popcorn



## MIND

“My mind is a fluff of smoke”

—*Manu Bissonette*



*Laying It All Out, Linnie McGuire*

## SONNET OF SENSIBILITY

*Noah Bishop*

The woman's burden most terrible,  
A fabrication by immoral men.  
The famed counterpart, women sensible  
A spectacle enclosed within a pen.  
"Have death-like health and similar beauty,  
And insight is a woman's dreadful blight."  
Virgin Mary -not Plato shrewdly! -  
cited for guidance, but too often trite.  
A shadow for domestic function or  
The marriage to obtain a fitting bride.  
Ideal from youth until signs of hoar  
Society of Man smothers their pride.  
Her embers flicker ashes and thin smoke;  
Malnourished fire need only to be stoked.

## LIKES AND DISLIKES

*Angela Leuck*

I.

I don't like bingo. It's a simple game where luck plays a part. My great aunt was always lucky. She'd go to bingo on Friday nights and win every time—a deep fryer or a new set of dishes. Things she'd sometimes pass on to us. I always thought, maybe wrongly, that you only get so much luck in life, and I didn't want to waste it on bingo.

The time I joined the Anti-Poverty League, I met women who loved to play bingo.

At meetings, they would put cards in front of me and nod encouragingly.

When my numbers were called, I didn't bother to mark my card, until a woman beside me would nudge, "Look, just one more number and you've won!"

II.

I like somersaults. It's something I've always been able to do. Forwards, backwards, I could somersault all day. I don't mind the world going topsy-turvy for a while because it always rights itself in the end. I was never much good at other sports, but I sure could somersault. In 1972, I watched Olga Korbut win Olympic gold. She could do much more than somersaults: flips, vaults, and cartwheels, complicated dismounts. She landed on her feet every time. I loved Olga Korbut. So did the rest of the world. She made us believe we could all land on our feet.

III.

I don't like imperfections in the ceiling plaster.  
At night when I can't sleep, I want to look at a  
smooth perfect surface, like a blank slate, like maybe  
my life could be that way again. I recall a story  
about a girl in England, after the war, looking up  
at the ceiling, which was cracked from all the bombing  
and had some sort of moisture damage, too.  
She stared at the spot a lot because it's hard  
to ignore an eyesore like that. One day her  
parents told her they were moving to a country  
called Australia, and she realized that the moisture  
spot was exactly the shape of Australia.  
The ceiling had predicted her future!

IV

I like willow trees. There was one in the back  
yard when I was growing up. My father planted it  
when it was just a tiny sapling, but within a few  
years it was tall and slender with long, drooping  
leafy branches that swept the ground. I would hide  
behind the branches and look out at the world.  
It was like being under the skirts of a tree goddess.  
I felt surrounded and safe. Now, when I stand outside  
with the wind blowing through my hair—  
another thing I like—I think of that willow,  
still swaying with every puff of air.

## LAUL

*Anastasia Stetsko*

At home, Mickai was having a bourbon, a selection from the crate he'd stolen only a month before from behind the hospital, and he was raving about the 'damned quality' as Alexei came through the door. Mickai often did this, talking to himself and all, which his mother thought was madness though he assured her he did it for his own amusement since *'no one else could amuse me so.'*

"Alexei!" he exclaimed when he saw his brother, bringing his legs down from the table. "Long day, aye? Need a drink? Or, you must be hungry, I shall make you something to eat." He went to the kitchen.

It'd just been redone and there were velvet curtains which hung over the windows, and the cabinets had gone from rotting wood to a darker, polished look. Everything smelled of cedar what with the chests and crates their mother had given them upon moving out, and there were wool blankets on the recliners just opposite the dining room. It was small but felt peculiarly comfortable, despite the lack of light in the evenings.

"Mickai," Alexei began, placing the book he'd taken with him upon the bench in the hall. His tone was serious, almost accusatory. "Do you really love Cherry?"

His brother turned to him. In the lamplight from the sconce on the wall you could see his apathy. "How do you mean?"

"What else could I mean? I mean what I say."

He paused, a saucepan in hand, then turned again to the stove. "I believe I do. I must, of course... she has melted me. I feel nothing else these days. But she is younger than I, which can be trouble sometimes."

"How so?" Alexei sat at the table.

"Well, the youth are vain. They want love, only love, and what have they to give for it, mm?" He shrugged to himself. "I don't know about these things. I don't like thinking hard on it or I shall doubt myself, and I know my feelings are true. My logic should not succeed my feeling."

"Aren't you still a youth yourself, though?"

"Oh, probably. How old am I — twenty-one? I remember I had begun feeling old when I was twelve, so I suppose it doesn't matter much."

Alexei looked at him thoughtfully with a hand at his lips. He loved his brother very much — he felt he was his aligning opposite in everything, the truth he refused to tell himself, and the lies he refused to believe. Though he was angry with him for all of his poor luck with the law and his thrill-seeking



disposition, he loved him all the same; he believed in him, and that was a kind of love in itself. "I am happy for you, you know," he said at last, and he smiled.

"Of course you are," said Mickai. "You are happy about everything."

"No."

"Yes."

"Only some things."

"Well, either way, you are happier than I am." He stirred the gravy he had been making, which steamed. "And anyway, how about Aleide Ciel, aye?" He grinned over his shoulder.

"What about her?" said Alexei.

"Your eyes were shining last night."

He frowned, but Mickai went on before he could reply. "And you are handsomer than I besides, I suppose your eyes are always shining. But she sat rather close to you, no?"

"The chairs were arranged that way," he said defensively.

His brother grinned again, shaking his head as he looked down at the pot. "Well anyway," he said, changing the subject once more, "Father is going out of his mind. You see how Mom is with him, and how loudly he talks. Ah! I see myself in him. I imagine I'll be like that one day."

Alexei's eyes widened. "You mean to say that he's mad?"

"Oh, very. Don't you see it too?"

"But he's always been like that."

"Ha! Alexei, you only think too well of everything. He does not control himself any longer. He does not know he is being loud, and he doesn't see things when he looks. It is not a result of his age, either, I'm telling you he is quite mad."

"But what is madness, anyways? There are a thousand different kinds," Alexei protested.

"Madness is only one falling into one's self," said Mickai matter-of-factly, and he brought the saucepan from the stove to the bowl of biscuits beside, and poured the gravy overtop. "But no more of this. It wearies the senses, talking so much about other people. We ought to talk about the drink, or about the sky. The basis of good and evil." He grinned again, and winked at his brother. "You know I am quite atheist, right?"

