

EDITION 32

Edited by Eva Rachert & Abigail Epstein



The Hand that Feeds
by Fabrice Juhasz

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132nd Edition

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Land Acknowledgement

The Mitre has been a staple of Bishop's University since 1893 and has ever since been created on the traditional and unceded territory of the Abenaki people and the Wabanaki Confederacy. Only in 2017 did we begin to recognize this.

We acknowledge the Abenaki people and the Wabanaki Confederacy, the traditional stewards and protectors of the territories upon which we are learning, and the violation of their rights. In performing land acknowledgments, we make what was invisible visible and invite the land, the First Nations people, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission into our conversations. With this act of naming, we wish to shed light on Indigenous lenses.

This act of naming is only the first step towards reconciliation; as settlers on this land, we must hold ourselves accountable. We must engage in the difficult conversations that address both prior and ongoing injustices. We must face this discomfort in order to deconstruct barriers and rebuild a more equitable, hospitable space.



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Acknowledgements

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The Mitre: Bark & Bite is dedicated to all who engage in dialectical processes of human and animal, all endangered species, and all the environments we occupy and over which we have responsibility.

A Letter From the Editors,

As we began our work on the 132nd edition of *The Mitre*, we found ourselves discussing what carves the line between human and animal. "Bark & Bite" was born of this discussion — a natural metaphor of latency and action, voice and consequence. In depicting our conflicts through the image of the predator, this expression exhibits the instability of the human-animal dichotomy. As we consider our bark and our bite, we must interrogate the standards we hold ourselves to — what makes us more or less than animal.

We invoke animalia to characterize human constructs — the rat race in which we are all caught, the lone wolves whom we become, the packs for which we all search. Art seeks to access the emotions we repress in favour of rational thought; through poetry, stories, and visual art, we recognize the unsated thirsts in our lives. It is through the creation and consumption of art that we process our wildest tendencies. Our human feelings of isolation and rejection increasingly mirror animal displacement and predation, and the environments through which we define ourselves are increasingly being threatened.

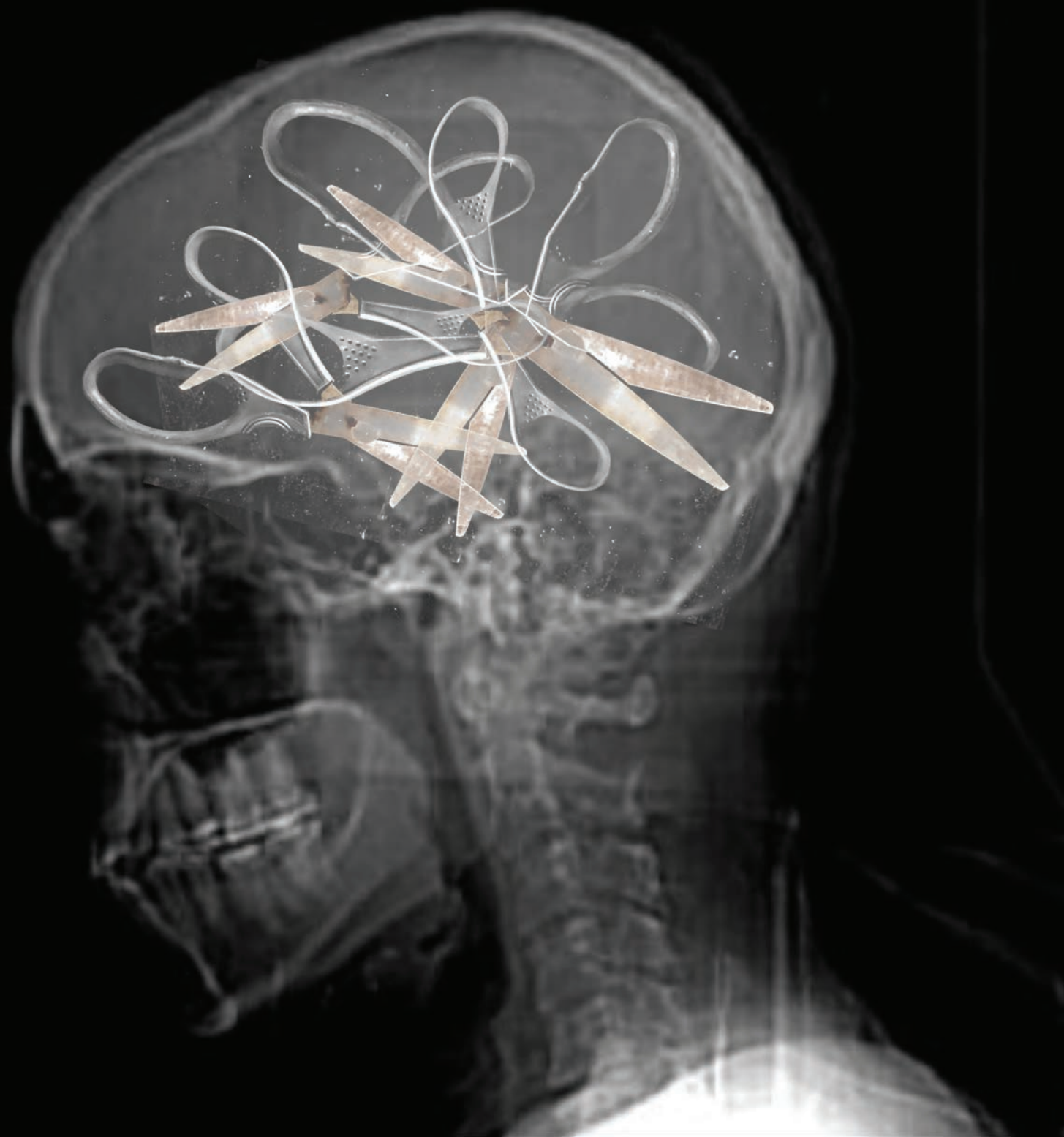
We invite you to consider — what does your bark say about your bite? What does nature demand of us? What is worth the abandonment of civility? The works featured in this edition of *The Mitre* ask you to examine what instincts we contend with, and what we can celebrate in the aftermath.

Thank you for approaching,

Eva Rachert & Abigail Epstein, Co-editors

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Generalized Anxiety Disorder
by Carella Keil





Sipping Bird
by Abigail Epstein

Bitch in a Cafe
by Sally Cunningham

I don't make it hard to eavesdrop.
Voice rough from a late last night,
Each word low and dissonant
Grating through the Starbucks on Kenmount—
The one where you have to make a U-turn,
Not the one in the mall.

My words push through last night's gin-yell
I think I'm being a bitch,
But I think I'm okay with it.
You're worried.
Buddy with the foot-cast who sat too close to us
For how many open tables there are: also worried.
The gal on the first date over yonder
Who bought a reusable cup
In watermelon green: less concerned,
But still listening, still leaning in
(She wants me to be a bitch, I can see,
Though her date is oblivious, too nervous
To meet her eye as I do when I say next: *and I'm not gonna stop.*

You're very worried now.
Eyebrows knit into scarves, the wrinkle I love,
(But you hate), arcing over thick black glasses frames—
We move on, we must.

You show me wedding dresses, lace and cleavage,
Boob City, I say, and I talk again about friends I made on-
line.
You tell me about your in-laws, food poisoning,
The cigarettes and cards and family jokes.
My platitudes are hoarse with last night's gleeful shouting
At a birthday girl I don't know, don't ever need to see again,
I tell you I'd looked into her drunk eyes
—I do think all Maggies have the same eyes—
And I told her I was there for her,
For that first birthday spent away from home.
I was.

Making the steep right out of the parking lot, I try
to tell myself that I said congratulations.
Test it out in the rearview mirror to see if it looks familiar.
But all I see is a bitch in a hatchback
Congratulating herself

:::CHANCE ENCOUNTERS:::

by Kathleen Taylor

"Through my collage work I aim to investigate my relationship with space, place and belonging by a process of observation, recycling and repurposing vintage books and magazines.

I use bold colour, abstract shapes, patterns, distinct images and scraps to create new visual landscapes. These landscapes are a type of 'field note' that document my process of navigating my humanness and my search for places that feel like home.

The compositions I create are harmonious, playful and bizarre and do not conform to any logic or rules. The work embraces the beauty and absurdity of human nature by seeing beyond the surface to disrupt the structure and rigidity of our reality. Confronting and challenging the way we see ourselves in relation to nature, the built environment and technology are central to this series. I collage to play, break free from the mundane, connect with myself, to share and to be seen."



Collage Three

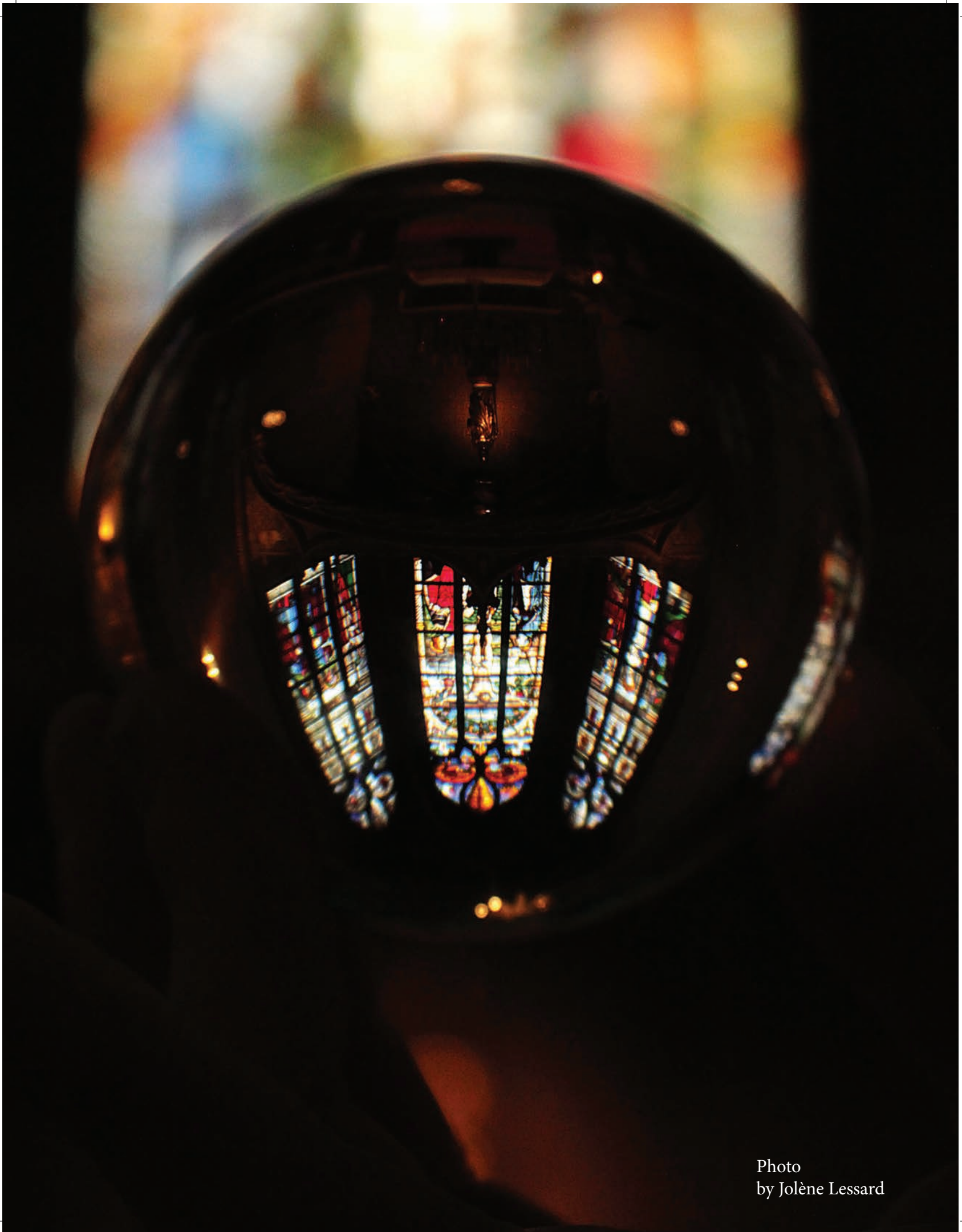


Photo
by Jolène Lessard

After Eden
by Jillian French

My mother gardens in the backyard, pulling weeds on her knees
From where I am planted at the kitchen window,
it looks like she is praying.
Grubby roots yield reluctantly to the pull of soft fingers
Blood blooms where a thorn catches flesh
she sucks her thumb to staunch the flow,
resting back on her heels,
the weight of the sun beats a tattoo on her back.

The air is dense honey
Creation is overripe,
sickly as After Eden,
Soft and sweet and heavy on sun-baked flesh,
Sagging sadly under heaven's heat-
I look up reprovingly.

We breathe tandem shallow breaths, me and my mother,
to not disrupt the stale warmth that wafts in murky tedium
I see her shoulders rise and fall.
Even when weakest breeze flutters sheepishly through mesh screens,
it prickles the sweat on my skin,
and I feel.

I see my father sluggishly round the corner of the house
offering my mother a glass of water.
She smiles gratefully,
and it is harder, now, to rebuke the heavens

When Cain wiped sweat from stinging eyes
to squint at the stooped figure of his dirt-stained father
and raised his head to curse sin's bitter inheritance,
He did not see his mother slipping nimbly through the fields
to offer Adam water.
He did not taste how sweet cool water stung against the salt of sweat
and made it sweeter still.

YOUR MOTHER NEVER LOVED YOU AND NEITHER DO I

by Erika Helby

You can hurt me baby,
but you will never have me.
you pinned me to your canvas to paint what you
want
'an artist's vision' was only Peter Pan Syndrome.
and you loved my mouth, the things it could do
how wide it would stretch
when i threw up on your bathroom floor while you
slept.
and you get off on the knowing
of all i put me through,
my limbs, my tendons
bending and snapping for you.



THUNDER IN THE IRISH COUNTRYSIDE

by Kat Mulligan

When thunder came billowing over the rooftops,
I sat in the field on the wooden bench
where rain would smudge away all that was not pastoral—
and the trees lowed glumly,
for they were succumbing to their moods
as I to mine, missing again all that could ever be adjoined
by nostalgia.

