

people – issue four



Editor's Note

This is our first themed issue, inspired by an Ontario Artist, Elyse Rodgers. It's no secret that character-driven writing is some of the most powerful because of the intense connection it establishes between the reader and the work. Photographs and paintings of people have captured the world's attention many times over for much the same reason. There's something compelling about seeing another person and realizing your common humanity, which is what some of the best art forces you to do. We feel Elyse's work in portraiture illustrates this, and she has been gracious enough to send us a short introduction to her work, which we're more than happy to share with you:

“For as long as I can remember I have been drawing, anything I see around me, whatever I like. It took me longer to capture the human face and it became my goal. Capturing likeness in portrait drawings comes later in the artistic process and it has consumed my artistic intent. I love the complexities of the human face, the shapes, the planes, the oddities.

“When it came to deciding what subject matter I would focus my body of work around in university, I decided that it would be the portrait. I needed to keep drawing the face in order to master it, however, I still believe I have long way to go. When it came to concept, I thought that I would give the attention to people I knew, the people who were part of my day to day

life. I ended up titling their portraits according to my relationship with them. I realized that what I was doing was what artists have been doing for thousands of years, representing themselves through their work. I was, in a manner, drawing a self portrait. Although I liked this idea, I thought I would challenge myself as I continued to focus on the portrait concept and I decided that it takes a lot for an artist to remove themselves from their work.

“I decided I would take a different role as an artist; I would take the time to delve into the relationships of others by drawing the portraits of people I had never met or didn't know very well. Due to time restraints I worked from photography and took the initiative to ask people for photographs of loved ones. I often wish I could have worked from life, set up sittings with these individuals, but what I found was that many people wanted portraits of late relatives and this added another perspective: the chance to know people that I would never meet. The plan was to suggest that I had a relationship with these individuals by attention to detail and the likeness I captured in my drawings. It worked. When they were displayed viewers automatically assumed that I knew the subjects personally.

“The scale of the drawings also contributed to my personal interaction. The portraits were done in small scale, four by five inches and two by three inches. I researched the history

of portrait miniature and by taking a tradition of personal relationship of owner to object and turning it to public attention I suggested the importance of these “ordinary” people. The scale gave these works a sense of intimacy and forced the viewer into close interaction allowing even the viewer to establish a relationship with the drawings. After I finished my term, what I believed would be entirely devoid of my own interaction became my personal joy. I found that I had established a relationship, maybe to my portraits, but I felt it was a relationship to these people. I recently posted the photos of my work to show the contributors and today I received an email: “I just wanted to tell you how well done the portrait of my brother was, even though you've never met him, you really seemed to capture his personality somehow in the portrait. So thank you!!” When I drew these people I felt connected to them. I felt like I knew them for years and still I look at my little portrait-objects mounted on glass and I love them. I know I will probably sell them to the people I “drew them for” but I have grown attached as I desire to know these people and keep this affiliation to them. However, I know I must give my art back to the public.

“When I was young, my goals were simple, I had two. The first was to go to every place and the second was to meet everyone. I realized these were impossible very quickly. However, I still have this strong will to meet as many people

or at least “see” as many people as I can. When I say “see” I mean to visualize them, to notice them and to acknowledge their presence, power and effect on this earth. As an artist or observer, I feel as though I have a task to portray the power of human presence.”

-Elyse Rodgers

We hope you're as delighted with the variety and insight shown in the works that make up our “People” issue as we are. Enjoy!

Editorial Staff
The Writer's Block

Poetry

Old Levi
Napkin Stains
A Series of Post-Scripts Taken At Random
Visiting Shannon
Visiting Mary
Lives
10 year drama queen tripping on full scale anxiety attack
A Matter of Love
Adam and Eve
Bathroom Foliage
First Time
Blood Mountain
Let Go
Water
Equilibrium
Writer's Block

Prose

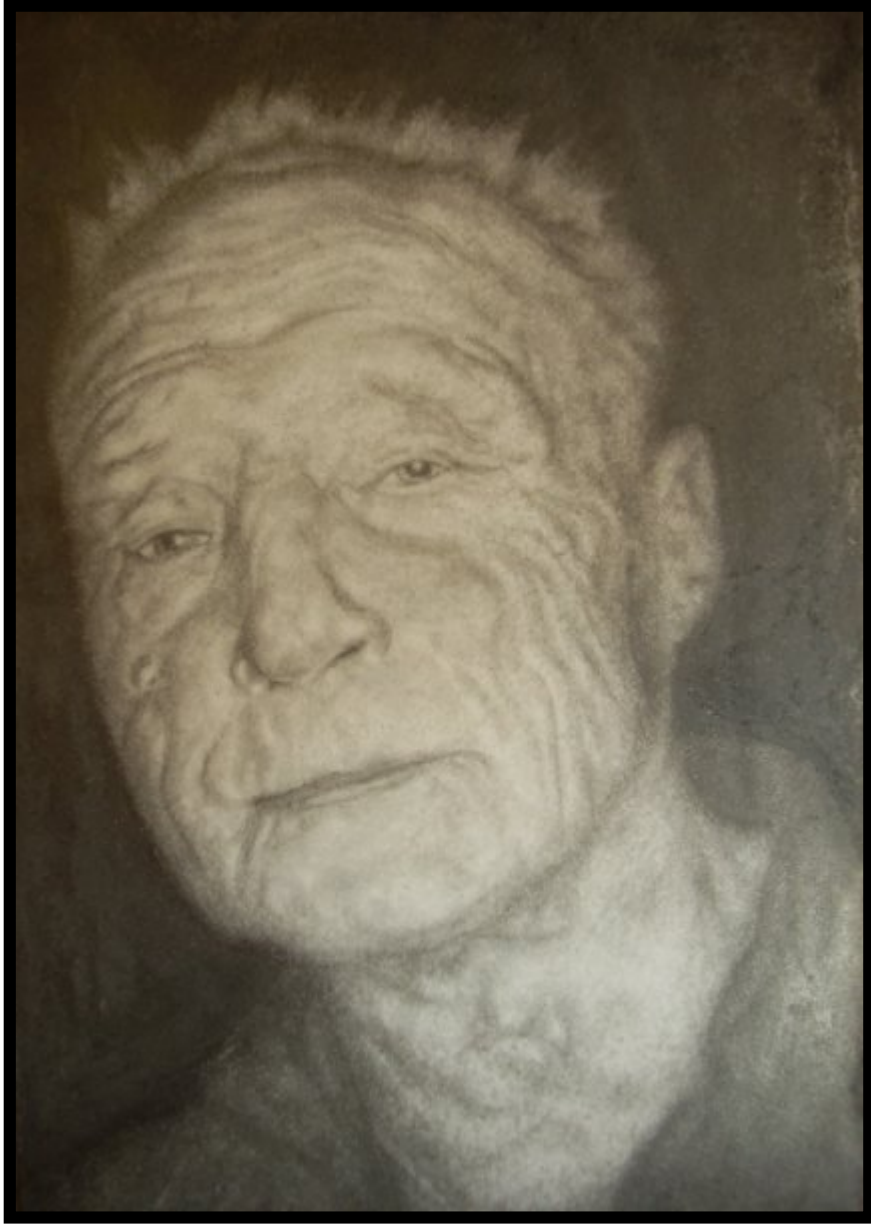
There is Meaning in Meaninglessness
Nostalgic
Wasted Time
Nigger Toes
The Color of Stones
The Gardener