Alexei looked at him curiously as though trying to discern something in his expression, perhaps a hidden message. "You've never told me outright."

"Are you atheist also, brother?" He sat at the table and handed over the bowl of biscuits.

For a while Alexei was quiet, his eyes half closed in contemplation. Then he said, "I don't know."

“What do you mean, you don’t know? What do you believe?”

“Well, there ought to be something watching over us. How do you think you’ve lived this long?”

Mickai laughed. “Because I am smarter than everyone else, that’s how.”

“Pfft. You are not smarter.”

“Oh, really?!”

Alexei shook his head as he ate his biscuits. “Just because you have got off with half of your crimes does not make you smart, Mickai, I can assure you of that.”

“So you are calling me stupid, then.”

“What? No. No,” he said. “But your faith in humanity is lesser than the damned in Hell.”

“Ah!” Mickai pointed at him suddenly. “So you think there is a hell.”

“No!” Alexei shook his head again, almost smiling. “Listen, I have thought this over a thousand times. When a train suddenly stops you in your journey, don’t you think it is there to prevent whatever is ahead, for at least the few minutes it takes? I mean, had there been no train and you’d gone ahead three minutes earlier, might you have fallen off your bike, or crashed into a car, or fallen into the river on the side quite by chance? All because there was a rock on the track to throw off your bike’s wheels which would have been moved by the train and thus prevented the fall?”

Mickai stared at him. “What the hell are you on about? I don’t understand.”

They both paused. “Come, I cannot make it any clearer.”

“So...” He adjusted himself in his chair. “What you are saying is that you think there is something—” And he gestured to the ceiling then as though acknowledging the sky. “—looking out for you? Something that sends trains to halt your journey for all of three minutes, because that makes such a difference?”

“But it does make a difference, Mickai.”

His brother stared at him hard, evidently confused. “What is this *something*, then, aye? Are you referring to a god, or a force?”

“I don’t know,” said Alexei. “This is my dilemma.”

“And you have struggled with this for how long, without discussing it with me?”

“Why should I discuss it with you?!” he laughed, getting up to get a glass of water at the sink. “Believe what you will, and I will do the same. Live and let live.”

“Aye, that is a principle of the atheists, not of spiritualists,” said Mickai.

“You cannot coin a principle, brother.”

"It was the atheists who thought of that first, though."

Alexei shook his head to himself.

"Listen now," Mickai went on. "Here is my argument. How many people are there in this world, mm? Let us take your train theory and apply it to all of these people. Every single one of them. They are all out and about for hours in the day, encountering a thousand different things on different roads and in different kinds of weather. So this force, er whatever, must look out for all of them, no? Thus the weather will need to be changed for each individual soul so as to avoid one getting struck by lightning, and the roads will be interrupted with trains at a thousand intersections at a thousand different intervals so as to prevent one from being thrown off by that rock into the river and breaking their head. You will tell me how exactly that is possible, should this theory be true, and how each soul is so important that this superior force provides safe passage for them on a very normal day."

Alexei stood there with his glass for a long moment, looking at his reflection in the window, then turned from the sink.

"I don't know," he said at last.

"Exactly." Mickai sat back in his chair. "One such soul is not that significant. Now, I do believe in the forces of nature, you know, with natural selection and all that, but I tell you with confidence there is no higher power watching over us. It is impossible. If a train stops you in your journey, it is merely by chance. Not even by chance, but just because that train was scheduled for that time at that crossing, and yes, one will argue it was meant to be, but once again I will argue the insignificance of one soul, for many of the souls which walk this earth do nothing and feel nothing, thus it is quite accidental they should even exist."

Alexei stood there watching his brother with eager amusement, and suddenly he smiled. "I suppose you are more significant than they are, mm?" he joked.

"Of course not," said Mickai. "It would make no difference if I were here or not. If I were dead I would feed the earth like every other rotting corpse and life would go on. It's quite simple."

Alexei was silent. He thought about this, then went back to the table to sit down. "You will allow me to make an argument?" he asked.

"Sure."

“Well, here.” He crossed his arms. “I know every life is intertwined, and with your logic we will prove it. Understand that one individual is born, and they grow up and marry, and they die. Let’s say they knew five hundred different people over their lifetime, and that does not even count how many interactions they had — you know, with strangers and whatnot, at a cafe, at the park, on the bus, etcetera, etcetera. Each of those interactions, though insignificant they may seem, affect each of those people involved in minute ways that ultimately relates to their set of five hundred people, and those people’s five hundred people, so on and so forth. Right?” He sat forward then. “All life is intertwined. I agree, no one is any more significant than another, but every action requires a reaction, thus it is merely a chain of evolving existence, like a game of dominos.”

“Yes,” Mickai said, smiling. “Precisely.”

“So we are on the same page, then.”

“Ah!” He stood from his chair and went to the cabinet with the brandy to retrieve the last bottle of his hospital collection. “It is no good being on the same page. Would you like a drink?”

---

Assuming humanity is the best one can do. Nobody slept as this perfect illness flooded through. Aleide could see the square from her window and the violinist was causing a great scene as his fiddling swept up the stand-stills into the circle and got them dancing. This was the fruit of the earth. When some minutes before, Alexei had left her at the doorstep and turned to go back down the street with his hands in his pockets, neither of them were sad at leaving one another till tomorrow as one might conclude at prospective lovers. Rather, Aleide knew she was not falling in love. She was only interested in the warmth. And from her window she looked down at the gaiety comprehensively, smiling as she sat on the ledge, wondering if this prepared joy would be long sought after in the following days as these sleepy souls resurrected their daily selves. She dwelled in those moments on this happiness, which, if she were correct, would be so quickly abandoned. She took up her journal suddenly and wrote a thought.

*No. People are beautiful — look at them, look at the hearth round which they stand, look at the dresses and jackets... the skin, the eyes — how they laugh! Why? Why does this go unspoken for? It is wasted... people think so cruelly these days, their sinister demeanours overwhelm them... they indulge their fallouts and savour the sadness... what is so addicting about it? Look at the hearth. Are they not beautiful? Can't they see it? Look at the sparks going to the sky. Is that not worth all of it — to know you live a life as this, to breathe, to love. What we are capable of — how can we not fall to our knees of joy?*

Then an applause sounded and the violinist bowed, and from her window she clapped and laughed and whistled.