Subway through Brooklyn
Cemetery
by Claudia Colati

FINDING GOD'S HAT

by Steve Luxton

It is finest antique felt,
a towering beaver
with a memorable outer band.

In contrast, though of finest shot-silk, the inner one is
(peering into the headpiece as down a well...)
stained in layers
tell-tale as flood signatures
on a Mesopotamian ruin's walls....

–They are the mark of legendary crises
that the Director of All Creation,
appropriately head-dressed,
presided over

–A log of flustered omnipotence
(some say incompetence).

Here's the thrust and retreat of glacial ice,
scars of asteroids, agues and plagues
piggy-backed on Khazaki gopher flees,
bloody peasant uprisings and the like....

Sheer *Depths* of executive sweat, but interspersed here
and there with unsaturated spots
of perfect blue-green silk, intact,
signifying a brief lull or even pleasant patch
–the retreat of The Wisconsinan,
the rise of Monotheism (?), the Renaissance
or some such humane thing.

These recent spikes and sweaty spates,
Hitler and Hollywood's debased swoon, etc.
Uremic ichor unmistakably narrates.
The Lord's just about had it
with us ingrates.

So, he's flipped his lid, flung it to the floor
(one can barely imagine the crash).
He's sick of taking the rap.
The pelt of the deity is only so thick.
The post's immediately available.

Not for long though!
These recent spikes and sweaty spates,
Hitler and Hollywood's debased swoon, etc.
Uremic ichor unmistakably narrates.
The Lord's just about had it
with us ingrates.
So, he's flipped his lid, flung it to the floor
(one can barely imagine the crash).
He's sick of taking the rap.
The pelt of the deity is only so thick.
The post's immediately available.
Here's the executive recruitment ad:

needed a creative leader—ideally a narcissist—
with a melodramatic sense of self and the mo-
ment:
to preside (or –clarification–hold sway)
over an immense fur-bearing territory.
Grease your traps!
Don't like my style? Then handle things
your way from now on.
Try this mighty Beaver on yourself.

Raidne
by Elsa Cunningham

The wicked girl down by the water
now looks back at those she slaughtered,
the little chuckle leaving her lips,
sounding ever so close to the ocean's kiss.
Broken bodies glitter on her love's ocean shore
while she splashes in the red water, laughing at Davy Jones' door.

The violence-swept daughter of the ocean's vicious tides
giggles at the broken sailors to which she lied,
twisting together delicate bones with still-wet veins,
and nibbling on another creature's remains,
she folds together a crown fit for her ruler
and returns to the locker a little bit sooner.

On a throne of painted skeletons
sits a being of no comparison.
A soul of the sea's wrath and living death,
they consume the last living breath
of those who sink beneath the dark water's swells
to be endlessly locked in their inky cells.

Our wicked creature slips into the locker,
sailor's blood still upon her.
She greets her ruler with a sharp-toothed grin
clutching the crown she sewed together with dripping human skin.
Approaching the throne of toothless jaws and jagged boulders,
she drapes the crown upon sharp shoulders.

With a low bow to a rugged laugh
the sea-twisted siren sits at the feet of her other half.
A bone-made hand tilts her chin
up to see the most wicked of grins.
And the ruler of the sea's dark abyss
pulls their siren up for the sweetest kind of kiss.

Sunk beneath the ocean's blue
sits a throne of great cliffs and drunken drowned crews.
To its side lays far too many crowns
each a relic of the ships she drowned
in honor of the horrid being on the throne,
her ever-wicked love, Davy Jones.

Gutter

by Samiya Bouziane Merceron

There's a hangnail in the gutters.
Buried beneath
the shade in the sand,
rosy, parasol cheeks, and coarse,
grey coral.
The dates on the page
are rubbed raw with wet salt, spewing
bubbles into the edges
of the open wound.



Sombrio
by Luke Munro

I suck sediment from my
nail beds.
Gnawing at the letters
and lapping up their inky blood.
The pierced months pool together.

Farmhouse Blues
by Eva Rachert

It would be easier to list the names I don't have.
I am not a sunset over a midwestern plain,
I am not a frequent flyer,
I keep the bedroom cold.
I pray for rain;
The drought eats all I grow and all my patience.
I am a farmer of manufacture:
short of breath and short of stature.
The railroad bisects my land,
and travellers look out of grey windows at my lonely fields.
I do not harvest —
I bury all the names that nobody knows I was once given,
and when I churn the soil, I call out to my neighbours and nobody comes.



On the Beaten Path
by Luke Munro

Chance Encounters: Collage Four
by Kathleen Taylor



WELLPETS
by Sam Dallamore-Hynd

**take a picture of me
at the pet blood bank
with our grandad's happy mosaics
portraits of post-surgical spaniels**

**standing upright
IV-drip-walking-stick
grinning bull terriers rescued
from crash-and-burn
multicar pileups**

**a stick insect
receives a lung transplant
from the local butcher.
(smoked too many cigarettes)
fast lobes wheel past
with an axle and tube.
(smells when it gets too hot)**

**wellness is a reality
in the tiniest tiles.
they emanate a glow.
i feel as warm as
the buzzing of a space heater.**

h u n

ger

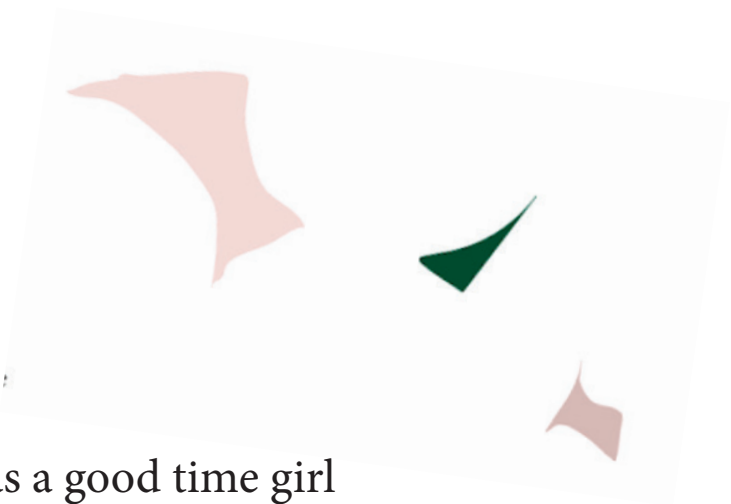
i think i really want you

in a scuzzy basement bar,
ceiling aglow with technicolor
out-of-season christmas lights,
the air muggy and music loud -
so very loud - i see you,
for a second too long.
your eyes flashing, cheeks bright.
my stomach keeps doing somersaults,
and i don't know if that has to do more
with my dinner being composed
of oreos and pita chips,
or if it's more about the way
i see you



seeing me.

the nape of my neck is buzzing
and warm with dive bar miasma,
and though i've only drank water,
i too, am abuzz.
and for several seconds,
over several hours,
i sense a solitude - moments in which
the tension is high, and you and i
are in a vacuum, saying
a million things with our eyes
and nothing out loud.

by Sophia Cumming



When I was a good time girl
I wrote stories of
chance and romance
with my plumes and wings
that caught the light
but the night
was so was much deeper
and I thirsted for something
so much sweeter
so while I flew closer to the sun
I choked on dastardly feathers
when the day was done
and soon I couldn't weather
one more tripped up affair
when I was a runaround,
can't knock me to the ground,
good time kind of girl.



Confetti Wounds
by Jennifer Harvey

through falling mirrors
by Carella Keil





Chance Encounters: Collage Two
by Kathleen Taylor

I, known

to bite back. to loiter
in the street, cold seeping
through my clothes.
to reminisce about the man
I never knew at costco, his
purple hand swollen
amongst guatemalan bananas
stickered like good habits.
the man I never knew, I blew him
in the woods, the burs nipping
at my ankles like dogs. I cleaned
my mouth with ginger shots
activated charcoal, coconut oil
baking soda, hydrogen peroxide
dabbed my gums with holy water
thought legionella, thought brain-
eating amoeba, thought you. the man
I never knew, midnight smoking
inside, no train station, nothing
to wait for. thought, your truck
in the snow, in the mountains
mountains I've never seen. thought
no-zone, ozone, come home
top of the world. I, known
for pollutants, for tripwire, for short fuse
for butterfly wings like grappling hooks
hold on. I, in the baltic sea, come up
gnashing for whips of eucalyptus,
for ice cold pilsner in thick steam, for
a magnum of Grey Goose, for a split taxi.
for a hand on my inner thigh, and
at the wrist, an entire life severed
by the dark but still known.

by Loch Baillie

illicit

by Yuhuan "Albert" Xie

foreign language
by Carella Keil

you want to know what I'm feeling
 what I'm thinking
 but my body
doesn't speak the same language as my mind

you tell me I'm all periods and dashes
that I hyphenate each moment with hesitation

but I understand you better
when your lips are scrawled across my body

tonight
I am curled up beneath a chandelier of stars
safe in my bed
with my clean hair
and the bamboo shaft growing on my window-
sill

I turn in bed and ache
where you entered me
my whole being
is still alive with your touch

 longing
for the exotic cursive
of our two bodies spelled out together

you ran your fingers through my hair
pressed your palm against my chest until
I began to feel my heart beating

I close my eyes to taste
this foreign language on my tongue

*Originally published in The Raven's Quoth:
Tempest*





I am the creak underneath your floorboards
by Freya Riches

I am the creak underneath your floorboards
I call out to you
With each stamp of your feet
I sing

I am the dust at the bottom of your lungs
Constant and nagging
With each inhale, I fall deeper
Darker and tighter

I am the dirt underneath your nails
Sleeping softly in your bed –
We both know I shouldn't be here
What would your mother say?

I am the spider bite on your leg
Raised, regal and ripe
Reddening wryly
I wait for your hands to touch mine
I wait in vain

I am the dandruff that holds in your hair,
the saliva on your tongue,
the marching drum in your ear,
the pit in your stomach,

I am eternity on your eyelashes
the burnt blush of your cheeks,
I wait for you
I have spent my whole life waiting,
but you never come.

Washcloths
by Alisha Winter

Were the washcloths stored on the left or the right side of the linen closet?
I can't remember and I won't ever be able to travel back to that second floor bathroom to check.
The washcloths will never be washed, dried, folded, and placed back in that closet.

In our apartment,
Three hours East,
We keep the washcloths on the left.

Was I the one that unpacked them and placed them beside the hand towels in the cabinet,
In our bathroom,
In our second floor apartment,
In the bathroom I remember now as walls, door frames, yellowed linoleum, and a panel of three light switches?

The bathroom in our apartment has grey tile, a corner shower, a separate bathtub, and ample space to set up the drying rack.
We hang almost all of our clothes to dry.

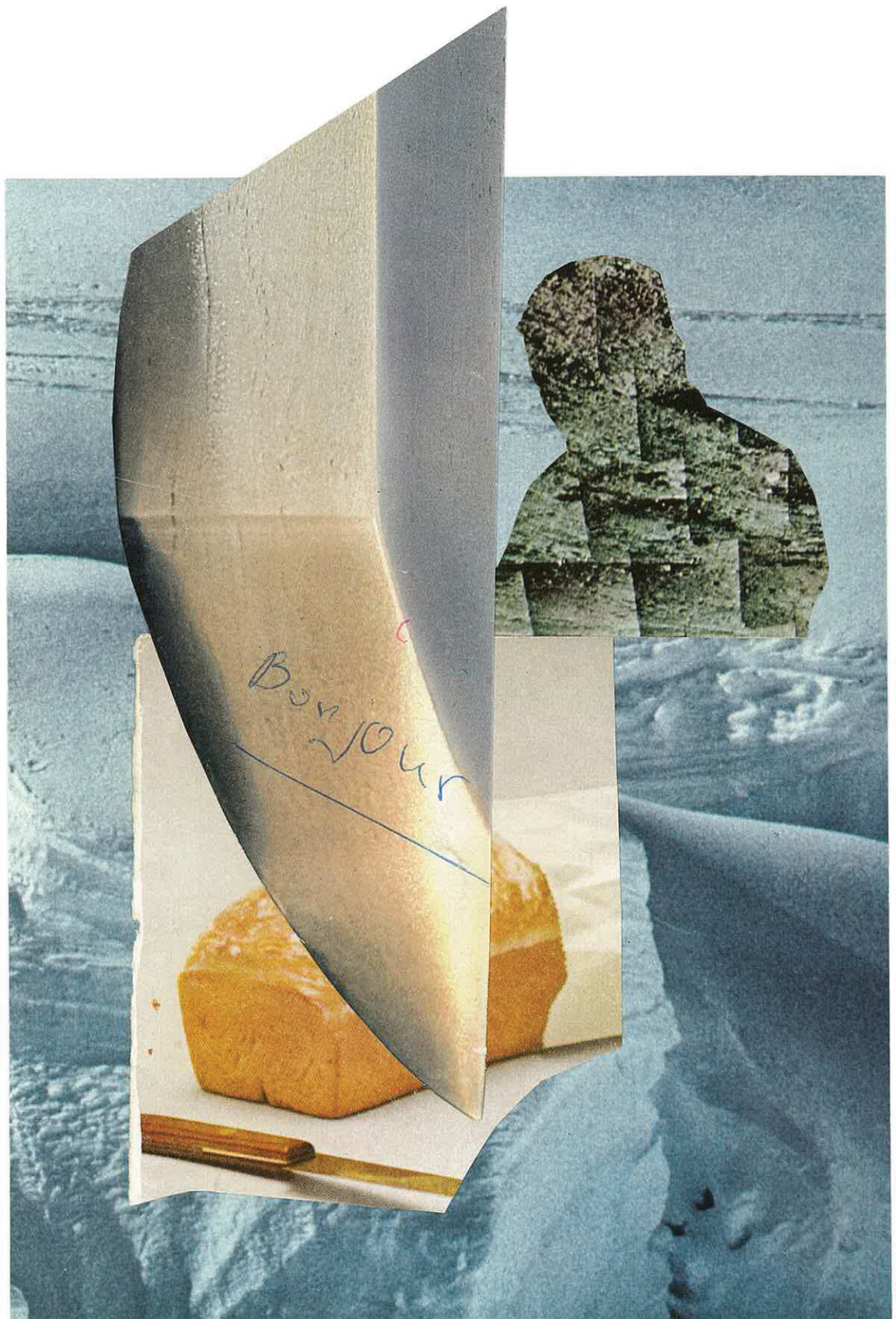
In the bathroom,
Three hours West,
And almost a decade distanced,
Clothes also hung to dry.
Not on a rack,
But over the curtain rod or the nozzle of the showerhead.