Artwork/Photography

Cover Photograph by Natalia Kochan
“Their People” - A series of portraits by Elyse Rodgers

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The Writer's Block including, but not limited to,
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“For Krystal”



“For Amberlee”



Old Levi

Jeff J. Dutko

Somewhere in a corner
and now only in the corner of your mind
but, unlike the lost area in your cortex
through the palpable atlas of our history
we can access the exact coordinates
of the railcar that moves from moribund to monoxide
where Levi became “Old” Levi
to distinguish him from his middle aged son
also on this train along with all the other Jews
from the Lodz ghetto

In the bitter and starving January cold
“Old” Levi, whose bowels burned in disbelief
squats in the corner
as the malkin population turns
in an effort of grace and respect
so tightly packed they have trouble
even moving their shoulders
but do not struggle at all to hear
“Old” Levi’s voice yelling out
“Don’t look away, turn around and face me.
Don’t ever look away from this corner.”

Lives

Chloe Burns

The old woman
with a wooden cane
and long black braided hair
used to totter around the village,
sprinkling seeds around,
and we used to whisper
that she was crazy.

And then
there was hardly anyone
at her funeral-
I know we didn’t go,
because;

the flowers didn’t bloom

until after she died.

There Is Meaning in Meaninglessness

J. J. Steinfeld

The day before Uncle Micah was never seen again by our family, he was at our house for Sunday dinner. He didn't eat much, but drank robustly as usual, three glasses of wine and two of whiskey, by my nine-year-old boy count. My mother, his oldest sister, claimed she recalled the first time Uncle Micah took a drink.

“We were shooting baskets in the schoolyard and I'd just made three in a row, when Micah ran up to me with an empty beer bottle and said this tasted bitter as pee.” My uncle denied the story, claiming he didn't have his first drink until his high-school prom, the night he was certain he got his girlfriend pregnant. My mother claimed he didn't have a date for his prom and they argued over that during dessert.

My mother went on to say she had made ten free throws in a row that afternoon, more than any of the boys in the schoolyard that day or any other afternoon anyone could remember, smiling gently and warmly in reminiscence. My mother, I heard people say on several occasions, had a gentle smile, but Uncle Micah could bring out the worst in her. Uncle Micah claimed he could dunk, but my mother called him a liar and threatened to slap him as if he had said something really awful. That argument was even more heated than the previous one.

“There is meaning in meaningless,” Uncle Micah said in the middle of the arguing, laughing wildly after uttering this statement, the last words I ever heard from him. At least spoken. I was sent to bed, promised I could stay up later the next day, and told that grown-ups sometimes need to deal with adult questions in private.

Thirty years later, almost to the day, I received a large padded envelope, with my uncle's name and a scrawled address I couldn't make out as the return address. I could tell from the stamp that the package had been sent from Norway, of all places.

“Tell your mother, if she's still alive, and I hope she is, that I am fine. I haven't had a drink in thirty years, almost to the day,” he wrote in the enclosed letter, printed but still not all that easy to make out. “And I'm left-handed now. A terrible accident a month after I left the country. But my life has been good, except for the loss of the fingers on right hand.”

My mother, I had no way to tell him, had died a few years ago. Or that she had lost her ring finger in an accident in the kitchen the night after he had left. I kept thinking how horribly strange that a brother and sister had lost six fingers between them.

“I married not long after moving here and have a daughter, who, amazingly, looks much like your mother. Of course, I mean, the way I remember your mother, when we were younger. I am writing now because my daughter will be visiting Canada soon and is determined to

find my family, that is, your family. I attempted to discourage her, not seeing any meaning in that, but as I like to say, ‘There is meaning in meaninglessness.’ When she shows up on your doorstep, I warn you, don’t believe her if she says I was a mercenary. I have lived a quiet, reflective life since leaving. Almost monastic, actually. Along with working in building maintenance, I tried my hand at writing. Oh, yes, she may also claim that I had been in the French Foreign Legion, which is not true. I swear on everything that is sacred, and on all the lovely memories I have of our family, I was never a mercenary, never in the Foreign Legion, never even touched a weapon of any description. My daughter, on the other hand, married a man I strongly disapproved of, who was convicted many years ago of a despicable crime and was released from prison only a week ago. It pains me to admit it, but my daughter, my dear only child, has never been what could be called well-adjusted or stable. Last time she was over my house, we had a horrible argument over her husband’s mental make-up. I pondered out loud if he was a psychopath or a sociopath, and my daughter hurled a kitchen knife at me, missing my arm by a hair. Then she left the house, after showing me her plane ticket to Canada.”

“That’s not much of a filling in of three decades, I do admit, but until recently I thought I would not ever be contacting any family members. I remember you clearly and, I should add, you were my favourite nephew. And I

don’t think it hurts to say, even after thirty years, are still my favourite nephew, in memory certainly, and memory is our most precious possession, isn’t it? Ask anyone whose memory starts to fail or betray them.”

I still hadn’t opened the thinly wrapped package within the large padded envelope yet, so taken was I by Uncle Micah’s letter. I could tell it was a thick book of some sort. Then I ripped off the wrapping and saw the book’s cover: *Confessions of a Fingerless Mercenary*, written by an author with an unusual name I did not recognize or could even pronounce.

Amazingly, after I finished reading that book, part of which was set in Canada and the rest all over the world, I heard a knock at my apartment door. I looked through the peep hole and saw a woman I didn’t recognize but she looked somewhat like my mother. I kept looking through the peep hole and she smiled, the gentlest smile I had ever seen, except for my mother’s. Still, as she continued to knock, louder and louder, I couldn’t bring myself to open the door.

“For Tonya”





“For Meaghan”

A Series of Post-Scripts Taken At Random

Kelsey Blair

From the adoring co-worker:

P.S. Coffee machine broken. Beware of under caffeinated secretaries.

To Martin. She looks down at her hands and curses time. It's a silly thing to do. Time is like fate, which is like the smell of huckleberry pie in a small kitchen: even in its most present moments, it's impossible to trace. She writes about picking up groceries, knitting, and Coronation Street. When she's finished, she seals the envelope with a sticky tongue and places the letter in a pile with all the others she's written since he died.

P.S. I still miss you.