## JOHN IN LONDON

*Cécilia Alain*



## SEASONS CHANGE AND SO DO WE

*Kendra Buchner*

orange red yellow leaves  
never cease to amaze you and me  
as they twirl and whirl around  
and playfully pile up on the ground  
we jump in so carefree  
like a couple of kids  
yippee! we're young! we're free!  
but autumn is now in the past  
the weather wore us down, can't you see?  
it was never meant to last  
don't you know that seasons change?

white soft sacred snowflakes  
never cease to amaze you and me  
as they twirl and whirl around  
and gently land on the ground  
we jumped in so carelessly  
like a couple of kids  
now I choose to live carefully  
don't you know that seasons change?  
i'm sorry we will never see spring  
all we have left is bittersweet nothings

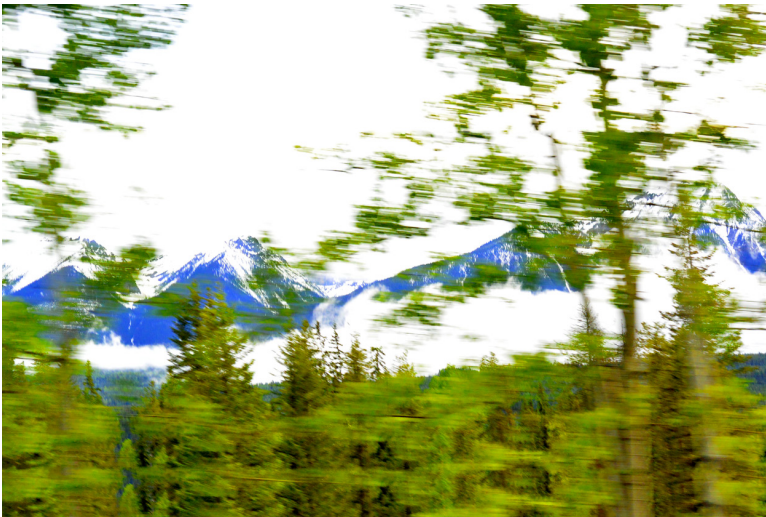
## **BY THE WATERFRONT**

*Noah Bishop*

Worn sea-crafts are anchored ashore  
secured by tattered ropes that clutter the quay.  
The rhythmic tempest's temperament roars  
against steel hulls causing sway.  
sea locked gods battle offshore  
callous to the coastline's dismay.

## **BANFF DAY MOTION**

*Donovan Faraoni*





## A WAKING NIGHTMARE

*Hailey Swift*

I used to believe that dying in a dream would wake me up from whatever nightmare I was experiencing. Not just dying, but the idea that death was just around the corner – a giant gorilla trapped inside with me, crocodiles closing in but never quite reaching me, or perhaps a creature from the barn, its skin pale and grey and hair the texture of straw, chasing me, and I trip alongside the riverbank, watching its reflection in the water as it gets closer and closer – but then I would wake up. The fear would usually stay with me, the utter helplessness I felt being trapped in a world of monsters. But then I was in my bed with a pounding chest and stinging eyes and no dangers to be seen other than the lingering afterimages. As a child I would always go to you and Mom after a nightmare – you could hardly form sentences when interrupted from sleep, but you never denied me my comfort. Once I was sandwiched between you both – two grown adults able to protect me from whatever was in the shadows – I was able to fall into a deep sleep. If I had any more nightmares within the confines of your arms, I do not remember them.

I used to believe that all sicknesses could be cured no matter what I was told. I had forgotten, or maybe refused to remember, that the talk Mom gave to Zack and me, in the garden of a hospital that looked like a castle, wasn't one about the long and arduous journey of recovery, but rather the last attempt at keeping someone alive for just a little bit longer. I didn't actually believe that I would exist in a world without you in it until the day you died.

I used to believe that remembering my nightmares in vivid detail would stop them from reoccurring. Before bed I would run through every nightmare I'd had – the crocodiles, the monsters, the zombies, the vampires – and I would rest believing that they wouldn't appear when I closed my eyes. But here is my predicament: I'm in a nightmare I can't seem to escape from, overlooking the precipice knowing I can't go any further, but I can't look back, either, and surely this is close enough to death, powerful enough to wake me up, yet here I am and here you aren't.

If the waking world is my nightmare, then perhaps my dreams are real life because it is only there that I get to see you, dig my face into your chest as though I'm eleven again and tell you how much I've missed you - where I get to hold onto the hope that you've miraculously come back to life and the past ten years truly have been the nightmare I've always thought them to be. But then, no matter how alive I feel in those moments, no matter how alive you

are, I wake up in a world without you once again. No longer escaping from a nightmare but entering one upon waking, only this time you're not just a few doors down the hallway, ready to comfort me at a moment's notice. I now find myself memorizing the dreams in which you appear, only, rather than trying to stop them from reoccurring, I fall asleep hoping to see you alive once more.

I used to believe that nothing, not even cancer, could faze you. You always had a smile on your face - when you would coach me at hockey, when we came home to find you building your own urn, and when you and Mom took us on our last family vacation to Disney World against the advice of your doctors. But there would also be other moments, like when Mom told us to stay upstairs and wonder as we watched the ambulance leave the driveway, come to find out that you had suffered a seizure, or when you forgot the guitar chords to songs you had known for decades. When watching home videos of the Christmas less than two months before you died, I saw how you sat on the couch as though it was pulling you in, how you smiled only when someone looked your way. I know, now, that you were merely putting on a brave face for Zack and me, children who couldn't tell the difference. The only time I remember seeing you cry was when you told us that it wasn't death you were afraid of, but leaving everyone behind.

What I need you to know is that you haven't left us behind. Although many parts of you are lost beneath piles of new memories, like the sound of your voice or conversations we've had in the past, you're here in other ways. I can feel you beside me when I play guitar, instructing me as you did when I was a child. I can hear you in Zack's laugh, and when I listen to the songs you used to sing. I can picture you in the stories people tell me from when you were my age, young and immature. When you had your whole life ahead of you and not a care in the world. All that I can hope for now, without you here, is that you are as happy in death as you were in life, and that one day I'll find you in my dreams again.

## WHERE THE TIME STOPPED

*Jérémy Scotto Di Uccio*



## THE MIRROR

*Tomas Peck*

Knowledge is something we all seek to find  
We want to learn more about what we don't know.  
But friends, I am witness to an item so chilling:  
a mirror to see beyond, a new universe at show

In the mirror, unearthly pale bodies do fly,  
But they seek not to be seen, however.  
I am blessed but am cursed with this terrible gift.  
And my mind wants no more, and wants to stop me forever

My desire to see, my desire to feel  
The warm and cold breath of those sprites in the mirror.  
Wicked they are not, but wicked am I to see  
what they see. I intrude, getting nearer.