Four doors,
Three hours West,
On the second floor,
Is one bathroom.

One door led out to the hallway,
The second led out to my parents' room,
The third separated the toilet and the bathtub from the sink and medicine cabinet,
The last closed in the washcloths and towels.

I remember the mornings, the doors swinging in symphony.

There is one door to the bathroom in our apartment, three hours East.
There is one light switch.
There is one drying rack, and I know on which side of the cabinet the washcloths are stored.



Chance Encounters: Collage Five
by Kathleen Taylor

oh you're goth? name three abandoned Irish
churches
by Luke Munro

Night Creature
by Brendan Lindsay

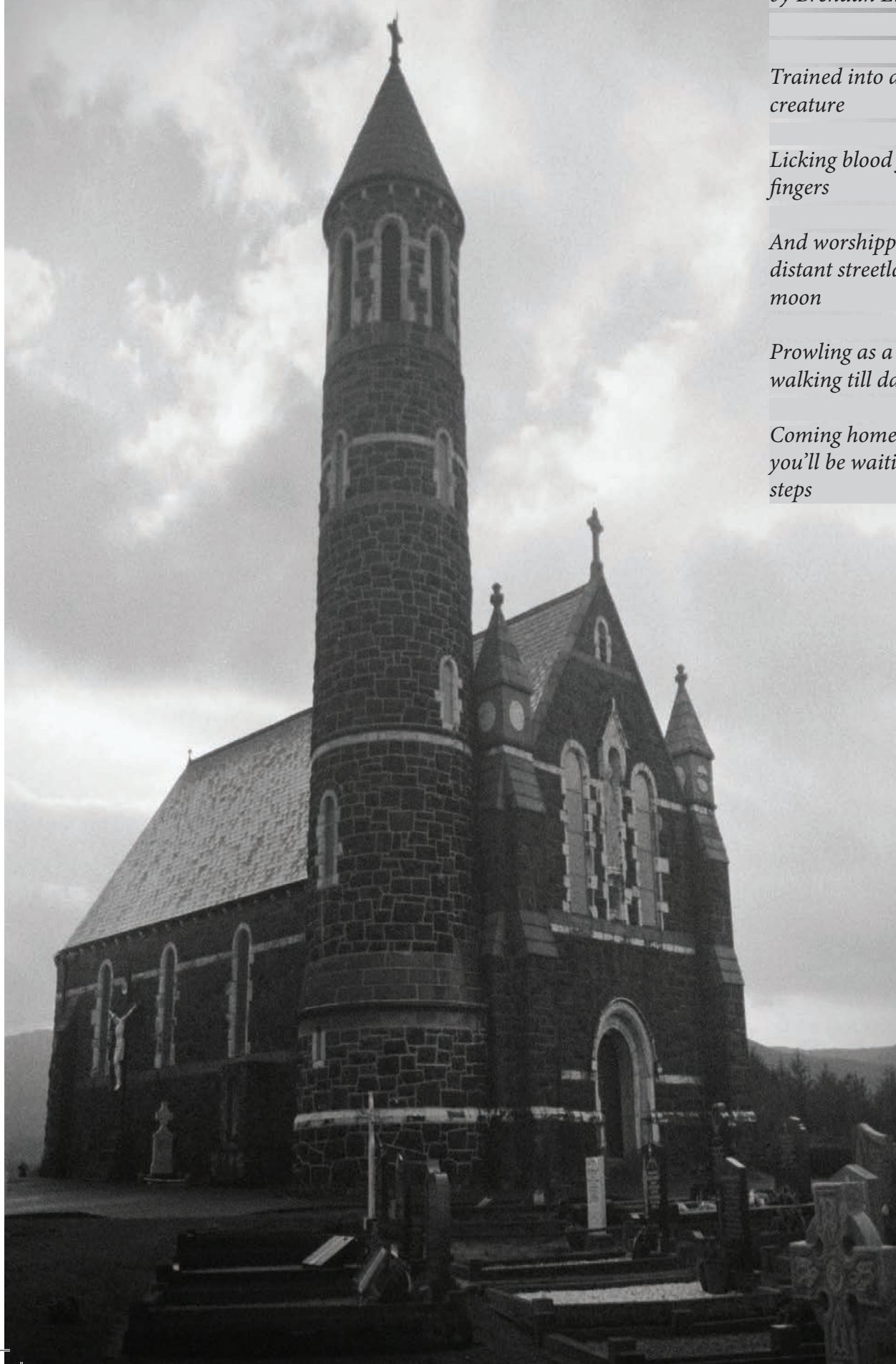
*Trained into a vivid night
creature*

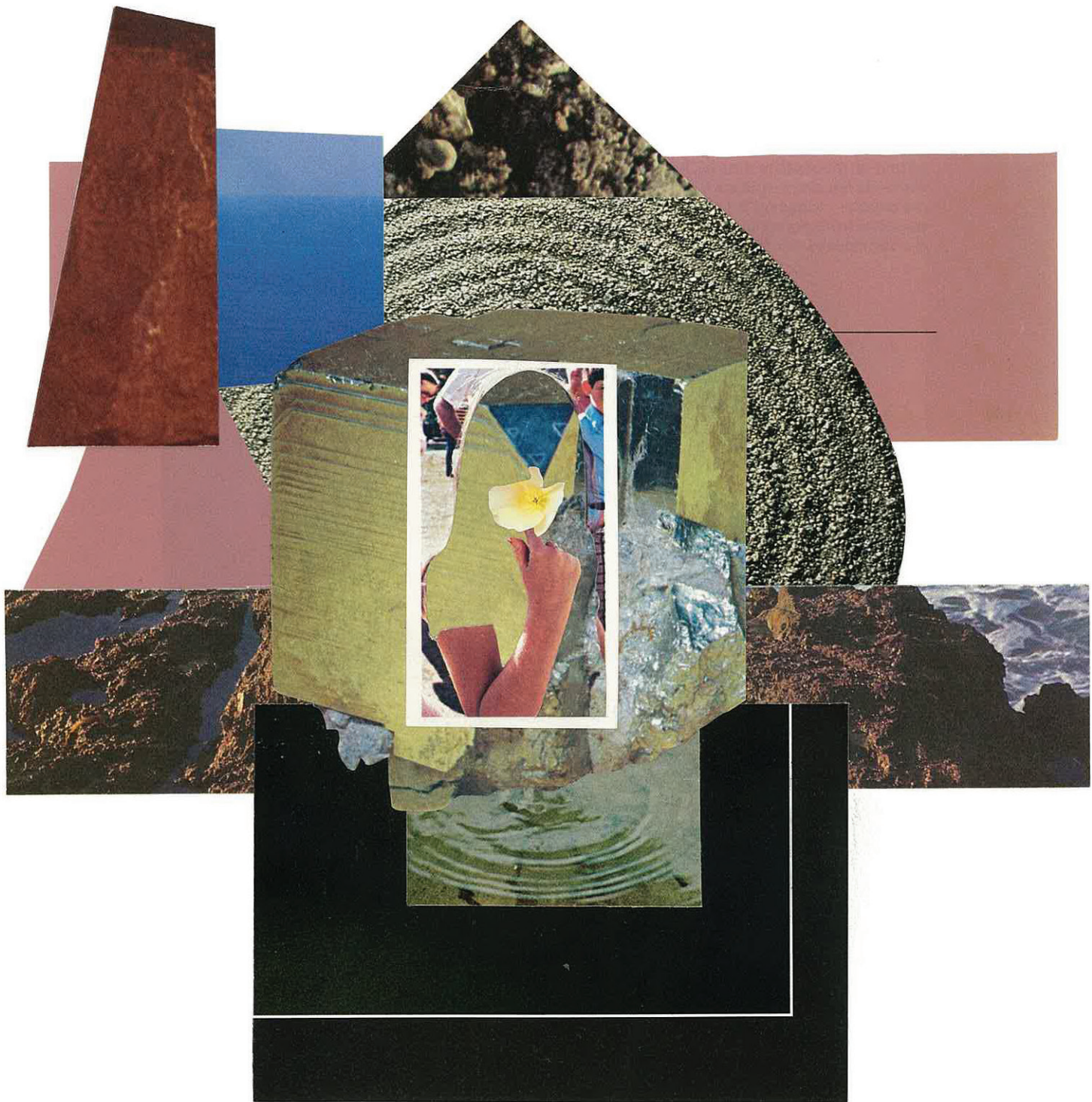
*Licking blood from salty
fingers*

*And worshipping the
distant streetlamp as the
moon*

*Prowling as a hunter, I'm
walking till dawn*

*Coming home, terrified
you'll be waiting on my
steps*





Chance Encounters: Collage Six
by Kathleen Taylor

Rock, Paper, Moon
by Carella Keil



NOCTURNE

by Steve Luxton

November night and rain storms the roof—the start
of a drenching that the on-line weather site warned of.
Wind lashes the bedroom panes with small limbs of trees.
Woken by the clatter, I recall the great Elizabethan
Bard's meteorological choruses:
the endearing: "When that I was and a little tiny boy,
With a hey, ho, the wind and the rain."
And, of course, the more fraught: "Blow, blow, thou winter wind..."
—along with its bite being nothing compared
to Man's ingratitude....

A harsh conclusion!
Age's unsparing lesson?
Lying wide-eyed beside my sleeping wife, rearranging
on its cushion my trick knee
(memento from my now distant youth), and
after weighing whether to lie on my back or
my front will be more sleep inducing (my back...),
I commence to ponder my own personal
Weathering—where stiff winds and the chilling
flood of years have fetched me.

—Into what wayside, thin-roofed, leaky abode?
(Actually, thanks to my dear, practical wife, it's pretty tight.)
Certainly not the splendiferous spot, brimming with acquisitions and
trophies that Youthful Ambition dreamed and schemed after.
You know: fame, power, riches, etc.
No, this erstwhile aspirant finds his cloak frayed and thin.
It seems the grand marshals of the big parade
—or harlequinade—
apologetic but firm, found no room on
a festive float for him/me. —All seats were
already booked in the jamboree....

Of course, the Simple Life, much blessed
and ballyhooed, has its own pitfalls,
and requires practice—its ten thousand hours!
But it does provide kind shelter and
compensations: forthright, humble souls
who'll share their umbrella with you in a storm,
or, if both lack them, the storm.
—Who'll help clear a blown-down tree from your lawn,
or assist in fixing the flashing in the leaking roof.
—And by the sounds of the tempest, morning
may bring just such chores.

—So, I'd best get me back to sleep.
Outside, it's still pouring cats and dogs,
sluicing hopes, remedies and restorations
through my slowly settling brain.
Pitter patter, patter pitter.
"With a hey, ho, since when that I was and a tiny little boy!"

Morning at Lac Croche
by Frank Willdig

Sunlight gleams on the lake,
reflects on the water
and through the island's trees

small ripples flicker, playful,
behind the spindled wall of spruces.
The dawn's mists burn away.

A raven calls from the fog-bound cove,
and a thrush sings in the darkest wood;
my son and I sit on the porch
and talk music.

Apparently They Shot Game of Thrones
Here (I Haven't Seen it)
by Luke Munro



Tree Bark Bite
by Heather Davis

1.
I am growing two dogs
named Bark and Bite.
They grew from buds,
in secret,
but now are
visible to all

2.
instinct
intact
in tree

3.
I sit under the tree
heart beating
feel so much
feel so deep

call out lonely wolf wail
danger anger danger
free leg from trap

from culture
free self
protect self

be wilder
be wilder

4.
Tree
Bark
Bite

rough bark
tough bite

free free free

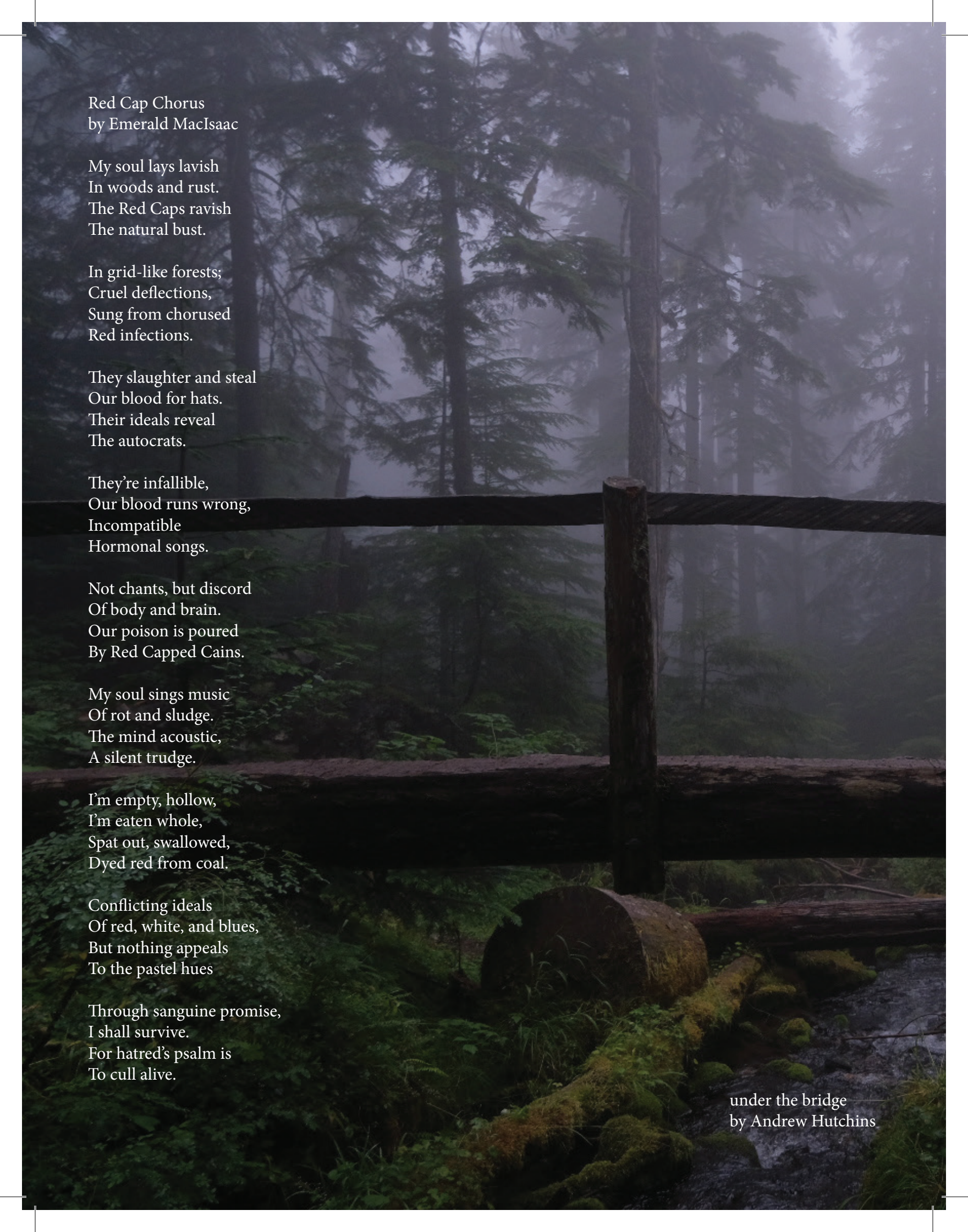
to bite and bark
if needed if
unsafe

5.
the wise woman
sits on the bench
a long, luscious life
and now she is safe

with bite and bark
in her tree

gifts to give
her children

6.
once I was frozen,
but now
I bark with joy.
I bite with passion.
solid in my tree bark



Red Cap Chorus
by Emerald MacIsaac

My soul lays lavish
In woods and rust.
The Red Caps ravish
The natural bust.