From the passive aggressive roommate:

P.S. A friendly reminder: dishes should not be left on drying rack for more than twenty four hours, unless there is a medical or family emergency.

From the aggressive roommate:

P.S. BUGGER. OFF.

From Gregory. Most divorces end in paperwork; Mark's

parent's has ended in boxes. Despite the fact Mark is an adult, he finds their separation, like a cooked carrot, hard to swallow. When he finds the letter, wrapped in a simple handkerchief, he wants to run and show them. Instead, he reads the sentence over and over. Not all his memories have to be re-adjusted after all.

P.S. I love you.

From the boy to his imaginary friend, Lawrence the Frog:

P.S Don't forget about tea this afternoon.

From Samantha- who has just been left for a younger woman. The letters on the page crawl, as though the pen was really a tube, plugged into one of her veins. The rage is palpable. Where there is anger, there is vulnerability. She hates that she is so angry.

P.S. I have nothing left to say, but I wasn't ready to stop writing yet. I wasn't ready to stop writing you yet.

Nostalgic

Ariana Potichnyj

He looked down at his shoes; the wind stung the tips of his ears with its frigidity. It was late October, almost Halloween – her favourite time of the year. He remembered last year, how she pulled on her homemade cardboard plane and threw snakes over her shoulders. ‘Get it?’ she kissed his cheek, ‘I’m Snakes on a Plane! Get it? Get it?’

Of course she was Snakes on a Plane. Only she could have come up with something that ridiculously funny. He had surprised her that year when he walked out in his blue-painted cardboard box, making strange vvorping noises. ‘I’m the TARDIS!’ he laughed into their kiss.

“I love you,” she mumbled against his lips, being careful that she didn’t rip either costume.
He brushed her hair back, leaving a soft kiss on her nose. “I love you too.”

He was glad there was a bench nearby; he could sit and work on the thesis in the outdoors. He found outside to be strangely comforting. They had gone camping once, just a few hours out of town. He took his old sleeping bag from his teen years, the one covered in stitches and

patches, and they slept outside that night. He remembered kissing her hair as she pointed up at the sky.

“That star,” she pointed up at the dullest star in the sky. “That star blows.”

He laughed, kissing her temple. “Why’s that?”
“It’s not even trying to look good,” she yawned, curling up closer to him. “It’s like it’s not even trying.”

His pen started to shake on the page as the memory came back to him. Keep going, he thought to himself, just a few more minutes here and you’ll be done. The wind picked up again, prickling the tips of his ears. He knew he should have brought a hat. She had always said she’d knit him one, if she ever had the time, the yarn, the needles or the ability to knit. But it was the thought that counted, he figured.

“It’ll have a big poof on the top of it and you’ll look like a cross between a Scotsman and a ninja. Which, if you ask me, is the best crossbreed I have ever heard. I think there should be more Scottish ninjas, don’t you?”

He pulled the blanket over her shoulders. “You’re drunk. Go to sleep.”

“How am I supposed to sleep knowing that there could be a ninja in here with a fondness for sheep?”

“Are you a sheep?” he laughed, pulling her closer. “Princess?”
Her snoring was quiet and rhythmic and, in no time, he fell asleep too.

He finished scribbling the last line on the end of the page and put the cap on the tip of his pen. The thesis was done. Finally, after two years, he was done. Brushing off his peacoat, he walked towards her and smiled sadly. “Finished,” he whispered, his hand grazing over the cold, grey stone. “Exactly the way you wanted it, Princess.”

She struggled to keep her eyes open. The drowsiness started to cloud her mind. “I’m so sleepy,” she yawned, her hand clutching her side, her warm blood sticking to her fingers.

“You’ll be okay,” he put pressure on the cut. “You’ll be okay,” he kissed her forehead. “You’re doing great,” he smiled sadly. “Just stay awake, Princess,” he whispered quietly. “Stay with me, Princess.”

“But I’m so sleepy,” she yawned again. “I think I’m dying,” she laughed quietly, wincing at the pain in her side. “Fucking cars,” she yawned again. “Stupid fucking metal cars.”

“Yes,” he egged her on. “Stupid fucking cars.”

His shirt was soaked with her blood. She loved that shirt – Periodic Table of Elements. He loved what he did, he loved being a nurse. And she never let him forget just how sweet she thought it was.

“You save lives,” she sighed into her textbook. “I’m busy-“ she smacked the open page of the textbook. “Oh, Princess,” he peeled off his dirty scrubs, tossing them across the room. “You’re doing something just as important.” He walked over and kissed her cheek, laughing when her head slammed into the pages of the book. “Stop that, get your thesis done.”

“This stupid thesis,” she mumbled into the paper. “Fuckin’ stupid thesis.”

“Ugh,” she groaned. “I’m going to die.”

“Stop that,” he scolded her, looking up the street for any sign of help. “Stop that this instant. You know who’s going to die?” he kissed her forehead. “That dumb fuck who drove into us.”

“Yeah,” her eyes went wide as she tried to nod. “Oh God,” her breathing slowed down. “I’m so tired.”

“No,” he pressed harder into her side. “Come on, Princess. Tell me about your thesis,” he asked nervously. “Come on, love. Please.”

Nodding slowly, she took in a deep breath. “It’s about soulmates,” she spoke slowly. “And the idea of there being only sixteen personalities in the world, so there’s no such thing as a ‘soulmate’.” She winced, keeping her eyes shut. They felt heavy and she was only resting her eyes, she was fine. “Except I don’t believe that.”

“No?” he asked, patting her face. “Come on, love, stay with me.”

“No,” she turned her cheek into his hand. “Because I found you. And you’re not like any personality I ever studied.” She opened her eyes hazily and smiled. “You’re

just mine.” She groaned and shut her eyes tight again; he could feel her breathing slowing beneath his touch. “Don’t you sing Jason Mraz at me-“

“I love you,” he choked out, fighting against his tears.

“I love you too,” she lifted her hand shakily, cupping his face. “I love you so much, so impossibly much.”

“I’m going to kill myself,” she sighed, slamming her forehead off the edge of the book.

“Don’t say that,” he kissed the side of her head, holding up a chip for her to eat. “Please, I see enough of that at work.” “Okay, but,” she turned her head and chewed on the chip. “If I ever decide to die before this stupid thesis is done, I bestow the burden upon you. Think of it as a child.”

“Labour of love,” he laughed, resting his head on her shoulder. “But okay. If anything happens, which it won’t, I’ll finish this thesis for you.”