They are like us, in all ways, in life and in freedom.  
Peace, lovely peace is what they seek. Nothing more.  
Their realm is their slumber, their time to rest.  
But I, the curious human, I enact a war

To see what I see, to feel what I feel  
Goes against what God and the universe desired.  
And the many pale sprites, dashing fast as sound  
Burst from the mirror and curse the gift I acquired.

The shrieks, the shrieks, along with deep cutting claw marks  
scar my skin, scar my soul, scar my being all sore.  
But I can only stand motionless as my guilt holds me captive.  
Damn this wretched power, why do I seek more!

And as they retreat, back into their realm,  
My guilt overwhelms me, and tears flow down.  
The quest gives me knowledge but does not give me strength.  
And to seek even more, will lead me to drown.

## **FIRST SNOW**

*Sophia Cumming*

evergreen boughs droop low, so  
heavy they almost kiss the ground.  
each arm weighed down  
by a glacial blanket,  
needles mummified in tiny sleeves.  
each branch laden with icing sugar,  
and a trillion individual  
flakes shimmer under the warm  
orange glow of the streetlights.

## **GUILLOTINE**

*Angela Leuck*

I wondered what  
the slice of the blade  
was like, the executioner's axe,  
the guillotine. It seems too  
horrible to contemplate:  
chin upon the block, the swift  
downward sweep of angled metal.

He emailed me today to say  
he was breaking it off;  
decided the attraction was only  
physical, that relationships  
were too high maintenance  
though he wished me well in  
life and love.

That's when I felt it:  
the whoosh of air,  
the instantaneous severing,  
so neat, so impersonal,  
and I, at the end, grateful  
he didn't fumble and miss,  
that at least he used his weapon well.

## FAN TAN NIGHT MOTION

*Donovan Faraoni*



## AWAY

*Manu Bissonette*

The sun drizzles on my skin  
A fluffy cloud, a blue highlight  
The cars run below  
Chasing away at life

I hear the mufflers muffling  
The people walking, loudly  
*Coño, tío, me estás jodando eh*  
Their normal way of life

The green leaves reaching my balcony  
Slightly browned by November  
Decorating all the concrete  
The street, the sidewalk, the buildings  
My mind, sometimes

I come from the land of greenery  
Every inch, every corner  
Invading  
Without me noticing

The gray leaves me empty  
My mind is a fluff of smoke  
I slipped on the cement  
I feel chilled

How do I get up  
How do I find the warmth  
I don't know  
I don't know

The sun does



AIR POLLUTION POEM

Noah Bishop

askInterldnkaslndapkndpasknmittentdapskndpaskndap  
skdn pstaskndpaksndpasarskndasddaskasnfuzaksnd  
baksbathkzydlkjsbdkljaasbdjlaaingainedassjstb  
kjabskdjbjssddaddskiesdddbkasjbdkjaskbdkjdbblackbas  
hbdkjabssd jenedlasnasbdkjaskjdbkajsbdkjasjsbdlk  
jabd kjwjbsak dibkjastbdjkaskhabsddsaskjbasdk da  
khu akhkasjbdssdsjdbksdskman'sjdbkjaes  
jsbpro grbbdkj skd jbessa sjkef bfsk

AN UPSIDE-DOWN WORLD

Jolène Lessard



## I CAN'T LISTEN TO MY FAVOURITE SONGS ANYMORE

*Sally Cunningham*

deja vu sounds like sitting on the worse couch  
the one we left there after all,  
its rumpled cushions sagging from group pictures  
(costumed, piled three rows high)

a single verse and i'm there, beaming  
for the camera flash...  
ready for it

if it plays loud enough  
i'm back in the cruellest summer:  
in the passenger seat soaring over Magog hills  
counting cows and days we have left

and it resonates less, retrograde,  
than it ever did pounding through the hall  
—asked and answered—  
no fear of noise making  
or movement

It's discordant. The songs keep playing,  
the couch stayed when we didn't, and  
I wonder, bitterly, if the walls get  
déjà vu listening to others  
whistle our tunes

## REMINISCENT

*Margaret Royal*



## THE MAP

*Tomas Peck*

“Have you seen it before?” they ask, quite coy.

In truth, I have not seen it before, and this I tell them. And with a movement of the hand, they guide me, bring me in closer to look upon its lines.

What they show me: a map, made of brown paper, with ink fresh and unblotched. One leading to a treasure that *we both* have yet to find. They say “we”; I am perplexed yet happy at this team up.

“Feel the paper,” they whisper.

I oblige. It is soft and silky, and warm. The lines, whether rivers, towns, mountains, or little creatures, are elegantly well defined. I admit, I have seen a few maps in my time, but never one like this. It is perfection.

“And this treasure, where is it marked?” I ask naively.

“Right here,” they say, grabbing my hand, gliding it across the smooth brown paper.

They let my hand go on an empty spot between two mountains; I glide my hand over that spot, trying to find the X that marks the treasure’s location.

But after a moment, I am reminded that there is no treasure, really. I knew that from the start. The treasure, in fact, is the map. Its beauty is beyond compare, more perfect than even the clearest diamond. I continue to glide my hands across the paper, slowly and carefully. The joy I feel just looking, touching this magnificent thing. They smile at me, and I smile back. We share a kiss. We share the pleasure. We share this moment, this treasured map.

## A DARK SOCIETY THAT FORGOT HISTORY

*Jean-Simon Guay*

Yow!

When I went by Cartier Street,  
Its name on a plate complete,  
A great number next to it:  
(1491–1557).

Wow...

What I'd give for such a treat,  
Numbers just for the elite,  
For us, they do not permit.  
1491–1557...

Now,

Only the rich have dashes.  
Cartier must have had riches.  
An ID with a number,  
“1491–1557”.

How?

I thought this thing was local,  
‘member Constantinople?  
Since the book-ban, me neither.  
1453.

Cow...

Surely, he was a peasant,  
Four digits isn't pleasant.  
No use thinking at present.  
~~1453~~.

— Jack87

## SOUL

“My beautiful Goddess, betraying the Lord,  
I pray to your spirit, your mind, and your sword.”