In grid-like forests;
Cruel deflections,
Sung from chorused
Red infections.

They slaughter and steal
Our blood for hats.
Their ideals reveal
The autocrats.

They're infallible,
Our blood runs wrong,
Incompatible
Hormonal songs.

Not chants, but discord
Of body and brain.
Our poison is poured
By Red Capped Cains.

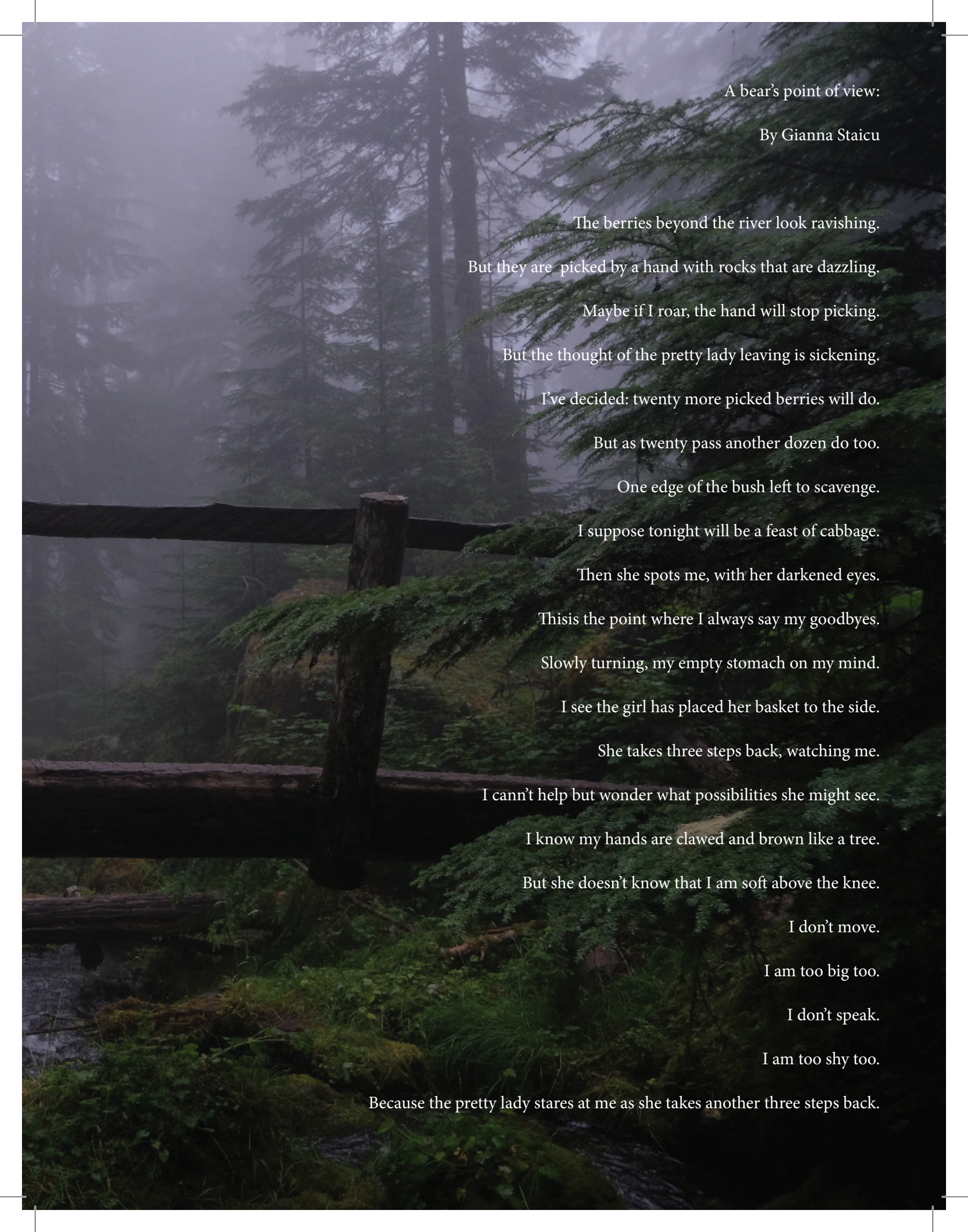
My soul sings music
Of rot and sludge.
The mind acoustic,
A silent trudge.

I'm empty, hollow,
I'm eaten whole,
Spat out, swallowed,
Dyed red from coal.

Conflicting ideals
Of red, white, and blues,
But nothing appeals
To the pastel hues

Through sanguine promise,
I shall survive.
For hatred's psalm is
To cull alive.

under the bridge
by Andrew Hutchins

A misty forest scene with tall evergreen trees and a stream in the foreground. The atmosphere is dark and moody, with a thick layer of fog or mist hanging between the trees. In the foreground, there are large, moss-covered logs and dense green foliage. A stream flows through the lower part of the image, its surface reflecting the surrounding greenery and the overcast sky. The overall tone is somber and atmospheric, providing a backdrop for the poem.

A bear's point of view:

By Gianna Staicu

The berries beyond the river look ravishing.
But they are picked by a hand with rocks that are dazzling.

Maybe if I roar, the hand will stop picking.
But the thought of the pretty lady leaving is sickening.

I've decided: twenty more picked berries will do.

But as twenty pass another dozen do too.

One edge of the bush left to scavenge.

I suppose tonight will be a feast of cabbage.

Then she spots me, with her darkened eyes.

This is the point where I always say my goodbyes.

Slowly turning, my empty stomach on my mind.

I see the girl has placed her basket to the side.

She takes three steps back, watching me.

I can't help but wonder what possibilities she might see.

I know my hands are clawed and brown like a tree.

But she doesn't know that I am soft above the knee.

I don't move.

I am too big too.

I don't speak.

I am too shy too.

Because the pretty lady stares at me as she takes another three steps back.

HUNT

White Phillip
by Luke Munro



PHILLIP

R I N G

SPOTTED
by Andrew Hutchins



L I N G

BARK - I AM NOISE, HEAR ME

by Sam Dallamore-Hynd

**cross the tracks and find me there, carrying a
sofa in one arm**

and a sack bag of rabbits in the other.

**i am the ultimate alpha male. my love of whey
knows no bounds.**

**my head shines when the sun hits it,
illuminating this dark room with Holy light.**

i do not have “feelings”.

when i am backlit, my silhouette resembles a
phallus. when we
are together, it is medieval.
i will carry the hay bales from my father's farm
to your father's
farm and we will make love in the cow shed and
after i am done
i will watch a number of Instagram Reels about
Formula One
race car drivers and their sexual proclivities.

i can bench fifty grams of granite and snort the
remaining two hundred and fifty.
my stomach is a rock tumbler and for you it will
produce
diamonds.

i am the ultimate man-lover. i will never talk to
you again.

Modern Day King

by Tomas Peck



E
b
b

by Claudia Colati

The waves gnash, a restless maw,
tearing at cliffs with salt-stained teeth.
Above, wings carve soft defiance,
unbowed by the lash of the wind.

The sun, a fleeting ember,
burns between fury and calm,
as sky and sea meet,
both striking,
both yielding.

a
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S
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BARK

By Abigail Epstein

I want to snap your bird neck bones between my
teeth.

Scream and I'll swallow it,

All of it, for God's sake

Ache and I'll cup it, snuff it and suck,

Wish, and I'll want it

Cock to your talk, put your conch at my temple

Slip three down my sock

Fit your fist down my femur

Walk where I walk

Why the fuck won't you follow through?

A hell of comprehension

Blink, I'm begging for clues.

It's 'cause

You've got it in your fingers

Yours to nurture or break

But forget about the pinky swears,

The sparkling fake drop off interest, the half-mast
approaching.

You think that I'm joking in lighthearted threats and

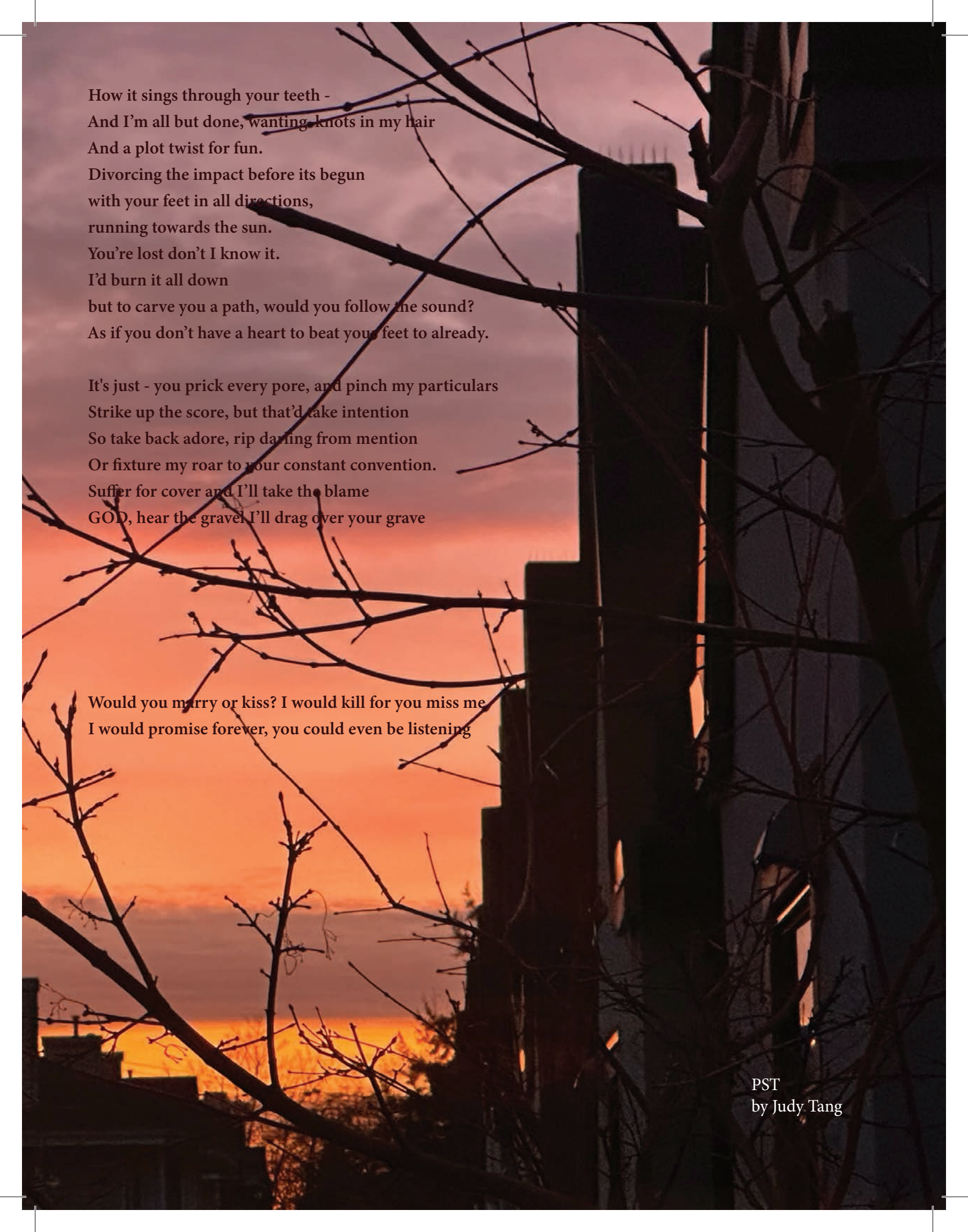
I'd say don't regret it

If I thought you'd look backwards

Or forwards, blank forecast

so where do you gaze?

when you say that you love me did you look up the
phrase?

The background of the entire page is a photograph. It shows a sunset or sunrise with a warm, orange and pink sky. In the foreground, there are dark, silhouetted branches of bare trees. To the right, a dark, vertical structure, possibly a building or a fence, is also silhouetted against the sky.

How it sings through your teeth -
And I'm all but done, wanting knots in my hair
And a plot twist for fun.
Divorcing the impact before its begun
with your feet in all directions,
running towards the sun.
You're lost don't I know it.
I'd burn it all down
but to carve you a path, would you follow the sound?
As if you don't have a heart to beat your feet to already.