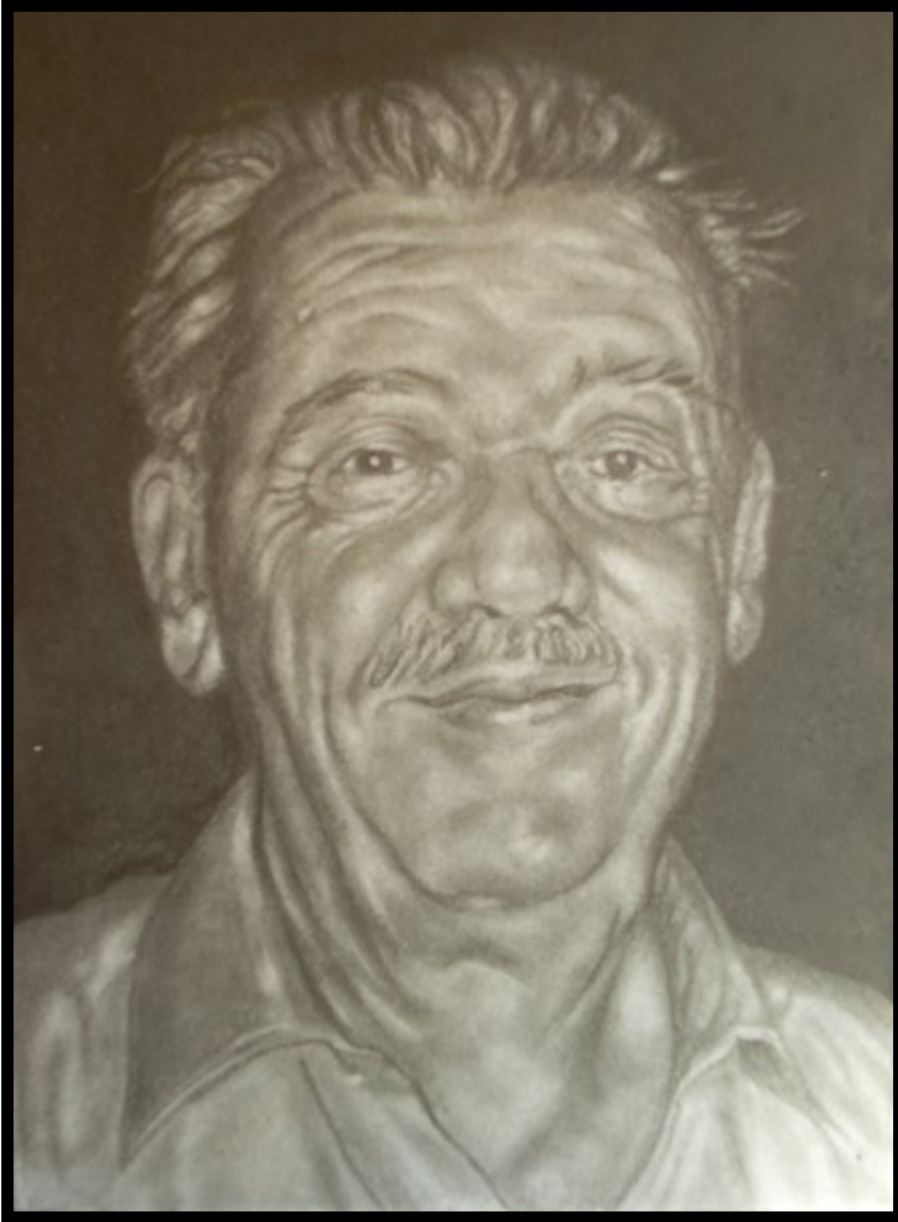
She turned her head, batting her thick eyelashes at him. “Will you finish it for me now?”

“No,” he nudged her nose. “You’re not dead yet.”



“For Joyce”

“For Vanessa”



Visiting Shannon

Sara Lier

She calls her 1-room flat a treehouse because
it's 6 stories above the ground of the city,
hidden in the higher air
from pickpockets and cutthroats.
Sometimes she lets street kids stay there,
looking for an easy sleep,
but she's no Wendy-Lady. Few girls are
these days. This treehouse has empty
cupboards, and the floor is strewn
with litter that never goes out.

Today I went to the woods
at the top of the island, to look
over at the larger woods
on the other shore, longing.
Later when it got too cold, I smoked
inside, staining her grandmother's rug.
Treehouses are rarely comfortable. Lost kids
don't know about housekeeping.
This season is fiendish, and in her home
it is smoky and too hot, with wintry blows

from the windowpanes, stained, rickety
stairs vaulting below, ready to

collapse like a fold-up trap.
This is how cities have always been:
shit in the streets and inside too much
smoke, too hot too cold, full
of runaways who crave real trees.
This is a city of children
and thieves (they all may
be), and Shannon lives over it,

in a 1-room flat where the dishes
are never done, hiding and smoking
away the winter, wary of the ground.
This is how cities have been
since the beginning: I visit.
I write poetry with messy handwriting,
drink liquor brought over from the Indies,
paid for by a boy who has nowhere
to sleep tonight. I will cough
like a thing diseased all through

these hours on the rug with 2 other guests,
sharing 1 blanket, tenement-
style, chests full
of smoke and interrupted dreams, drowsing
through the noises below,
how floor will shudder
like something's stirring in its deeps
that it can't hold, and that's when we know

we are sleeping over plumbing, smoky rooms,
and under those

catacombs, spaces
for trains to move into,
and water mains, gas lines, this maze
of hollow tubes and tombs,
imaginary ground
we could fall right through,
and we are waiting for the day
we'll leave for the larger woods.
It's always been this way
with cities. Somehow only I remember.

Visiting Mary

Sara Lier

Mary washes dishes
while a kitten plays in the sun at her feet.
Last night on the roof, I said: This is not
how my grandfather would celebrate
his life. This is something we do, climb
a broken ladder with whiskey in our pockets
to sit windswept, hearts wheeling, watching
the pin-point Brooklyn stars while ghosts
play in the stairwells below us. This is not
how my Baptist grandfather, who never tasted wine
outside of church, who sang hymns and prayed

for us while we climbed the oldest trees outside,
this is not how he would want us to celebrate.

Maybe it was the whiskey talking,
and maybe that was why
I took my cousin by the hands and spun
around around around,
until we couldn't tell ourselves
from the dim stars spinning over us, the edge
of the roof. Maybe it was the whiskey, how we
were not afraid.

Here is why Mary gets to live
at the beginning of this poem, idyllic
in her apartment with red curtains
and a ladder to the roof: because she took us in
on a mourning night, and we slept in bunches
on her floor, the way we would've once
in our grandfather's living room, breathing
rhythmically until we woke,
then harder, hungover, blushed sunlight
touching us on the cheeks, while she
was up already, washing dishes
with a kitten playing at her feet. Here she is:
she has coffee ready. She is rinsing the cups.
Here we are: waking from a night of climbing and
psalming,
tender, sober, so damn young.

Wasted Time

Jordan Rankin

John Hamil pulls back his dark green sleeve to check his watch. He is flustered and red in the face. He rubs his damp palms along the sides of his sharp-creased pants. The last time he felt this nervous, he was being presented with his first uniform. His thick hand finally turns off his jeep’s ignition. It’s been twenty-five years.