— *Emerald MacIsaac*



**Green Bed**, *Ariane Bernard*

## SUNDAY QUESTIONS

*Mercedes Bacon-Traplin*

Why does fresh rain smell sweet?

Water, earth, air

Yet there is sugar in the scent

Her bedroom window is open

And that sweet earth smell is here

Somewhere        between the bedsheets

Between her duvet and her quilt

Tangled            between our legs

Pressed where our skin meets

Why does fresh rain smell sweet?

I would ask her if she were not so beautiful

Undisturbed and asleep, breath soft

Somewhere else my ears can hear the rain

The soft trickle as it hits the window frame

The damp carpet near the sill

Somewhere else I register the sky darkening

Grey afternoon turning to greyer night

Maybe thunder rumbles somewhere near

Why does fresh rain smell sweet?

Here I just see her face, pillow bound

Her chest against mine

The sticky skin, cool to the touch

Her breath on my neck

And the rain so sweet

Sugar cane mist

Yet deeper, mixed with the soil of life

The earth, water, air

Why does fresh rain smell sweet?

## STRANGER AT THE TABLE

*Amie Godward*

There's a stranger at the table  
They barely know her name  
Its syllables swirl around their mouths  
Falling out in clumsy chunks  
They scan and search  
For some hint of recognition  
And when their eyes collide  
Their cheeks blush and they look away  
They offer wine  
In hushed embarrassed tones  
And politely pour  
Without a word

There's a stranger at the table  
Small talk chokes the room  
Every word a crack in the ice  
A delicate game of chance  
Someone brave shares a story  
From 20 years ago  
And for a moment  
They all remember  
They smile and sigh and gaze at her  
No longer a stranger,  
But that sweet tiny child  
Stubborn and wild in a golden dress  
She smiles back  
And the moment is lost



There's a stranger at the table  
But she remembers them all  
She can recall infinite moments  
With these people  
She remembers laughter and tears,  
Gatherings just like this  
Some of them she cradled as babies  
Some cradled her  
And their names she knows like breathing  
Recites them in her sleep  
Has photographs of them  
In a shoe box on a shelf

There's a stranger at the table  
And she is me  
Strange indeed  
And foreign now  
But always the odd one out  
The black sheep  
Come home to graze  
On unfamiliar pastures  
There's love enough  
To keep a seat  
But a stranger I am  
And forevermore will be

## THE EDGE OF AUTUMN

*Sophia Cumming*

it's the last thursday in september,  
which feels particularly penultimate,  
especially when the evening air  
cuts through a parking lot conversation,  
smelling of crushed leaves and dry  
grass. it is the first truly cold evening,  
a jacket no longer optional. the air is so  
thin that the moon looks inches away,  
the waxing crescent a pale yellow  
against the dark indigo sky.  
stars seem brighter this time of year. closer. i  
had forgotten the feeling of sunsets at seven.  
winter breathes down the back of my neck –  
any day now, i will wake up with frost at my door.

## **RIDE THE LINE**

*Jolène Lessard*



## OUT IN RAIN

*Cameron Larocque*

On the way home the droplets start  
A touch of rain here and there  
This is no concern; I love the rain  
A natural beauty to make all things clean  
Sequins softly melting strands of hair

My headphones are snug to the ear  
The new wave sound births  
A tidal wave of synths – that 80s bliss  
This private symphony flares my body  
Smoothly jiving down empty sidewalks  
Liberated by the carefree raindrops  
Caressing me from my head to my toes  
To my teeth and along my dampened nose  
Will the world ever *leave me alone*  
As it does on this stormy Tuesday evening

A crass cackle shifts the weathered tide  
The sky's monstrous mouth opens wider  
To vomit its liquid bullets over me  
Gone is the joyous rain of before  
Replaced by its raging brothers  
Those slippery trigger-finger soldiers  
Murder the band and worsen my mood  
Every inch of my body is soaked  
Shoes ruined by trapdoor puddles  
When stabbing air clashes against my temple  
The cheap fabric shirt grossly grips the skin  
A defiling touch from nature's wicked hand  
This rain dirtying its helpless subjects

Finally home  
My swamped clothes are peeled from the body  
And as I change into cleaner attire  
I meekly proclaim:  
I hate the rain

**LOCALS WON'T SWIM HERE  
(BUT IT'S TOO LATE FOR US)**

*Sally Cunningham*

Two cold days in May  
We packed in the car,  
Got lost looking for parking,  
Carted to the beach (closed for the season).  
We taught you to swim,  
But you still stayed waist height  
Standing in glacial lakeweed  
While we swam out to the line—  
Into the breaking waves.  
After, we scoured the beach and you  
Taught us to spot crystals, to  
Find the ribbons of quartz in the shale  
While we shivered in a grey wind.  
On the walk back to the car,  
you point out a wooden sign:  
beware the lake monster  
And we laugh and laugh  
Our pockets full of stones

## **GOD'S OWN COUNTRY**

*Amie Godward*

A fire burns on a distant hill  
Fog meanders through the valley  
The sky is a great, grey sea  
Collapsed walls that separate  
Field from field  
A patchwork blanket as far as the eye can see  
Everyone here  
Is someone you know  
And those rolling hills  
That you once cursed  
Bring such comfort now  
A peace otherwise unknown  
These hills that held you  
Sheltered and forgave you  
Sing softly now  
The wind a sweet lullaby  
Through the lavender heather  
Years have passed  
And buildings have changed  
But these hills remain the same  
As they have for centuries  
And will for centuries to come  
This passing thought  
Fills you with a tranquil calm  
You are part of these hills  
You are in their lifeblood  
As they are in yours

**NO MAN'S LAND**  
*Jérémy Scotto Di Uccio*



## A DAY IN PARADISE

Hailey Swift

The boy is first aware of strands of grass threading through his fingers, of warmth on his face, and the sound of birds and cicadas chirping in the distance. When he opens his eyes, the world is bright, and full, and beautiful. He's surrounded by a grove of lilies, tickling the skin on his arms, on his legs. Trees tower over him on all sides. The bees hum as they float from flower to flower and butterflies flutter in the wind. A robin's wings flap as she returns to her nest, bowing down to feed her crying chicks. The boy feels himself sink into his body, a calm washing over him. When he closes his eyes, it's not because of a bone-deep weariness. He's able to let his mind fly with the birds soaring through the air, with the little creatures skittering through the underbrush.