It's just - you prick every pore, and pinch my particulars
Strike up the score, but that'd take intention
So take back adore, rip darling from mention
Or fixture my roar to your constant convention.
Suffer for cover and I'll take the blame
GOD, hear the gravel I'll drag over your grave

Would you marry or kiss? I would kill for you miss me
I would promise forever, you could even be listening

PST
by Judy Tang

Vaches, le matin
by Heidi Noel



Wind rustled through the chilled pines as the sun peeked over the horizon. The woods slowly awoke, small animals stirring from their nests and burrows.

The man shivered, sticking his hands into the pockets of his bright orange jacket. He forgot his toque, which he realized only when he could feel the tips of his ears flushing red in the bite of the cold. From the comfort of his tree stand, he looked across at the clearing. The winter had already set in. A few short months ago, it had been fertile with purple and yellow wildflowers poking out from between the grasses, standing tall to meet the warm rays of the sun. Now, it was stomped grass and caked mud, the few bits of greenery picked away by small rodents and hungry deer.

The herd of deer moved from the pines into the clearing, picking at the last of the grasses. There was one buck – well, only one that the hunter could even consider. The others looked more like does; frail, meek, weak, their crowns barely large enough to be considered masculine. The older deer huddled together as they grazed, their thin bodies shivering in the cold.

His gun was already loaded, propped against his body as he stared through the scope lined up on the herd. His fingers waited patiently on the trigger, inching closer and closer to pressing his full grip onto it. The large buck just had to move into the line of the scope so that the hunter could get a good angle, and proper bullet placement.

Straining his eyes, he saw a quick flash of silver dart through the pines near the clearing. Its fur was thick. It had a long tail that could wrap around its body, a wide set muzzle and pointed, furred ears. It was a wolf, slender-built, a she-wolf if he had to guess. She was petite, only around the size of a German Shepherd. The rest of her pack, pelts charcoal black and tawny brown, came into sight and she seemed even smaller. Her head was barely at shoulder height with most of the other wolves, yet they all bowed their heads to her and moved out of her way.

She crept towards one of the deer. It was scrawnier than the others, grazing with the elderly, but an easy kill for a small predator like her. Her footsteps were careful and deliberate as she stalked, completely silent, her body hunched low at her haunches. Her pack had dispersed, hiding behind trees as they worked to corral the herd.

The deer stirred. His head snapped around, gusts of cold air blasting from his flared nostrils. His body stiffened, prepared to bolt.

The hunter's hands hovered over the trigger as the she-wolf sprang, the rest of her pack in pursuit. The deer screamed as they took off.

A blast rang out around the forest. Birds took off into the sky, flapping their wings with fury and fear. White tails disappeared into the pines. Staining the yellow tufts of grass, the deer lay there, the bullet in its head.

The she-wolf retreated back into the forest at the sound of gunfire. The hunter could see that her silver coat had been stained with blood, yet her muzzle was clean. She stood between the trees, her amber eyes meeting the hunter from across the clearing. She broke his gaze first and she turned, her tail flicking as she trotted into the forest to meet her pack.

Groaning as he stood up from his tree-stand, the hunter climbed down the rungs of the ladder. His joints and the soles of his feet screamed as he hit the cold soil. He shuffled over to the deer. He was definitely dead, and a waste of a bullet. There wasn't enough meat on him to even bother bleeding it, just a sack of skin and bones.

The wolves wouldn't have been able to eat much, anyways.

Scaling his tree-stand again, days later with the snow finally fluttering to the forest floor, the hunter looked for the small she-wolf. He had gotten to the woods early, before the sun had even kissed the horizon. The deer had been grazing in the clearing for a while now, the bloodstains from the previous kill washed away by the elements.

There was the small flash of silver, darting in between the trees. She dropped to the ground, her muscles moving slowly over the forest floor as she approached the clearing. Her pack flanked her and divided, circling and caging the clearing.

The deer stood more alert. They raised their heads, mid-chew, their bodies going tense. Their heads began to swivel, checking around for their nearest escape as the wolves worked hurriedly to trap them.

A deer was tackled to the ground and the others fled, their white tails flashing as they dodged the other wolves who were now focused on the struggling deer. The she-wolf held it by its hips, her teeth sunk into its flesh as it shrieked.

He pulled the trigger and the deer collapsed once again, the she-wolf yelping and scurrying away at the sound of the shot. She had angrily shook her body, trying to rid the stress from her bones, but with no use. The rest of the wolves scrambled into the pines once again, regrouping and staring back towards the clearing. They touched noses before turning and chasing in the direction of where the deer had fled, howls echoing around the forest.

The hunter once again descended from tree-stand and despite the wolves' howls slowly fading, he could feel an amber gaze on his back as he grabbed the worthless deer and started dragging it across the snow. Deep red blood spilled all along the snow, leaving a streak through the forest like a line for no-man's land.

This happened again and again. The wolves would be ready, the small she-wolf pouncing and fighting and scrapping with the deer, her teeth and claws piercing skin and flesh, only for a gunshot to erupt the forest in chaos.

The hunter once again sat in the tree-stand. The sun was up and beaming, the snow glistening as the deer foraged for the last remaining bits of green. His body ached from sitting there all day, yet the she-wolf hadn't approached. He remembered that her pelt blended in well with the snow, so he figured she had just been camouflaged, but as he looked for her, he started to believe that maybe she just wasn't there, lurking in the woods.

She must have died. She had gotten so small, so light, she wouldn't have made it through the winter. He probably did the rest of the pack a favour. They wouldn't have to go on with her dead weight, struggling to feed themselves and get her back to a healthy weight.

With a sigh, the hunter began to climb down the ladder. He already had deer. His old chest-freezer was fully stocked with venison. He had more deer than he had tags, but he came to see the wolf. It was funny the way she fought. She was so small, yet so driven and motivated, it made it all the more worthwhile when she would angrily shake her body when her prey sat there dead by someone else's hand.

She was too small to survive, the hunter knew that much. Her pack would be better off without a wolf as light as her. She was so light that he couldn't hear her pad over the dried leaves and fallen snow, her steps deliberate, slow and motivated. He had started shuffling back down the trail in the direction of his ATV, parked about a mile away. He couldn't park too closely or the forest would know he was there and the deer wouldn't venture into the clearing.

The hair on his neck stood up despite the warmth of his balaclava. He shook off the feeling, stomping in his boots and gripping his shotgun.

A quick glimmer of black shot in front of him, and then brown movement in his peripheral. He grabbed the stock of his gun, raising it. His movements halted and he checked around him.

Another footstep and she sprang, her small build and her sheer drive knocking him off his feet. His face met the snow and he barked in pain as her pack piled on top of him. Teeth punctured his loose flesh, tearing at his bright orange clothing and body. He rolled over, teeth and claws digging into his flesh as he tried to aim the gun with no use.

The she-wolf was the last thing he saw as she lunged for his throat, his blood dripping from her muzzle and massive canine teeth.

She didn't look small anymore.

crossing paths by Andrew Hutchins





Beneath the same sky
By Sara Di Girolamo

You came into this world and eclipsed my heart: Your eyes sparkle with wonder
And your laugh leads me home.

I often look at the moon
And like to imagine that you're looking too
As if there's an invisible line that connects you and I

When the day comes where we don't share the same sky, The stars will hear the
echoes of my cries
But even through the distance, I will feel you near In the rustle of the leaves, in the
quiet of the night

Your presence lingers, a quiet echo in the air. I carry you in the rhythm of my breath,
In the steady beat of my heart,
In the way the light filters through the trees, In the quiet stillness of the morning,
And the way the ocean moves without end.

You are everywhere, yet I miss you,
As if the world has lost its hue
And when the sun rises, painting the sky with gold And in the echoes of laughter carried by the wind,
I find pieces of you where the silence begins.

As the night settles around me like a familiar song
Each star, a fragment of you, shining where you
belong.

No matter where you are, you are my guiding light.
Leading me home, through the day and the night.

Autumn Ocean
by Luke Munro



the of moun peace tains

by Alysha Goudreau



Panic
By Alisha Winter

Stomped on,
My heart is pounding, out of reach.
My fingers cannot wrap the ventricles to squeeze the circulation.

I begin drowning.
My throat is nailed to a board.
My mouth opens, to cry for help, but no noise escapes my lips.
I am silenced, the screams locked away, the key lost in my adolescence.

Tears begin to pull from my eyes.

From the outside, in a dimly lit room, I am an image of relaxation.

Hiding my worn out rubber band tendons.
Hiding my locked teeth and set jaw.
Hiding my flattened lungs.
They beg for air, but no relief comes.

Then, all at once the fingers compressing my heart, the board stiffening my throat, and the blanket weighing me down, lift.

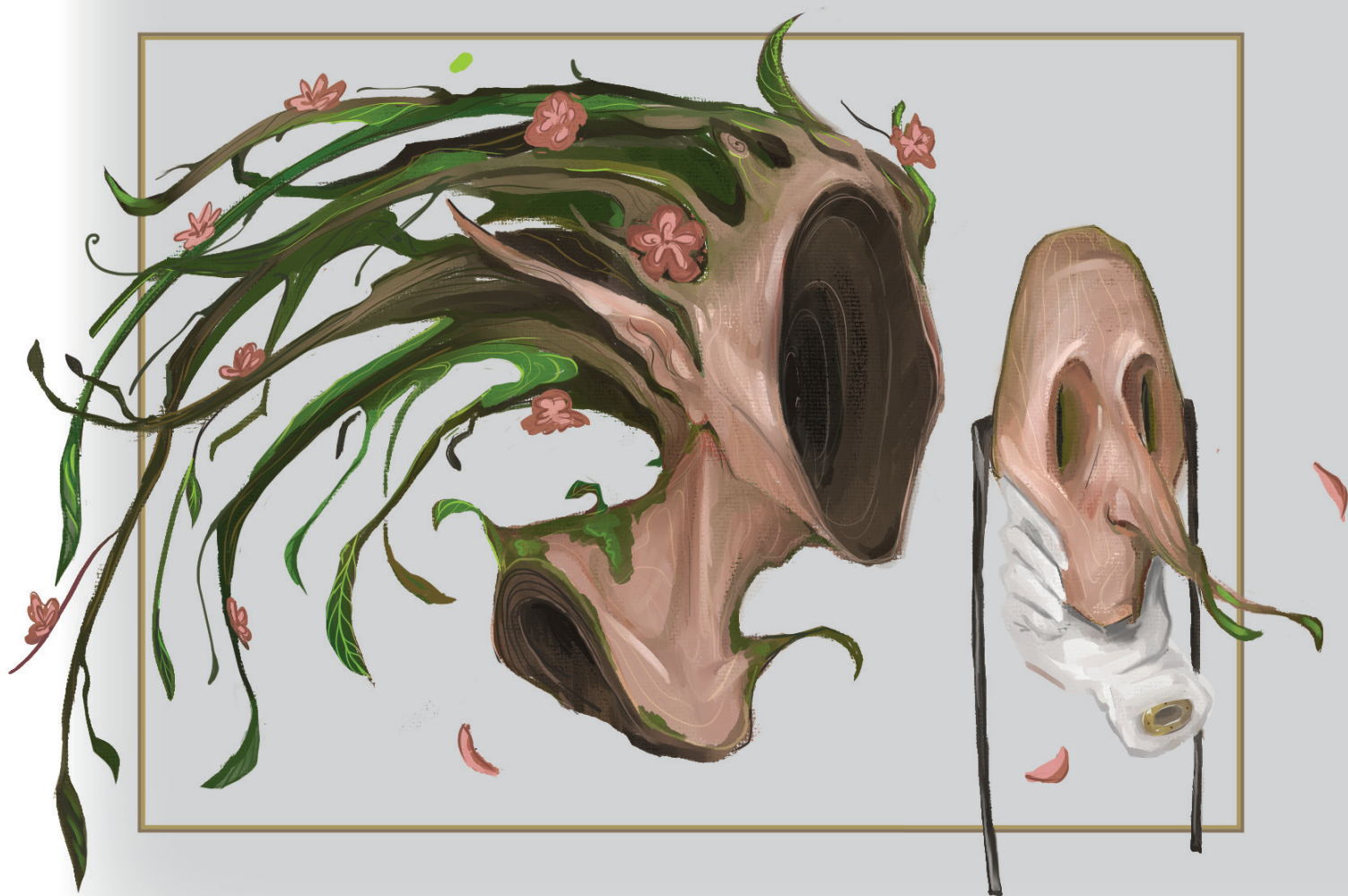
Only momentarily.
I feel the world again.
I surface from the drowning.
I gasp.
I toss.

But the next wave hastily approaches.

There is vengeance in their return, like a scold for breathing.

Deep breaths feed the panic, I savour the few free breaths.
If only for a moment.

endar



ngerred

INNATE / CONSTRUCT
by Journey Bardati



Chance Encounters: Collage Seven
by Kathleen Taylor

The Landlord
by Angela Leuck

You knock on our door after midnight. The tenant on the second floor has water dripping through his ceiling and you think it's likely our hot water tank has sprung a leak. You check and confirm that your suspicion is correct.

You shut off the water and open the pressure release valve. Now we sit, shoulder to shoulder, on the utility room floor as water from the tank trickles into the bucket at your feet. My husband has gone back to bed. You urge me to do the same. You say you'll deal with this alone. Afterall, you've learned the knack of quick naps to get you through your hospital residency. But, no, I insist on keeping you company. We chat. You tell me about how that morning in ER, a man was brought in with so many stab wounds you didn't know where to begin. But you managed to sew him together and he survived.

We lapse into silence. I glance at you and your eyes have fallen shut. I gaze at your face, the way your hair falls over your left brow just so. When I first met you—the time my husband-to-be and I came to look at the apartment—I thought you were just a boy (although it turned out you were only four years younger than me!), slim, shy, but with a smile that could make a person leave a fiancé at the alter. If you had asked, I might have considered it.

After we moved in, my husband and I invited you over for dinner a few times. You were busy with the final year of your medical degree. When you graduated, you celebrated with a trip to France, alone. You said it rained every day you were there.

For someone so gentle and caring, you had a lot of bad luck. My husband always said you were too trusting.