“I see people coming out,” exclaims his wife Jennie. “Shouldn’t we go in?”

She picks a hair off of his burly, rounded shoulder.

“Okay.”

“Are you alright? Do you want a minute?”

“I’m fine.”

He takes off his sunglasses and fumbles them into their case. More and more, he realizes, conversations with Jennie have been going this way: harsh and dismissive, just like conversations with his dad since he left home. He looks down: name tag, brass cufflinks, two gold bars on his sleeve. Jennie’s baby bump is beginning to show. She takes the case from him and places it steadily on the dash.

“Thanks honey,” he manages, leaning over to kiss her on the cheek.

She smiles in return, but he is already glassy-eyed, looking past her out the window. His old neighbourhood. His Dad’s old house is still the last house on this street, the

only paved road in sight.

“Could you read me the schedule again, please?” he asks, leaning his head back and trying to relax.

She reaches into her purse and opens the stiff yellow paper of the crumpled schedule. It had come in the mail just like every other normal envelope, addressed to Captain John Hamil, 260 Ceremonial Avenue, Drumont Air Base, Guelph Ontario. The return address in the top left corner, however, caught his attention: in a small smudge of blue ink were the words “Nova Scotia.” He had expected this, but still— Now that it was finally here he somehow couldn’t manage to open it. Thank god for Jennie. She starts to read:

“At 4:30 pm, the casket is open to the community. Then at 5:00 pm, the room is reserved for the next of kin only. Finally, burial at the community cemetery is at 5:30.”

He looks at the time on his cell phone: 5:02 pm.

“Let’s go,” he says, motioning for her to lead the way out of the Jeep.

His knuckles on the door handle are deathly white, highlighted by little dark lines of scar tissue. Most of them had come from combat training. Most of them.

John looks up at the house and takes a deep breath. 5:03. His watch was a high school graduation present from his Dad. The greenish silver band made his skin itchy and bumpy whenever he wore it, but Jennie had long since given up trying to buy him a new one. Her attempts would simply gather dust on a shelf somewhere beside forgotten

medals and gifts.

His old basketball hoop catches his eye: the old, red painted rim; the bare pavement where the offensive line chalk-marks used to be; the dangling white strings, long since rotten. Dry leaves crumple beneath his feet. The last time he and his dad played hoops, just before his high school graduation, he had played defence while his dad played forward. They never switched positions. John had gotten dominated well into the evening.

Whoosh, went the ball, again and again. John's legs had felt like lead.

“Geez Dad, I'm beat,” he had whined. “C'mon, how about to be continued?”

“No way,” his dad had replied, ripping off his sweaty white T-shirt. “This ain't over until you take the ball from me.”

They had lined up and started over. John had bitten on his Dad's circle manoeuvre and missed, falling to the ground. He had looked up just in time to see his dad make an easy lay-up.

Whoosh.

They had lined up again, this time with John's hand dripping blood from a small, but ugly pavement gash. This time the fatigue had given way to hate.

“If you want something, then take it,” his dad had repeated.

“I can't,” John had replied, through gritted teeth.

Whoosh.

“There's no I can't! Only I won't! If you want the ball, then take it from me! TAKE IT!”

Whoosh.

His Dad had lunged to the right. John had tried to keep his angle. They had pushed for positioning and as his dad had jumped up to shoot, John had lashed out with his fist and punched the top of his dad's shooting hand. Both his Dad's sports watch and the basketball had gone flying into opposite directions. John had scooped up the ball and limped painfully into the house. Neither of them had spoken.

John slowly strides through the same back entrance and finds Jennie already kneeling on the cushion set out to protect your knees from the hard floor. He stops in front of the casket and stops, staring blankly. Jennie takes his hand and gently pulls him down to the floor to join her. He doesn't know what to say. The coffin is much smaller than he expected. Jennie kisses him on the cheek.

“I'll be in the car whenever you're finished,” she tells him.

The rickety screen door slams behind her, and he stands up, rubbing his sore knees absently. Soon he is pacing: back and forth between the coffin and the coffee table. Finally he goes to the coffin and examines the shrivelled cancerous body for some trace of the man he remembers. Nothing. He tries to speak, but his throat has gone dry. He notices his Dad's old watch, black tape slightly more glossy than the armband and the face that it

was bridging. He lifts up his Dad’s right hand: 5:27.

“5:27,” he murmurs out loud. “5:27, 5:27.”

He slowly undoes the watch strap, trying not to disturb the rudimentarily repaired band, and then replaces it with his own. He compares the shiny silver in the coffin with the dull darkness on his own wrist. He takes a deep breath.

“Thanks for the watch.”

Napkin Stains

kj

The stars twink like the celestial zits on the perfect, azure cheek of a young actress sobbing the black & white confetti from her snow globe face into the creases of her grandma's yellowed, brittle, wedding dress.

An attic trip broke her eyes & she spotted the best prop, but now she has made a spectacle of herself & not one camera nearby to expose it. A woman drowning her tears in the waves of grandma's wedding dress in an attic rigged with sentimental photo albums designed to crack soft hearts. She'll wheeze on the dust until the phone rings, & she'll renew her weeping when the message unfolding from a scared sister's voice about wet names on divorce papers lacks a natural ending of any kind at all.

When the hives eke out from the old skin in the cloth
she'll long for her life's old fluff.
& when friends ask her, she'll say she & her sisters are
going through "stuff just stuff."
The stars will look down on her.



“For Adam”



“For Vanessa”

Nigger Toes

Eliza Kelley

God would not dare to suck black red blood... He
would duck his head in shame and call for the
Judgment Day.

~ Jean Toomer, “Seventh Street”

Apples and oranges and grapes and pears diced into little cubes and mixed with real whipped cream and tiny marshmallows. Zucchini bread and brown sugar yams. Brown gravy and mashed potatoes and honey glazed ham. If I stood on the firewood box, I could see into the plates steaming on Memaw’s table. Mama said you could taste the mincemeat pie all the way outside on the back porch. She always brought the same contribution to any gathering, slammed the screen door on her way in, grabbed a big bowl from Memaw’s kitchen cupboard, emptied the cellophane bag of nigger toes into it and set the bowl in the middle of the coffee table so everyone could reach. Ricky was a baby then so he couldn’t crack them open, but he gnawed at the dry black things until his gums bled. Marlyn never went anywhere without her spider monkey, and as soon as Melody spied the bowl she shrieked until Marlyn gave her one, too. That always made Ricky giggle.