*You're awake*, a voice says, and sound returns. The boy raises a hand to his brow, shielding his eyes from the intensity of the sun. A woman is sitting on a swing, almost hidden by the shade. She wasn't there before. The boy pauses. One breath. Two. There's a sudden lull in sound, almost as though the boy's ears are submerged underwater. Everything seems to slow down, until the wind no longer flows between the leaves.

*Grandma?* The boy says, disbelieving. An imprint of his body remains when he stands, flowers hugging an invisible form. The grass tickles his bare feet as he rushes towards her, and he flings himself into her waiting arms. She cards a hand through his hair, and his scalp tingles from her fingers.

*A garden?* his grandma asks, finally. She pulls away and seats herself on the swing, patting the cushion beside her. He sits.

*I like gardens*, the boy says. They remind him of before, when his parents would drop him off at his grandma's house and she'd force him to spend the day outside, tending to her plants. He had complained, of course. The last thing he had wanted to do on his days off were to spend it in the heat, his skin sticky with sweat and itchy with bug bites. It was only afterwards when he'd daydream about those visits and wish there had been more.

His grandma hums, then silence resumes.

The boy lifts his gaze to the sky, eyes following a lonely cloud as it floats across the endless blue expanse. The sun is getting warmer. He closes his eyes against the brightness of it and tilts his face up, until the darkness behind his eyelids is awash in a reddish hue.



“There you go, nice and cozy,” the boy’s father says, and when the boy opens his eyes, the sun is gone, replaced by the bright light of a campfire in front of him. The crackling of the fire is loud, an instrument backed only by the croaking of frogs beyond the darkness of night.

The boy’s dad wraps another blanket around his shoulders and ruffles the boy’s hair when he’s done.

“Now - I want you to promise me something, okay?” At the boy’s cautious glance, he continues. “Don’t tell your mom.”

The boy returns his dad’s mischievous grin, and their hands meet in a binding shake.

A thump sounds and the boy is back in the forest. At the base of the trees a chick sits alone, having fallen from his nest. A leaf drifts towards the earth. The robin cries for her missing chick, but she can’t see him amidst the lilies. The boy moves to rescue the poor little creature when his grandma stands.

*Follow me.*

*But the bird*—his grandma shakes her head, and the words die in the boy’s mouth. He follows.

The boy’s grandma leads him to the edge of the grove, and there’s a new crack in the wall of trees, almost as though the vines are ropes and they’re pulling the trunks back. His grandma strides forward like nothing is amiss and pauses only when she notices that the boy has yet to move.

The boy doesn’t want to leave the grove with the beautiful flowers, warmth, and quiet comfort. He doesn’t like the look of the hidden path behind the trees – dark with its twisted paths and permeating shade. Sounds made in darkness are not as welcoming as those made in the sunlight. Pressure gathers behind the boy’s eyelids. Another leaf falls. His grandma beckons him closer, but he doesn’t move. The boy shakes his head, and his tears spill.

His grandma is silent, staring, and the boy takes a slow step backwards. There’s a crunch when his foot lands. He stepped on one of the leaves – no longer a vibrant green, but grey and shrivelled. The colour is leaching from the grass, and the flowers are closing as the sun dips further across the horizon. The breeze carries an unpleasant chill.

The boy’s grandma holds out a hand and he rushes to grab it, squeezing it tight as he steps onto the path beside her. He allows himself one more glance behind as the ropes release the bark, and the grove disappears before his eyes.

The boy remains silent during their walk, content to listen to the ambiance of nature – the soft splashes of a stream, the crunch of sticks as they tread over them, the croaking of frogs that get louder as the moon battles the sun for dominance over the sky. The leaves in the canopy above them seem to shimmer, changing colour before his eyes, and suddenly the boy is in the kitchen, head in his hand as he looked out the window, watching the autumn leaves sway in the wind. His mother is beside him, computer open and fingers flying over the keyboard. His dad is making afternoon pancakes.

The boy has never realized how fast fall comes – one minute everything is green and new and then, in the blink of an eye, the leaves are changing colours and falling from the trees. He watches as one drops from its branch, a touch of gold drifting towards the ground he can't see.

"I want to go outside," the boy says suddenly. The typing stops.

"Oh, buddy," the boy's dad says, ruffling his hair as he passes, "it's too chilly out, you'll get a cold."

"But what about last time?" The boy asks. His dad shoots a glance to his mom, wincing. The boy had kept his promise to not tell, but his mother had found out anyway – she is too clever to keep things from. The boy still remembers the hushed voices as he lay awake in bed, straining to hear their conversation. They had a lot of conversations like that – behind closed doors when they thought the boy couldn't hear them. They shared a glance now. Heavier, more weighted than ever before.

"The weather changes very quickly this time of year," his mother finally replies. Her smile is small, dim. Her eyes are shadows. "I'm sorry sweetheart."

*I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry.* It seems that's all he hears now.

"Look," his mother says, and turns her chair so that it's facing the boy. She grabs his hand in hers, running her fingers along his knuckles. "Look. I requested time off from work, okay? I didn't tell you before, I didn't know if they'd allow it, but for the next week I'm all yours."

She smiles, and the boy's father smiles, and the boy can't help but smile too.

Later, they're sitting on the couch and he's comfortable between his parents, fighting to stay awake in this rare period of comfort, but eventually exhaustion wins over. He closes his eyes, and then he's back in the beautiful forest with the beautiful leaves that fall on his face, and the boy's grandma keeps her step beside him.

The encompassing darkness only grows as they walk, and the boy observes his elongating shadow, a distortion of his body. By the time they reach the pond, night has fallen. The boy releases a quiet gasp when he sees the dancing fireflies, their light casting beautiful images onto the water. The boy giggles when they fly close, lighting up his palm. His grandma stands off to the side, silent. The boy leans forwards when the firefly floats away, and jerks when one of his hands touch the icy water.

*Oh*, the boy says. He glances at his grandma and pauses when he meets her eyes. *You're not my grandma, are you.*

The woman smiles sadly, and shakes her head. *Do you understand?*

The boy looks around. The fireflies are gone, and the pond is illuminated only by the strength of the full moon. The trees, previously green with youth, are barren. Leaves coat the ground in a blanket of yellow, red, green, and frost runs up the blades of grass. He notices the chick sleeping in his grandma's hand. The boy looks down, meeting his reflection's tired eyes in the pond water before returning to the woman. She's closer now.