There! I've done it. Referred to you in the past, when I so much want to stay in the present, in this room with you, waiting for the hot water tank to drain. Not yet knowing, that every drop is your life ebbing away.

(Two weeks later you will be found murdered in your apartment. The police will have no leads, but know you let your killer in.)

Sitting here beside you, I want to take your hand in mine, tell you I've loved you since the first day I saw you. I want to ask you to run away with me somewhere—anywhere. I'll insist we'll be happy together, and you'll be alive.

But, instead, I just sit here with you, shoulder to shoulder, waiting for the water tank to empty and thinking, with vexation, that this night will never end.

For Edward Yong Sua Mok (1964-1990) who was one of a string of 14 unsolved gay murders in Montreal between 1989 and 1993.

The Doorman Called Phoenix by Harry W. Brown

In recognition of the 35th anniversary of the École Polytechnique Massacre, December 9th, 1989
Originally published in the Bishop's University Chapter of the Canadian Women's Group

The Doorman Called Phoenix

Where are you going? the Doorman cried.
To look for my daughter, she's there inside
She's chasing her dream
a real future ahead
I really admire her!, I said with pride.

But why search you here?, he did speak again,
regarding his face I could sense some pain.
She told me to come
classes almost are done,
hardly knowing I never would see her again.

But have you not heard, speaking softly to me,
of what has occurred here?, he said wearily.
Not really, said I,
I haven't much time,
could you hasten to call her?, impatient I be.

Dear Sir... as I noticed some tears filled his eyes
...please listen to me. Do not me now despise.
What is it?, I cried
wanting quickly to go
he shuddered; then pointed - a body there lies.

With anguish I knelt next to her unbelieving
surely some joke, someone me is deceiving
She followed her dream
did quite well - harmed no one
I should be rejoicing, not here now bereaving.

Who did it, I screamed, had she hurt anyone?
In foll'wing her dream was there scorn in her tone,
to put someone down
in her run for first place
demeaned someone who in turn put her down?

No, no, cried the Doorman, 'twas nothing like that.
One came off the street having brought from his flat
a rifle equipped
to harm plenty for sure
who fired it at those only women; a fact!

Who was it, I pleaded, a lover now scorned -
a vandal, a thief of whose presence she warned?
Who could it, who would it
now wish her expired?
Who hated her so much to murder now turned?

The Doorman Called Phoenix
2.

The Doorman took pity, and me, in his arms.
There are, Sir, some others who share your alarm.
Whose daughters, young women
like yours, too, are dead
their curse being women at this point in time.

This man, most disturbed did not fire at random
or spray into space with a sense of abandon
he chose out his victims
sought them one by one
charged, tried, and convicted them 'til he was done.

And now they are gone, and with them all their dreams
there's nothing but memories left so it seems
but I who am life
give you hope, hear me out
her life is not wasted, her courage remains.

A challenge to all who are brave and move on;
on over the hurdles that will come in their turn
and must be confronted,
each one to fear not
your daughter one such, by her courage we learn.

that vict'ry will come to those women who press
on up to and over burrs left to distress
to find for themselves
their right place in the sun
their medal of honour that they did their best.

Your daughter's no martyr, her death not her choice
to prove her beliefs were for better or worse.
She just chose a path
she did not see as wrong
but entangled a man who resented her place.

You see, said the Doorman, if one will aspire
for goals that some insecure people declare
to them not belong
have no right to pursue
she must be prepared as a soldier for war.

Your daughter is gone, weep for her, this you must
but take on her dream as your personal trust.
Remember, and challenge
each young woman there
to see in her dream no improbable guest.

The Doorman Called Phoenix

3.

Remember the ardour put into her life
how she felt encouraged to be part of the strife
and gave it her all
no waste in her effort
in total commitment she prospered, aloof

of all of the negatives binding her gendre.
I saw her, he said, as dynamic, yet tender
You loved her
still love her
encourage all aspirants to her agenda

And then he was gone, and left there in his place
a sign, 'stead of emptiness seen in the space
"Ecole Polytechnique -
it blazed with great pride -
a place for young women to enter the race."

So holding the pride of my life in my arms
and weeping in sorrow because she was gone
I list to his challenge
determined that she
will be a role model for others in turn.

I looked up content that her life will now be
not wasted, but precious to those who feel free
to take their just place
side by side with the best,
because she died reaching for rainbows with glee.

- Harry W. Brown

By Abigail Epstein

"Poor Ophelia,

Divided from herself and her fair judgment,
Without the which we are pictures, or mere beasts."

William Shakespeare, Hamlet, 4.5.81-82

Meraki

(Greek for creating with passion, devotion and creativity, putting your soul and yourself into something)

Since the dawn of time, man has felt the need to communicate
Words have the power to elevate or to abate

When we must atone for the tone of our voices
When we raise our discourse instead of whispering our choices.

When we listen but choose not to hear
The cries of a neighbor living in fear

We express ourselves with our mouths, our eyes and our souls
We sing our own virtues, and their merits extol

When words are not enough to attain our goals
We resort to violence and smile as it unfolds

When we use our arms to displace and not to embrace
When we ignore birthright and exploit birthplace

When our only aim is to dominate the race
When we cross the street or look away, just in case.

If the soul communicates through art
Should we create with a keyboard or with our heart?

When music finds its rhythm
Should it be with an algorithm?

If we replace finesse and due process with progress
Do we allow the programming of art to go unaddressed?

When our soul calls to us to speak out
Do we press 'Enter', and wait for a printout?

Should emotions be shared or fabricated?
Should they be experienced or created?

Sharing your feelings through art is genuine and real
It's a state of being and the way we feel.

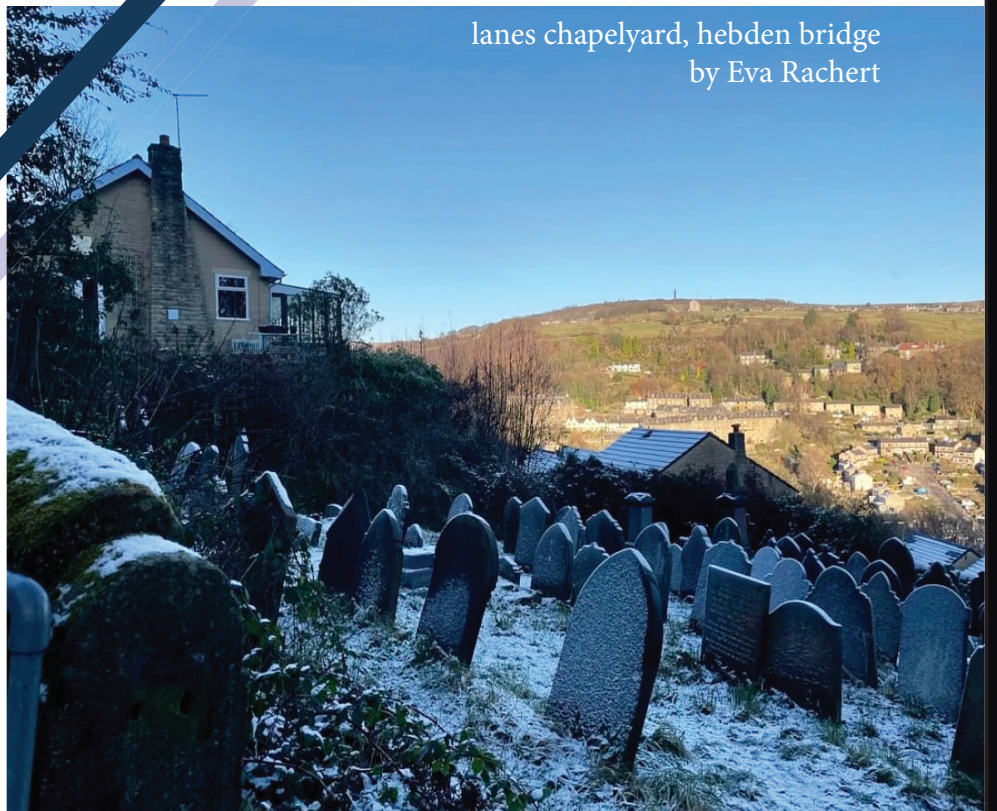
If art is to reach you and make you laugh, sing and cry
Should it be created by the soul or by A.I.?

by Michel Gagné

Iron Lung
by Eva Rachert

Before I steal Canadian Classics from
strangers outside bars
watch spiders climb the telephone poles
and wait for you in the street,
and before I walk home with aching feet
and sore eyes,
before the taste of soot on my teeth
I wake up in a bed I used to think I would
outgrow.
I learned myself from mimicking you —
I am loud when I need to be.
I am dreaming about getting lost.
Let me slide into your skin and wear you,
let me be tall enough to see the tops of
picture frames
and I can check for the accumulated dust
of the last twenty years.
We will never part.
We will have a heart with arteries springing
forth like spider's legs,
creeping through our chest, veins twitch-
ing through our bodies.
Have we not always been interwoven?
That dust has a home here too.

lanes chapelyard, hebden bridge
by Eva Rachert



god made flesh

by Eva Rachert

our house is god made manifest;

I see It in the sets of keys hanging on the hook by the door-
way,

in the twin sheets in the linen chest

in the towels in the laundry.

god is curling up to die in the drywall,

and god is fibreglass in my hands.

god is a cranberry scented candle dripping wax onto your
nightstand.

god has three wicks.

god is a pile of unwashed dinner pans,

It is floating in the scum of the sink.

I make an altar of the kitchen table at night —

spilled noodles and drops of red wine.

we eat by moonlight.

come say grace with me, our hands entwined.

our house is god made manifest

and you are god made flesh.

Growth in Abstract
by Aeryn Angelique Ben Youssef Chappellier
acrylic painting



Aeryn



Chance Encounters: Collage One
by Kathleen Taylor



Dandelion
by Aeryn Angelique Ben Youssef Chappellier
acrylic painting



Houseplants
by Oksana Boisclair

We took them from across the street
And showered them with pretenses of love,
Watered down lies and golden spray paint
Found at the nearest thrift store for a dollar or so.

We watched them bloom, we watched them wither
(It doesn't hurt like life should hurt)
We said goodbye without ceremony,
Plastic bags and no care for origins.

It starts when the sun warms the atmosphere,
And I hope a glance will warm my soul for the summer
But when fall comes, too soon, they fall too -
The cycle of life in a museum.

We trapped their roots in a book to house the divine,
Now we trap them in our backyards, for our own minds.
We keep nature in pots of gold,
Because we do not want to feel the cold.

In the field ten dandelions sigh with relief
Because weeds are not taken as prisoners.
In a cage the bugs can't reach,
The walls drown out the others' screams

Most of them have never felt the rain.
Fed by the same water that gives me life;
Selfishly, I decided our needs are alike.

Midnight Scars
by Carella Keil

"I want to turn your face into poetry," he says.

The raven at the writing desk offers its quill. Sixteen staples to the back of the head and a paper-weight for your heart.

The page is blank until you begin reading it. The pitcher empty until you turn it upside-down.

Pour me a glass, I want to be filled to the brim with you.

"Can you help me," asks Love, "I've lost Desire." Her blue eyes like wishing-wells you've thrown sparkling coins at beneath the stillborn sun.

The girl with clipped wings, the snake with forked tongue; these are all creatures you expect to meet. But here in the garden are untread paths, barely a foot-print deep.

A girl who prays for one eye to see the past, the other eye to see the future. A boy who longs to hear only a siren's song.

Dip your pen. Spill my ink.

"You can't, because I'm not a poem."

She is born blind to the present, he with a mouth unable to respond to his lover's voice. Between cliffs of shoulder-blades, the waterfall down her back never stops flowing.

Take a sip. Others will.

You might as well have erasers for eyes, if you expect to get out of here intact.

Not that you came in that way.

"It's ok, I'm a poet," he says, and this makes you hate him a little more.

Fishbowl Economics

by Jennifer Harvey

I went to the spa to escape my thoughts
and over a bowl of hot smoked trout with caviar
overlooking the hot tubs,
I looked over potential microloans to fisher people
a world away
who could not escape their situation,
much like their daily catch.

This food chain we create of microloans
to the fisher people only lasts
while there are fish
to seize from the seas,
but winds and tides shift more easily
than we.

Eventually there will be nowhere left to hide,
since we're all on the hook for this common crime,
as the drum beats out the time.

Hawaiian Flowers
by Aeryn Angelique Ben Youssef Chappellier
acrylic painting



Aeryn

Aeryn BenYouss

Human Face in Infrared
by Aeryn Angelique Ben Youssef Chappellier
coloured pencils



Flaming June
by Lucie Casinghino

It is June and everything is on fire
I expect blood, the sudden
Calamitous sound of thunder in the dark
The world is an opulent orange
Which I peel mercilessly in my hands,
Ripping apart the rind.

Like a merry-go-round, I'm all capering and carnival
But what supreme loneliness
Lives in those carousel horses.
Stung by the phantom pain of memory,
I toss out old photos and notebooks
Refusing remembrance, I take a match to my past

I sicken myself with terror
Fear lives in my house, eats my bread
She causes a ruckus, breaks plates
Moves my things, berates my mother
Only death separates dread from the body

The neighbor's chickens scream,
Wander into our yard
We keep the dog inside,
Imagining her tender snout stained red.
I open the window, adrift and awestruck,
And taste ash on my tongue

Where the Last Light Meets the Worn Hands of Winter
by Claudia Colati



Iron Typhoon

by Emerald MacIsaac

Hear my jaw's unholy iron
In the wind sweeps of Orion.
Shambled curses mark the scion
Of the vile iron typhoon.
Striking blows to all that's sacred.
Rusted armour not created
By this husk I've fueled with hatred.
Broken form, but soul immune.
Tenacious spirit of the East!
Born-blown from I, a rust-bound beast,
My rotted eyes desire feast
To rend my lusterless cocoon.
Curse the rasp, cathartic creakings,
And my perforated leakings!
I must rush a flurry, weeping
For a thunderous monsoon.
Damn the night! And morrow scornful!
Wicked morning unremorseful!
Why tonight must I be mournful
for ambitions lost forenoon?
I may be weak, alone, withdrawn
In the fleshless shell of dawn.
I'm a disabled paragon:
The broken winds of the typhoon.