Marlyn was what you call quirky. She was a telephone operator and she told everyone Leroy worked

nights at the Fairfax County Jail. Marlyn came home every day for her lunch break and warmed up a can of tomato soup for me and Ricky with a dab of milk and some crunched up saltine crackers stirred in. She didn’t cook much else and even when she made grits she did it wrong and put sugar on top instead of salt. Marlyn’s brick house was different from Memaw’s whitewashed clapboard. It was hot and dry inside and the monkey cage made her kitchen smell like Ricky’s diapers, except when blueberry time came and Marlyn boiled glass jars she filled with sweet cooked berries then poured melted candles on top that the ants used to chew trails through one jar after the next where she set them, lined on the top of the cinderblock sidewall of her basement stairs. I know because I hid there and watched the ants climb the cursive glass ridges that said Ball, following their need to dig, walking around in circles on top of a jar until they cut a trough through the wax that fell over the glass rims into tiny piles that must have looked huge, even to one of those red spot spiders Marlyn called Widow. It didn’t matter that she had ice. I didn’t want my ears pierced with Marlyn’s embroidery needle. Besides, it was cool in the basement and dark enough that when Marlyn went out to pick more berries Leroy couldn’t see me from the door at the top of the stairs even if he switched on the bulb.

But there was always cooking at Memaw’s, especially on a holiday, and Mama was always funny then, making drinks and telling her jokes, cracking open and eating nuts

from the bowl and getting all her sisters to laugh at one story or another, except Marlyn who was always angry about something and didn't even like nigger toes. I circled the coffee table, picked up the nutshells Mama dropped on the floor, brought her full bottles of cold Pabst Blue Ribbon, carried heavy platters to the table then sat on the shiny red cushioned stepstool in the corner next to the stove, waiting for Memaw to help PawPaw get to the table so I could have enough time to rearrange the bread rolls on the baking sheet. She made me a plate right after she made his. Ricky sat on the floor with a little saucer, scooping up potatoes with his hands, and I watched him for Mama even though she didn't ask. I tried to chew slowly, one bite at a time, even the broccoli that looked like bright green apple crayon trees dripping with butter, all the while keeping an eye on Ricky, and concentrating on flattening the bread bulges inside the pockets of my dress that I smoothed politely underneath me when I sat down with my plate. The chrome rungs of the stepstool cooled the arches of my feet. I patted the corners of my lips with a paper napkin. Maybe if I wiped Ricky's face and hands, too. Maybe if we stayed out of the way. Just maybe, I thought.

10 year drama queen tripping on full scale
anxiety attack

Rhonda Melanson

like balloons
she blows them up
and spins them around
filling fishnets full of
hysterical colour

they pop
and shed their
dotted snakeskins,
paper droppings
into a zillion
pieces, slithering
under her desk

she scurries to build
a nest around the fruit
and pretzels she has
stashed beside her
pencil case

proclaiming loudly
that rodents
won't come

to the land of
confetti screams

A Matter of Love

Emily Stephens

There is a point beyond pain where all I feel is terror; the mirrors reflected back blank eyes, I can't recognize what isn't there. & her ghost keeps me awake at night, sitting at my bedside, breathing into my ear, another oh my god, another bruise to bloom as my head hits the wall – panic.

Where do mothers go? Where do the children go? How does your garden grow with so many bodies buried beneath earth & stone?

I'm not a victim; my eyes stare back into yours, relentless. You tell me I am stubborn, well I've been forced into this, grown into this by an iron fist & a screaming fit waiting to happen. You have to be tough enough. I was always too sensitive, sitting at the top of the stairs listening to the war being waged beneath the floorboards.

This house will come down around me, no one can be trusted, & everyone is leaving. I am alone.

Sometimes the pain is all that's left to keep me alive; memories pumping blood like a botched suicide. Her hand over my mouth to muffle any sound, I'm sick of struggling & I'm sick of fighting, but oh my god, I really miss it.

When you are never held but merely held down, to you, that is love.

When you have known nothing but abuse

To you

That is love.

I miss the feeling of being loved

Shoved

Down a flight of stairs & hitting head to see stars, the bruises on my arms, she used to give me. Gifts granted as I retreat.

& I don't recognize this person, this horror, looking back at me, staring with those dead eyes. Where has my mother gone? Where have the children gone? & where have I gone that I can't come back from?

If love is hell than I am in it.

If love is hell than I am in it.

If this is love where are the bruises – except those around my eyes, the ones that catch me by surprise?

She's sitting

On my bed, she's crawled inside my head; she wants me to know what its like to be dead.

& if this is hell than I am in it.

If this is love than I can't give it,

With all these memories pumping blood, my body has given up & now I know, I know, where all the children go, with mothers like you & me they live in eternal hell.

Because being hit doesn't feel like love. & a scream isn't a whispered reassurance, a threat isn't ring-around-the-roses, so I've got nothing to give & I know where all the bodies go, I know where I'm going to go, so if this is love, than I'm in hell. If this is love, than I can't tell. If this is love

I want mine back.

Adam and Eve

Robin McCarthy

A stranger is making a joke
About God
Creating woman from man
When I remember

A November Sunday afternoon
Counting each other's ribs
Along our naked torsos
As sunlight curtsied and bowed
Across bed sheets.
There was laughter and tickling
Between moments of something
Close to love.

This unfunny stranger sees only
Half of my weakest smile.
You have wrung all the laughter
From my Adam and Eve.



“For Elamin”

“For Meaghan”



The Color of Stones

Guy Cranswick

It was a Friday evening in November. On her way home Kate Morse looked up at the sparrows wheeling in the sky. Kate watched them for a second that was all, as she did most evenings, on the route to the subway.

Then she fell.

She hit the concrete slowly.

As if she fell in slow motion.

On the sidewalk she felt herself drip away in seconds; enough time for people's shoes and boots to blur before her closing eyes. Her mind was a drop of water dangling from a faucet. It was hanging defiantly, dripping slowly. Nothing hurt, not her body which she knew was still there, nor the hard ground. She was light; not her real weight and she had no feeling of her former self. Pedestrians stepped around her; she was no longer in the present; outside the previous moment. The bitter stench of car pollution touched her nostrils.

The shrill squeal of the sparrows above came to her, far off, as they settled on eaves.

All their feathers beating.

Like the sound of children playing.

Like the pitch of their singing.

Like birds' wings fluttering.

The birds were quiet, momentarily, but she knew they

would start up again, wheeling about the sky as they did every dusk.

The crowd around her dispersed, wandering off, people hissing, asking questions to one another; going onto engagements where Kate's fall would open their evening's conversation.

As if it had never happened before.

As if Kate was the first to fall on that sidewalk.

As if a woman had never fainted before.

All their voices dissipated into the city once more.

Kate lay still, she had no pain, she did not know what had struck her though she realized she was not well. Neither here nor there, her coat was not covered in dust and dirt. Her instinct for time had ended with the fall. Minutes became hours. She was neither dead nor alive. She heard a siren, or she may have imagined it. She was not certain of anything.

But she wanted to tell anyone, everyone above her that she was still, still...there in some way. The right word, the best word, evaded her.

Kate heard the voices of the first-aid workers merge with the crowd's collective murmur. It sounded like people speaking, like people trying to speak underwater. She was wary of the voices.