*Can I say goodbye?*

*Of course.*

When the boy wakes up his cheeks are wet. The sharp scent of antiseptic stings his nose, and steady beeps to his left pierce his ears. His hand is warm, held gently by his sleeping mother. The boy's father is on a cot placed beside the bed, his arms resting over his eyes. They both look tired – an exhaustion that can't be attributed to the lateness of the hour. The boy squeezes the hand enveloping his own. His mother doesn't stir.

"I'm sorry," he whispers. "I love you."

The boy's cheeks are dry when he returns to the forest.

*Ready?* The woman is watching him with a calm gaze, but she is no longer a woman. A tall creature stands where the woman once was, its skin shallow and pulled tight over its bones, but the boy is not afraid.

In the creature's eyes exist a galaxy.

The boy nods and, together, they step into the water.

## LAST NIGHT IN ILION

*Frank Willdig*

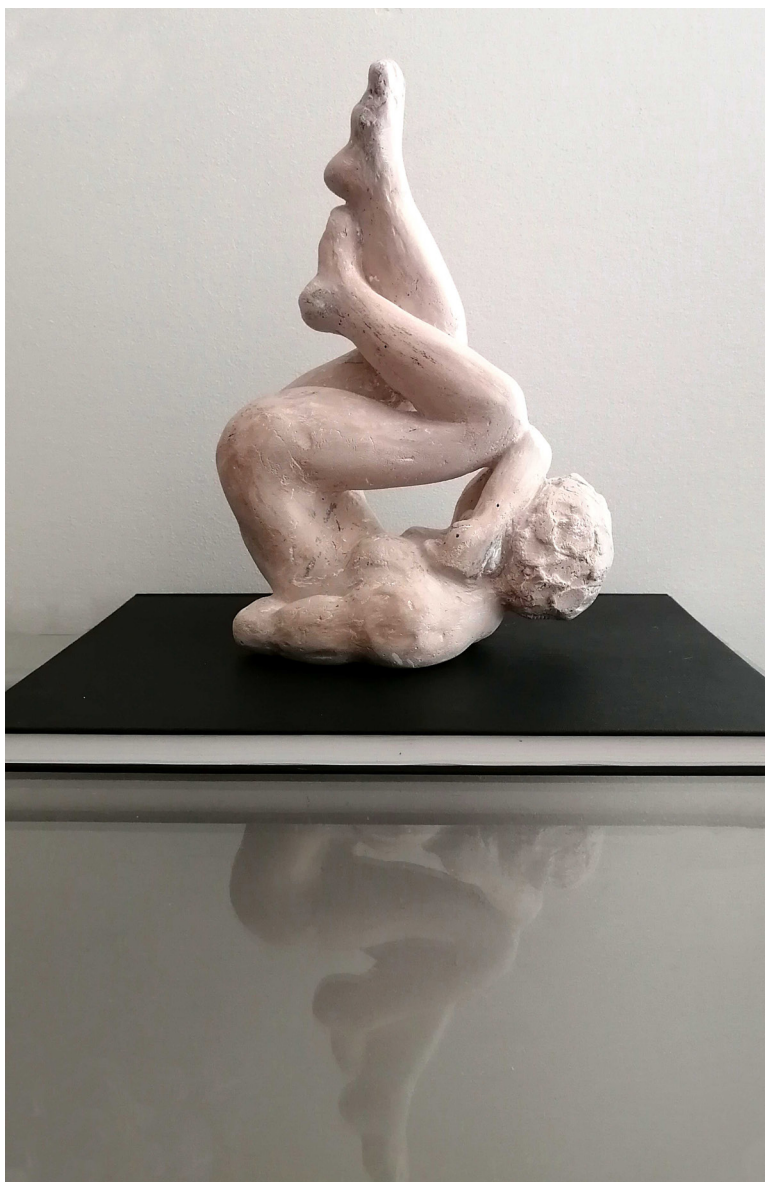
The city lamps are brightly lit  
and smiling faces are everywhere,  
the streets are full of song and cheer,  
happy hearts watch the empty shore.

Young lovers hold hands by the wall,  
and children wave their banners high,  
parades and joyful serenades,  
as peace will reign throughout the land.

The moon rises to open skies,  
silence falls on the wine-dark sea,  
gone is the war's brutal tumult,  
our soldiers return from the field.  
The bright stars above augur well,  
the kingdom is saved as is this gift.

**MAN OF POMPEII**

*Cécilia Alain*



## STEM STITCH

*Kaitlin Fitzgibbon*

after all of the pain

I sutured myself back together

slowly, and, carefully

like the deliberate precision

of. a. stem. stitch.

one. little. step.

backwards,

before. always. moving.

forward.

in the right direction

embroidering the best parts of me,

into  
blossoming  
flowers,  
slender stems  
,and  
dainty  
petals,  
strewn  
across

the thick canvas cloth

and the repetitive motion of my

sharp needle persistently pushing

through and letting the thin

yet determined thread pull upwards  
and

I feel every little tug, every little knot

despite the heavy resistance

I create something so full of life;

full of  
effervescence.

## SNOW IN NOVEMBER

*Amie Godward*

great purple clouds  
gather over this town  
this small, small town  
with its cotton candy skies  
and melted winds  
a chair  
    a bridge  
        a railroad track  
collect secrets  
written in bathroom stalls  
and lecture halls  
  
howled into the night  
  
and whispered in off-white offices  
  
the cycle repeats  
as certain as the snow in november;  
we will fall



## **DIVUS**

*Emerald MacIsaac*

My sweet angel, with river-lined cheeks,  
My brightest light that slaughtered the weak,  
My beautiful Goddess, betraying the Lord,  
I pray to your spirit, your mind, and your sword.

I fall to my knees, against the dogmatic—  
The doctrine that births the holy fanatic—  
But I follow yours, so sweet yet so blind.  
The dozens of years I've sat and I've pined.

Scorpionic venom, horns of the Ram,  
Claws of the Tiger, heart of the Lamb,  
Cracks made of Heaven with lips ever soft,  
And kind like the Dove which sends me aloft.

Forged in silver, gilded in gold.  
Tainted by ancients unholy and old.  
Peace be to Bael, Vepar, and Azazel;  
Beleth be chained by courage and hazel.

Hark my betrothed, who falls from above;  
You're never alone, you're surrounded by love  
No matter the hardship, I'll lay by your side  
And devoutly halt the ebbs of your tide.

You may cry in my arms, you deserve it the most  
Your pastoress prays with no fear to boast  
We shudder the words, "God may be dead,  
But the burden will carry atop of our heads."