Winestain
by Jillian French

My mother is a poet
of hidden mysteries
She sits below the willow
to write of intertwining roots
Which cage the bones of rotting souls
Emitting ghoulish glow
See their decrepit hands outstretched
with offerings of wrinkled leaves,
laden with the heavy cling of bitter voices, sultry winds, guttural
pleas
to wither quickly.

I watch her sometimes when she writes
The ink seeps into her skin and lies
in carved dark valleys beneath her eyes.
Where red veins knit rivers in the whites,
I can tell the wine has gone to her head,
and stained her fingers: watch them twitch
when paper sticks to blushing fingertips.

When I rest under the willow,
I try to picture it as she does.
But my eyes are young,
And their gaze is slow
so I sit
Inebriated in the shallow wisdom
Of warm sunlight and easy wit,
and write of wilted silken willows,
river beds with soft rock pillows

My fingers reach for wine and bread
The wine has stained my smile red

Chrom
by Abigail Epstein



twilight by Andrew Hutchins

SCI-FI VISION IN HARSH MOONLIGHT

by Steve Luxton

I

My blanched hand's back seems
nobbed by knolls and
dug by dark valleys
—a phosphoring lava field cooling
on an unstable, fire-centered planet.

II

I fashion a fist.
A second scene:
Folded in a row and gripped,
my fingers are the torsos
of sweating space thralls,
their knuckle down backs
gleaming as they oar
a Star-galley towards
Andromeda's looming whip-coil.

III

Flipping my hand over to show my palm:
A further eerie vision....
A wrinkled waste
scored by routes
of traders and fugitives
to some alien Hole-in-the-Wall
or off-world Timbuctoo,
past bandits like Saharan Taureg
ominously tattooed,
levying silver specie
(anaerobic blue).

IV

My hand waves back and forth
to dispel such outlandishness.
I stare hard at the moon.
But from my eye's corner I see
my fingers tracing weird
bright motion trails.
—Deep magma

THE NIGHT HAS TEETH

by Samiya Bouziane Merceron

The room is white hot. The warmth of the heaters bounces against the eggshell-coloured walls. She licks her lips, holds back from chewing the flaked skin off, and shifts her feet to the beat of the monitors. The string of the cheap balloon gripped in her numb, sweaty palms nearly slips. It's one of those generic yellow ones with the cheesy smile and the poorly dotted eyes. Its grin is crooked no matter the angle, leering at Alma and her silent baby with a smile stretched by overblown plastic, eyes crinkled and peeling at the corners.

Mack's voice cracks when she speaks. "Is she alright?"

Alma shifts, gently jerking a crick in her neck like the sound of Mack's voice was enough to get it to ache again. Her forehead is sweaty, brown hair sticking to her temple in beautiful waves. She used to style it that way, back in high school. The gel smelled like maraschino cherries. The room smells like citrus cleaning solution and antiseptic, and Mack's shoes squeak when she takes a hesitant step toward the hospital bed, just like they would in those sticky school hallways.

"She's fine," Alma responds dryly. Mack doesn't think to offer her more water. Instead, she looks out the frosty window, to the thick flurries of snow and gray sky. The clouds are plump and wide; their entrails look like elderly hands reaching out for the buildings. Alma shifts again, clutching her baby closer to her breast, its face tucked into the crook of her body.

"She's six whole pounds." Alma looks at Mack for the first time. "Six," she says again, like the number has already turned into a ghost.

Her eyes are red but still beautiful, the doe brown of her iris so dark that it pools into her pupils. Mack doesn't try to step forward again, but she spots Alma's smudged eyeliner and the veins underneath her eyes. They are thin and pulsing, matching the protruding periwinkle blue on the baby's naked forehead. The eye contact burns differently than the radiators. Alma's pupils are pieces of coal burning at the bottom of a fire pit. Mack feels the soot of her gaze coat her from head to toe, ashening her with guilt. She looks away.

There's nowhere for her to tie this damn balloon. Everything seems too important to tamper with. Mack imagines herself tying the string to the wrong tube or wire, cutting off some vital resource from reaching the person she's supposed to love the most. The monitors would scream and spike and Mack would stand there with her hands empty.

"That's a good weight." She decides on tying the string to her belt hoop. Pausing to nudge it away, keeping it from grazing her shoulder.

Alma rolls her eyes, the first smooth movement Mack has seen her make all afternoon. Every other action seems to break disjointedly, cut short by the foreign weight planted on her sternum. Mack hears a wet little babble over the whirring of all the machinery. The baby wiggles helplessly in the blanket she's swaddled in. The charcoal gray fabric is speckled in white polka dots. If it cried the stains would be obvious. Alma would turn it around and the angry wet splotches would ruin the playful pattern of its short existence.

"Like you care," Alma sneered.

Mack remembers the five pound flour baby Alma was forced to take care of for a week in her eighth grade class. Part of the grading criteria was buying clothes for it to wear, attaching cotton stuffed pantyhose to its sides for arms, and making sure it had a pacifier. Despite the preening, the main idea was keeping the thing "alive". Alma carried it on her hip when she walked the halls, bounced it on her

knees during lunch to make the boys around her laugh, and when she needed someone to “babysit”, Mack was the only ninth grader who would sit alone during free period with a dressed-up bag of flour by her side.

On the last day of the project, the bell rang and Alma was one of the students to climb up three flights of stairs and push the flour babies over the railing. The weight of their falls almost made them feel alive. The impact echoed up and through the corridors. Mack was standing on the first floor with her head tilted up to watch the show. Nelson Malroy, a boy from her geometry class, was hidden under the arch of the stairs with his bright red backpack hung over his stomach. She saw him swallow air, Adam's apple bobbing like a toad's, before squealing out “*Mama!*”. The noise wormed out of his gut, and so did his whiny laugh.

“Why would—” Her mouth hangs open, brows creased into high arches. She almost pushes herself off the bed, briefly forgetting about the little head resting on her collarbone. Her hands hover around the soft, new skin, like the slightest touch would burn if she dared to get too close. Alma's shoulders meld back into the pillows and sheets, urgently shuffling the blanket back up to her shoulders. She never settles her hands on the newborn, but her palms and fingertips linger, tracing circles around the baby's ears, tiny torso, and all the way back up to the pruned nape.

“I don't even know why you're here,” Alma settles. She hangs her head gently onto the baby's crown, taking a deep breath in before smiling at its invisible face. Her loose hair dangles over the baby's head. Mack wonders if she gave birth that way, with it perfectly combed and straightened. It falls like a curtain.

“Did your roommate kick you out? Were you fired? Or did you just get *bored*?”

“You just had a delivery,” Mack says desperately, redundantly. The balloon bumps the back of her head, its banana-yellow face smacking right into her. She whacks it, quickly untying the string with her clammy fingers and letting it float up to the short ceiling. Right back to how she found it.

“You needed me,” she says. The words feel foreign on her tongue, like her teeth are too large to let them out. It takes three steps to get to the lip of the bed. The balloon floats above her languidly, like a distorted halo. The static around it glows and electrifies the air, itching at Mack's skin. The cold sheets underneath her palms briefly soothe the humming.

“You can't deal with this alone.”

Alma's lips are downturned and warbling at the corners. Her lashes are clumped together by old mascara; it makes her pupils look like a spider's abdomen.

“*You're* the one who left *me*,” she hisses.

Mack expects a hard punch to her shoulder, but Alma's hands are stuck in a cradle, bringing the baby even further into her chest. She tilts it away from the room and the world, smothering it. The baby stirs, writhing in its dotted swaddle. Mack freezes, doesn't breathe until it stops.

“Hold her,” Alma demands wetly. Her eyes scuttle around the room.

“What?”

“I want you to prove it to me. If you really cared—if you really came back to help me—you'd be able to.”

Dirty tears stream down Alma's face, polluted by her concealer and foundation. The drying streaks leave trails behind them. She looks younger this way, her age closer to the one Mack remembers taking care of. Salty drops gather at Alma's chin and Mack wills for the hospital walls to disappear. Her hands dig into the scratchy bedding, wishing she could grip onto the memory of blowing gentle air onto her sister's bloody knee after they both fell off their bikes with the same force.

"Fine," Mack replies. "Fine—yes." She'll hold the damn baby.

Alma sniffles, struggles to catch her breath, yet her voice is steadier than Mack expects it to be. "Go wash your hands."

The bathroom is small and the lightbulb is dim. Mack clutches onto the curve of the sink until the cold porcelain is too painful to keep pressed into her skin. The water trickles out of the faucet frigid and without much pressure. She tries to practice cradling her arms as she would to hold the baby, but her limbs are crooked and jagged, untethered from her body. She washes her hands twice more before stepping back out.

Alma doesn't look like she should be standing. Peeled out of the bed, her legs tremble under her weight. She passes the floating string of the balloon and shakily meets Mack in the middle of the room. The baby's face is still shielded, but this angle forces Mack to realize just how small the thing really is while it sleeps in her sister's arms. Six pounds. Six whole pounds and Alma is teetering between dropping it or squeezing it too close.

"Hold out your arms," Alma instructs. Her breathing is shallow.

Mack tries to do better than she did in the mirror, resisting the urge to wipe her hands dry by dragging them down her stained jeans. If Alma has any complaints, she doesn't voice them. Her mouth is tied tight at the corners. The newborn is out of her hands in seconds.

The baby's face is the plainest thing Mack's ever seen. There isn't much of a resemblance to her sister. Her tiny features are buffed out by the smell of baby powder. It's almost like Mack's holding a toy doll, the ones kids draw messy, demented faces onto with permanent markers.

"Do you have a name for her?" Mack asks.

"No."

Mack frowns. Something about that felt wrong. Alma had even named the flour baby. She can't remember it clearly now, but it was cute and dainty. A name as soft as this baby's cheek. Without thinking, Mack reaches up to lightly brush the skin with the back of her pointer finger. Her niece flinches, babbles, and then chases the warmth. Mack almost smiles. She looks up to find one on Alma's face despite her wringing hands.

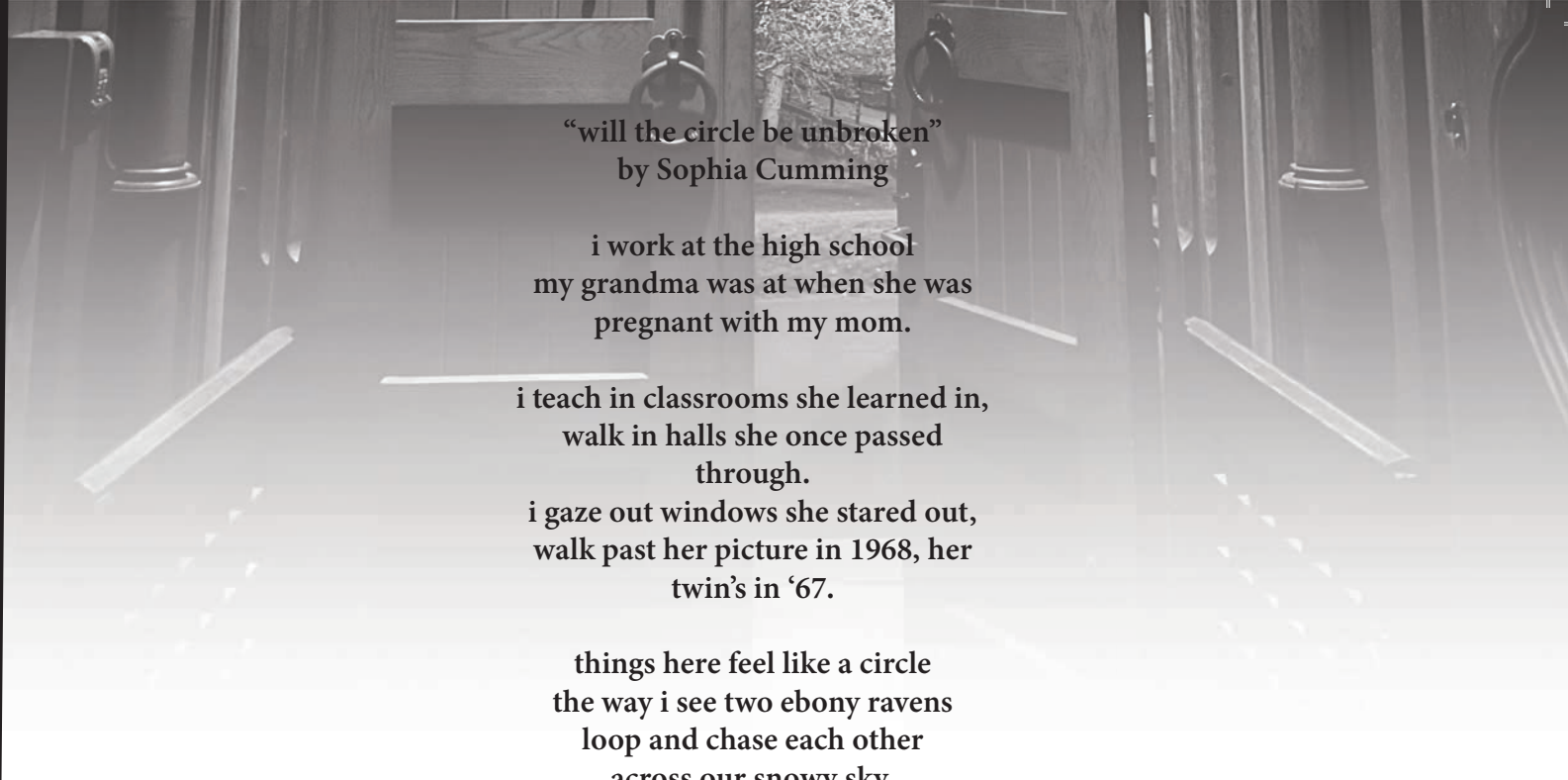
"I'm sorry," Mack blurts. "I couldn't—"

A sharp pain shoots out from the tip of Mack's finger.

She yelps before she can think of dropping down to a whisper. Her shriek crescendos across the room along with the explosive pop of the balloon. It had floated toward the ceiling light, not built to withstand the artificial heat and warmth. A shredded piece of its crooked smile floats down to the pristine floor, next to the shiny drops of blood trickling from Mack's finger.