It was like an unearthly cry from across the river.

It was the tone of a mysterious lullaby.

It was an unreal sound, not to be trusted.

And it ebbed and flowed along the street.
She gathered all her effort to revive herself; she began at the beginning. The smallest gestures and actions were important to recreate the evening's events; from the moment she left the office to the fragmentary glance at the sky. She repeated the images in strict sequence until the time she fell. Her mind washed out as she tried to regain the scenes. She saw nothing but white. Her hand reached for a pen, a glass, a - everything went white, unable to grasp anything at all. Everything went celestial white. Kate paused, she did not try to see; she lay there blind, back in time, in memory.

Like a moment without form or substance.

Like being in the world with only hands and ears.

Like a glimpse without memory.

As though it was a recollection without meaning.

It was a train, an old train. The carriage was empty. A mother and her small son sat two seats away from her and Cynthia. The boy wore a cap, and shorts to his knees and babbled insistently to his mother's despair. More than once she called him back from crawling under the seats and collecting cigarette butts. He stood by Kate, watching her and said nothing. Cynthia talked to him, joking about him being a big boy one day. That made Kate and Jill laugh. He trotted back to his mother. Once by her side he pointed at the three girls: they were not twenty-one. Cynthia took a flask of brandy from her bag and poured out three cups. And still young for their age, but nervous and certain all

the same. They drank a toast to their little holiday. Kate wasn't supposed to be on the train, she had a job, but she had decided to go with Cynthia without telling anyone.

And the guilt remained with her for years.

And it's from here the truth will come out.

And why she lies within this portion of time.

As if it was real, not in her mind.

The brandy warmed Kate, settling her nerves as well.

Cynthia and Jill were blameless, they were students; no one would miss them. It was Cynthia's fault for bullying her, for being invited to stay the whole weekend by Larry and Nat; for being a student, all of those things. Larry met them at the station. Kate liked his brown eyes and long fingers. He was a carpenter. He took them to his cabin, his parent's cabin. It was dirty; decorated in gray and beige wallpaper designed in diamond shapes, a faded orange sofa, chrome kitchen chairs covered in red plastic and yellow and turquoise carpets.

And that was it. Kate wanted those four days with her friends and although she could imagine what had happened, she looked on from a distance. Taking the bus to her job, Kate knew she had done the responsible thing. She felt conscientious at her desk, knowing that Cynthia and Jill were living wild, even for a weekend with Larry and Nat. Now, years later, Kate joined Cynthia on the train on that weekend with the stories Cynthia had told her. Like a child wishing it would be real. The images of the girls, the boys dissolved.

On the concrete supine Kate realized that she had the ability to grant herself wishes already given. She did not ask why this happened now, on this Friday evening, at this time; that she should be lying on a cold street, as a man spoke to her, of that she was certain, and she could feel pressure, the touch of a man's hand on her arm.

Now, her own arm felt small, soft and fleshy. The large male hand gripped her.

He wore an orange and yellow rayon shirt. There was a young woman beside him in a brilliant white summer dress, she bent down to Kate: it was her mother. She had dark hair swept in broad curls away from her face, her dress came below the knees and she wore sandals. She smiled. Was the man her father? Her mother and the man spoke, quickly, softly, urgently but Kate never understood. Their faces are from out of the past.

Like staring into an open fire.

Like seeing faces in the flames.

Like hearing voices in the spitting fire

By gray morning, only whispers in the embers.

A view came to Kate, murky and indistinct, brown seawater under a flat gray cloudy sky. She had a long view closing in on an unseen point. Small fishing boats were lodged high on the banks, or was it a beach? The fishing boats were painted in summer colors: green and red and blue, that in the limpid daylight seemed dull. There were gulls above her, high on the wind, hanging in the air. Kate didn't know where she was in the scene, she could not

point to her own place; it was still forming as the definitions of cliffs, houses, sail boats and people became solid in the picture.

Like postcards from an imagined holiday. Images faded, postmarked, creased, pushed to the back of drawers. As so many nostalgic days, remembered less with each passing year.

Kate remembered these details with utmost clarity. The man was her father, as Kate observed her mother take the man's hand and walk a little distance to the shore. Kate could see herself at the top of the embankment above the people playing games and swimming. She watched her mother, who stood by the water's edge, taking her sandals off, in sight of her young daughter.

Around Kate were pebbles of different sizes: smooth oval, water polished and hewn by wind, warmed by the sun. Her hands splashed at the stones, the tone of blank clapping resounded as the pebbles knocked together. To her ears this noise was wonderful. She clapped at the stones for a time as nervous swimmers dipped their toes in the sea; she watched her mother unbutton her dress and wade out, waist-high in her blue one piece costume. Her mother waved to her.

She felt the male hand grip again.

Kate put a small nugget of stone in her mouth, sucked it and rolled it around her mouth. She felt the male hand grip again, but tighter. She bit on the stones and then paused, with a surprised expression, that she did not know what

was happening inside her; her voice burst into a cry, growing to a shriek. She sat there on a towel and screamed. She screamed till she felt her throat was burned raw.

Her mother pulled the dress out of the man's hands and ran up the beach; while on the cold street Kate could feel hands on her face, pulling her lips apart; and at the beach, her mother was on her knees picking the bits of stone out of Kate's mouth with her fingers; thick spittle stuck the grit to the soft inside of Kate's lips; while on the street she had the sense that she had hurt her head and it was cold; as years and years ago her mother cleaned the fragments from her mouth. She was calmer when Kate's crying abated.

And on the street Kate knew a woman was trying to revive her, the uniform of the first aid worker was almost visible. Her mother scooped a handful of stones to show Kate.

Silently Kate observed her mother's hand while her soothing voice recited the colors: white and pink, grey and brown and blue; her finger pointed as she called the colors. While on the street Kate heard real people, not the people in her head. The stones fell out of her mother's hands; she brushed them together then embraced Kate. Swept up in her arms and held close, quiet and consoled as though saved from drowning.

Like coming up for air.

Like grasping for a hand.

Like being comforted by her mother's breath.

Bathroom Foliage

Jeff J. Dutko

The synthetic leaves
of your wet clothes
littered the bathroom floor
where I dressed you up
with the formalities of finesse
tugging on the dry clothes
your mother presciently
stowed away in your backpack
she alone understanding our luck
can only run so far, and hoping
our patience can stay
within shouting distance

I admit, it is twice as hard
to change someone, not wanting
to touch or be touched
this is not father and son
alone in the bathroom

this is one man, flinging
with one finger, a single
dry sock to a soggy boy
standing, one hand
on the handicapped rail

the other grasping at the sink
one foot perched on one toe
the other with half a sock
sagging at the heel

I tried to make it okay by weakly
tying a handkerchief of humor
around your constantly runny nose
But, I was glad when I could finally
synch your mittens tightly over
your taloned and trembling fingers
and walk out into a mature September day
only to realize with regret
that this is only spring
veiled in the crisp thoughts
of desultory leaves
decorating an otherwise
naked and bony tree

First Time

Robin McCarthy

We sat on either side
Of six cans of Schlitz
Cradling the necks of hand-me-down guitars
Making awkward, perfect sounds.