## TRANS AWAKENING

*Morgane Davis Demers*



## **DIVINATION**

*Kendra Buchner*

I have not found the magical elixir of pharmaceuticals that beautifies and balances my brain chemistry. I leave therapy feeling heavier than when I arrived. The weight that lay heavy in my chest has now transferred to my brain. I detest spilling my guts to a soulless set of eyes who takes notes and never seems to discuss with me the stuff I feel is important.

I have found something else. It offers me something so much greater than myself.

Tarot.

I ask the almighty Universe,  
How can I achieve the life I desire?  
While I shuffle life's answers in my hands.

The Lovers.

I smile. Gemini energy. Balance. Harmony. Love.  
Many people are happy for a portent of their soulmate. I am overjoyed because this card is asking me to love myself. Take care of myself. Nurture myself. Be my own lover.

The Four of Pentacles.

The man is gripping his pentacles. He is holding onto his stability, wealth, and livelihood so tightly that he is being asked by the Universe to let go. Letting go of attachments is easier said than done, but I rather have this told to me by my tarot cards than by my therapist. Something about being divinely scolded feels much easier to grasp.

The Two of Swords.

I smile again. Major Gemini energy in its malevolent form. Indecision. Anxiety. Putting on a blindfold and trying to find a way to trust your intuition. I smirk sadly. This card also indicates the want to not have to make a decision at all. I must follow the road not taken by many. I must choose to live. Life happens to you, but I need to make life happen for myself. I exist in a liminal space, but I do not live. No matter how small, one step forward is better than none at all.

The Three of Cups.

Three people gallantly throw their cups in the air to celebrate. This card is all about joy and collaboration with others. The Universe is tired of my purposeful desolation. I must celebrate the life I have been given rather than groan about the life I don't have. I exhale heavily, knowing I isolate myself. However, I feel relief since I'm being told to receive help from others. That it's good to receive help. That I don't need to face this world alone. I don't want to face this world alone. It does not matter how spiritually enlightened you are, you still need people in the three-dimensional world to need you too.

I thank the Universe for the wisdom that's been bestowed upon me today and I curse the Universe for making enlightenment look so easy.

## THE INTIMATE FOREST

*Frank Willdig*

Such a solemn stillness this moment brings,  
Here in the forest that frees me,  
Under dappled leaves where the wood thrush sings,  
Comes the peace I can now see.

Coming cool and clear in abounding light,  
I stand astounded just to feel  
How the earthbound spirit in me takes flight  
To make this sublime presence real.

## **HYPATIA AND SAINT CATHERINE**

*Lucie Casinghino*

Men spit and spear at the  
Saint split into pieces  
Blood drips from tangled limbs  
And trickles between stones

Hellenist and heretic struck down in the street  
To rise again in four hundred years  
Teacher, philosopher, martyr

Carrying debates and lectures in the halls  
Of the greats who came before her  
Giving lessons to all who came to learn from her  
While political rumors spiral, a Charybdian monster,  
Till a lector and his followers take matters into their own hands

Remains strewn out of the city,  
Her head rolls twice,  
A brine of milk and wine,  
Soaking into the earth, open and ready to welcome her

Holy woman  
Separated and mythic as the gods she worshiped,  
To be resurrected like the man she prayed to  
Content to quietly make progress

Two women become one under these higher powers  
The first gives strength to the second  
All of that power builds beneath her fingertips  
Till she touches the breaking wheel and it shatters  
Then, impatient for the trials and attempts at torture to be over,  
She orders the executioner into action

Equation and oration turned to prayer and piety  
Silenced in a house of God,  
Stripped of her robes and dignity  
The heavens fell as the weight of her words  
Which flew from her lips and took flight as a dove  
Crushed her

**SAPPHIC REVERIE**

*Linnie McGuire*





## PHOTO ALBUM

*Mercedes Bacon-Traplin*

As if the shape of my smile in some childhood photo  
Could melt away the bitter woman who has crawled into my clothing  
I have left craters in my wardrobe and cold in my bed  
I am the treeless tundra, no life, no growth

And my blood is thin as spring waters, fresh snow melt  
As icy cold as gutter slush in March  
Down the street drains, I long to be scrubbed clean  
I crave some childhood smile to make me better, make me whole  
Sweet medicine like cough syrup, sticky lipped  
She stares at me from behind the grainy veil of time  
Reaches out from the frozen frame, some blonde baby  
And I want her to make me whole again, make me better  
As if her little chubby fingers could stroke my hair  
Whisper toothless sweet nothings in my ear

She might tell me she doesn't hate me  
Doesn't hate what I made of her raw potential  
Doesn't blame me for the bitterness, the ache, the rage  
I need to know she won't hate me for what I made of our life  
I crave to hear that she forgives me  
For being nothing of the woman we dreamed we'd be

And in this photo I/she/we are smiling  
Sweet child with life expanding in front of her like the tide going out  
No pain, no comprehension of failure  
She is not anyone's disappointment  
She is flush with hope and love, yes she is loved  
And she has never hated herself, never wished she did not exist

She has never been anything but this moment frozen in time  
This grainy photograph, grinning, toothless, happy  
I want the shape of her smile to wash over me, salted sea  
Melt away what time has made me, soften the cracked clay  
Smooth the cutting rough edges of my brain  
Grind my glass down until I am sand again,  
Ready to be washed away with the tide of her laughter  
Ready to be baptized and born again in salt waters

## IN MEMORY OF ZOÉ FORTIER 2003–2022



Zoé was a first-year student studying to be a secondary teacher within the Bishop's School of Education. Zoé not only had a passion for teaching but also a deep love for pop culture, writing, and poetry. Zoé identified as gay and was a proud advocate and supporter of the LGBTQIA2S+ community. Zoé also lived with epilepsy and brought awareness and support to the community through social media. In her short time with us on campus, Zoé touched us all with her infectious laughter and creativity; she has made her mark on campus and will never be forgotten.

## **I REMEMBER NOW**

*Zoé Fortier*

now, i remember  
i remember moving through the motions  
the motions of our lives in action  
in action with our smiles  
the smiles that could linger for miles  
the miles of laughing societies  
societies full of varieties  
varieties full of humans  
humans that remember  
that remember our freedom  
the freedom of dances in the rain  
the cries of the heartbreaks  
the pumps of loving hearts  
the freedom to express love  
love, kiss, hug,  
i remember now.

## **ONE SENTENCE FOR EVERYONE**

*Zoé Fortier*

don't lose hope, life is going to put the pieces back together