Alma's face has gone cold, her eyes are iced over by the lighting. It's only then that Mack notices the small bite on her sister's left shoulder. The wound is bruised pink and dusted by dried drool.

The baby is crying. Mack watches it lick her blood into its mouth. The glint of blunt, white teeth peeks out from its pouting lips.



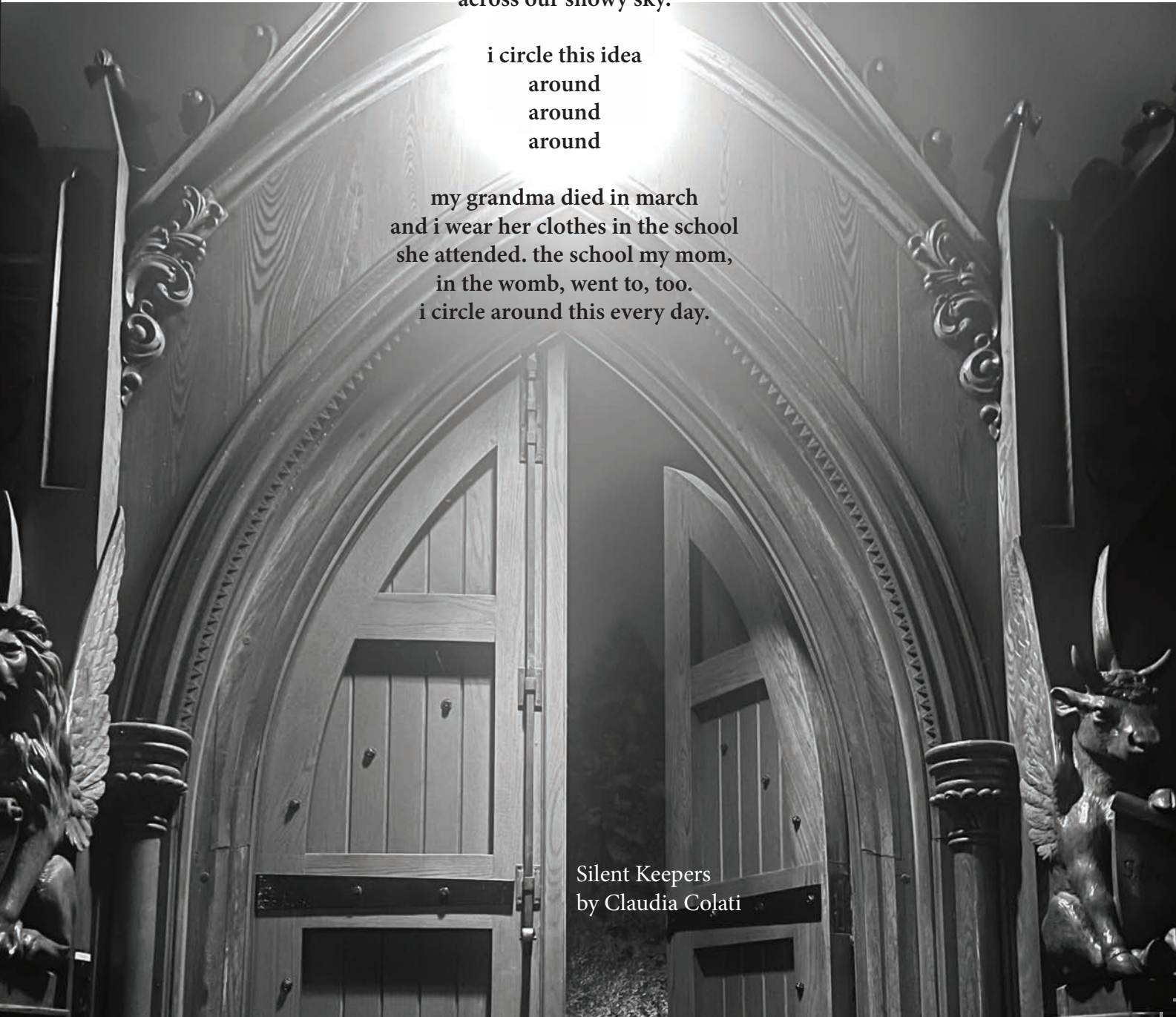
“will the circle be unbroken”
by Sophia Cumming

i work at the high school
my grandma was at when she was
pregnant with my mom.

i teach in classrooms she learned in,
walk in halls she once passed
through.

i gaze out windows she stared out,
walk past her picture in 1968, her
twin’s in ‘67.

things here feel like a circle
the way i see two ebony ravens
loop and chase each other
across our snowy sky.



i circle this idea
around
around
around

my grandma died in march
and i wear her clothes in the school
she attended. the school my mom,
in the womb, went to, too.
i circle around this every day.

Silent Keepers
by Claudia Colati


A photograph of a person standing in a dark, red-lit environment. The person is wearing a dark, textured jacket and is looking down. The background is dark with vertical red light streaks. The overall mood is mysterious and dramatic.

Photo
by Jolène Lessard

What Holds You Here

by Sally Cunningham

A word of advice:

Tethers don't hold if they're spun from spider legs

Or if they're wrapped around someone else.

Climbing limb over limb, skin stretching under heels, elastic.

People do not make good tethers.

Imagine what you would know if you knew nothing at all.

And remember the block letters in pink Expo, coated in dust

And how they'd feel when you brushed them off?

Soft under leather-caked fingertips, saddle soap grime

Remember the tether, then? A rubber rein,

Elastic, pounds of pressure, even, taut to teeth.

Remember the other rope, less tangible but no less sure,

Sewn into a net, a tapestry, a blanket over the back of the couch

In the living room that you grew up in.

Second impressions were easier then; all you had to do

Was be brave.

Remember the tether, a brown leather dog-chewed belt,

A hand-me-down and remember

How the edges felt gripping into your palm

Before you knew what you didn't know

Think of how it was going to be strong enough,

The wish—*I want that*—had to be strong enough.

Eyes on the road,

The worst news is not that you are you.

The End of Atlantis **by Lucie Casinghino**

I imagine the women of Atlantis
About to meet their watery end
Still laughing, having brunch
Some of them squinting in the sunlight
Exiting movie theaters, having sex
With each other, with their men

Those women, with their empires, insolence, and families
Who were subject to kings and conquest
And went under with the rest of their people
Becoming a faceless horde,
Plato's imaginary playthings

Did they know they were doomed?
I go to the forest and picture it underwater
Mosquitoes and gnats replaced with bountiful fish
Carp and bass, pike and perch

Stuck still in limp horror
I know the statistics, the facts and figures of injustice
I know what we are doing overseas,
To children, to men and women,
To cultures and whole nations
I have seen the photos. I have read the op-eds.
I have swallowed down
The words of my politicians, my representatives.

Maybe the Atlantian women played ultimate Frisbee
Or golfed on the weekends.
Impious women, painting their nails
Laughing and chatting on the subway
As their nation sent out drones, killed thousands
They slept fitfully
Then sheltered in basements,
Waiting for the earthquakes to pass

What did they dream of?
I think of them wearing togas or some other Grecian get up
And ache for something larger than my body
But nothing is unnameable here, not my desire,
Not the end of empire

Silverstrand
by Luke Munro







STORIES FROM ITALY

by Kat Mulligan

I fall back into my pity, and the leaves fall from the trees
and reestablish themselves in spring sweat
to tell me it is another year of declaring offhand
that I have never been in love—like a rebuttal
to the stories he shares from Italy. A defense
against his assumption that he could try it on me.
You can appropriate images from anyone
and not be in love, I want to say. We are both fine poets.
Once, an Italian kissed me in a church on the Keizersgracht—
we both have our gut-wrenching verse, our Italy,
though what he had is an eight-year head start.
I want him to tell me the difference between all the others
and the one he thought about this morning, five years later,
and between them and me, to whom he recommends
Mendelssohn concertos and spends all night inhaling.
And could he write me his psalms of forgiveness
as I pin our laundry to the clothesline?
He has an aptitude for hands, for stone fruit, for observation.
And will I remember him longer than this week?
Another year will fester in the boughs, and he—
brunette, depraved—is not unlike the rest
I have wasted autumns pleading with.
And if I, despite this, could not manage to love them either,
then what should Italy mean to me?
We are both fine poets.

This is Derry Girls Propaganda
by Luke Munro

Promenade of the Poet
by Lucie Casinghino

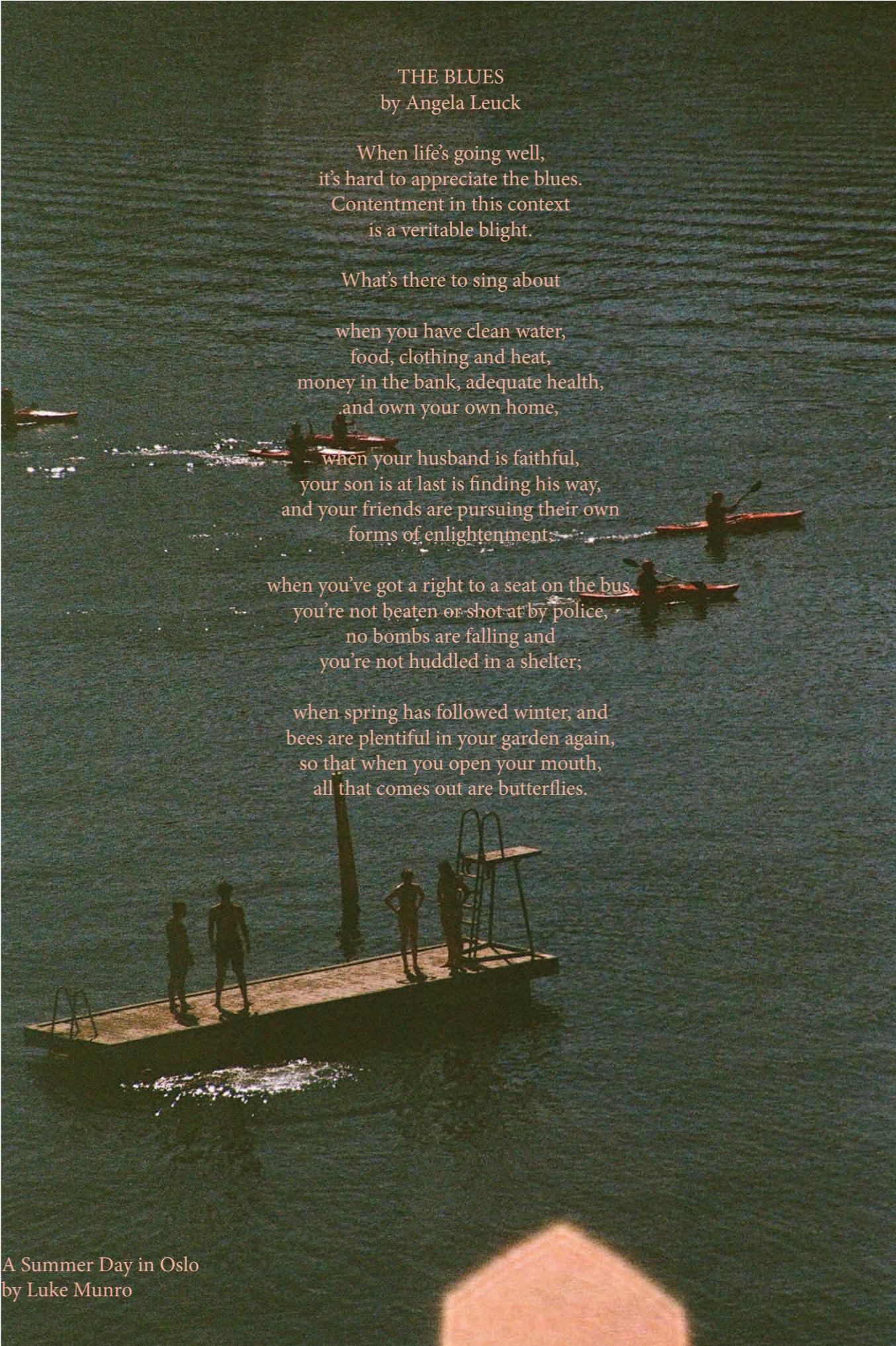
How do I break the bad news, tell the bees
There is no real me, just this husk
Whispering into the buzzing hive,
All honeyed and heavy with grief
With my lips sticky from syrup

A litany of empty promises follow me through the streets
Pollen floats through the air
Like icing sugar sifted through a sieve
The cacophony of bird song makes me tremble
I maneuver around daily violences,
The knife steady against my throat

What to do in this apocalypse of distance and feeling?
I become a mausoleum
For the clean and happy things of the past
Absorbent as an old sponge and just as sad

The flurry of grammar and form overwhelms me
Snowblind in summer, I stumble through structure
O sentences, O syntax,
How I search for your clarity

As a flock of birds rises into the air,
I open the front door



THE BLUES
by Angela Leuck

When life's going well,
it's hard to appreciate the blues.
Contentment in this context
is a veritable blight.

What's there to sing about
when you have clean water,
food, clothing and heat,
money in the bank, adequate health,
and own your own home,
when your husband is faithful,
your son is at last finding his way,
and your friends are pursuing their own
forms of enlightenment;

when you've got a right to a seat on the bus,
you're not beaten or shot at by police,
no bombs are falling and
you're not huddled in a shelter;

when spring has followed winter, and
bees are plentiful in your garden again,
so that when you open your mouth,
all that comes out are butterflies.

A Summer Day in Oslo
by Luke Munro

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Editor Biographies

Eva Rachert is a fourth-year student with an honours in English literature and a minor in politics. Born and raised in Victoria, British Columbia, she is passionate about the natural world, and values art as a method of communication and reclamation. She is immensely grateful to have been chosen as an editor for the 132nd edition of *The Mitre*, and is honoured to have worked alongside her co-editor and such incredible writers and artists.

Abigail Epstein is in her second year studying liberal arts and English literature. A lover of aesthetics and novelty, she can be found frequenting new environments that challenge her notion of direction. She is appreciative of this opportunity to create in collaboration, and gives her sincerest gratitude to her co-editor, contributors, and community.