Our melodies flirted and finally tangled
Warm and timid, unsure of the goal
Content and unsatisfied in the struggle.

Willing ourselves to be better
Thrilled by the chance to fail
Exhausted and drunk,
We crashed into evening's end

With your calloused fingers
Against steel and my skin
Long past the point of pain.

You loved just as you sang;
Flawed, but enough,
Saving part for something else.

After the first time,
The things we made
While beer grew warm between us
Were never quite as much.

Blood Mountain

Eliza Kelley

Everyone is gone now. It is getting cold.
The gray haired man dresses neatly in jeans
and a black shirt, packs a small bag and tucks it
behind the driver's seat. Somewhere, he pulls off
the road at a diner, orders meatloaf
and mashed potatoes.

Written on his hand in blue ink, an old poem
smudges where his knuckles bend the poem's line
breaks. His hand shakes. The fork drips
wrought iron pan gravy
liverspots on gaudy red formica.
She never painted her nails.

On the counter, an unfolded map fades
fluorescented indigo rapids, chasing a dotted trail
all the way to a pencil circle drawn
around that peak. His fingertip shadow
recalls the cleft in the small of her back.
You are beautiful, she said
when he touched her

there. At the summit, Yunwee chuns dee sing
magic songs echoing from their tiny caves. Red lichen

bleed the battleway. Nunnehee stitch
a blanket of clouds. They fit together
as they were made to do.

I was wrong. It was perfect, he thinks
calmly, but then a low belly moan slips and falls
in riverbank clay, claws up
from the bottoms to the treeless ledge, where the great
rock
wails, remembering her name.



“For Vanessa”



“For Christina”

Let Go.

Amanda Zutz

Letting you go is hard.
Having the sense to let go is
Harder.

A slowly burning ember within
Reminds me of what we
Might have had.

What-if's crowd my mind,
Second guessing everything.
But I know I have to give you up.

How to tell you
Will be so hard.
You can't imagine.

Letting you go is hard
Having the sense to let go is
Harder.

My desire is
Hard to try to escape but,
I must try to let it go.

There is no more
I've wanted what I can't have
For too long.
My heart is dying
From trying too hard to

Get what I wanted.

Letting you go is hard
Having the sense to let go is
Harder

I don't know how
I'm going to manage
Without you.

But I must.
I know it's not possible to
Have what I want.

Letting you go is hard
Having the sense to let go is
Harder

It will ravage my soul,
For a while, I'll let it.
Then, I will take it back.

I will look and
See a beautiful day
Even if it's pouring rain.

Letting you go is
Hard.
Having the sense to let go is
Harder

The Gardener

Anna Stitski

Abby looked at the body in the wheelbarrow. She ran her fingers through Dean's thick, golden hair. She loved the way it glistened in the sun, like wheat fields in late summer. He was so beautiful. Abby wiped her tear, leaving a muddy streak on her cheek.

She wheeled him to the garden shed and went inside to grab some clippers. “What am I going to do with you?” His lifeless green eyes stared back at her. She removed her gardening gloves, clipped a lock of his hair and carefully placed it in the little plastic bag she pulled out of her pocket.

Abby glanced around her vast yard. Dean loved gardening as much as she did. She gazed at the rose garden but Edward was already resting there. Roses were his passion. They really flourished after she buried him there. She kept his pruning shears in a special spot in the shed.

Abby looked at the pond and smiled. Dean bought koi for the pond, but Sam, resting at its bottom, helped dig it out. There wasn't room for two. She kept Sam's shovel in a special spot in the shed.

Dean built the bench. Together they bought the clematis and planted it by the arbour. It needed a few finishing touches.

Abby wheeled him into the shed, carefully placed his hammer in the special spot, his lock of hair in the scrapbook and opened the freezer. She pushed the wheelbarrow up the specially built ramp, tipped it and said, “Until tomorrow my love.” She blew him a kiss as she closed the freezer door.

Abby glanced at the arbour as she walked out the shed. She locked the door and sat on the bench, gazing thoughtfully at the clematis.

Water

Sergio A. Ortiz

Loss
has no sound,
yet is not
difficult to read.
There is strength
in water,
my hair rusted
in its pursuit.
The rest is
shallow,
let's keep it a
secret.

Equilibrium

Josh Stewart

I want to carry you,
to make these days a lighter load,
to make every smile genuine

to help your heartbeat echo in your ears
every moment of your life,
reminding you how close you are to home.
But lately I've been stumbling
down the long sidewalks of contentment,
stalled by apathy and skinned knees.
Lately I have been your biggest burden;

I've been the weight of the world
clinging onto your leg,
dragged along behind your stubborn strides.

I would forgive you
if you shook me off, placed me aside,
and walked on alone; you don't need help
carrying your life into tomorrow,
balancing this stack of days.
You don't need me
to be part of your equilibrium.

But I would appreciate
if you paused long enough
to let me find my feet again.
I would appreciate if you waited
for me to shake off apathy,
let my skinned knees heal,
and watched me take a few tentative steps
down this long, narrow sidewalk.
Maybe one day, you and I will lean together
balancing each other's weight

as we take stubborn, steady strides
that bring us closer to home.

Writer's Block

Psycho Kanev

The tongue of my soul
is hanging out.

Contributors

Elyse Rodgers, figurative/portrait artist graduated 2009 from University of Waterloo with a BA in Fine Arts. Now based in Toronto, emerging artist and will take on portraiture commissions media includes, graphite, chalk/oil pastels, and oil paint.
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Natalia Kochan grew up in Long Beach, California. She is currently studying screenwriting at the University of Southern California School of Cinematic Arts.

Jeff Dutko lives in Farmington, CT with his wife and son and crazy dog. He often tries to give voice to the special needs children he teaches through his writing, but has also produced poetry for twenty-five years on a variety of themes and social issues. Some of his most recent work has been published in *Right Hand Pointing*, *Rattlesnake Review*, *Slow Trains*, *Haggard and Halloo*, *Miller's Pond* and *The Furnace Review*.

KJ (Objective) lives in Orange, County CA with his dog Mr. Bear and their snake, Ace. He'll have work forthcoming in *Strong Verse* once Orson Scott Card gets back to him. Other than that KJ's just been reading Bukowski and taking luxurious naps. Find his blog here:

<http://illegalfunk.blogspot.com>. Contact him for an invite: khays45@gmail.com.

KJ (Biased) lives in Orange County CA, with his hound Mr. Bear where they both raise hell on a daily basis. Some of KJ's publication credits include: *Bareback Magazine*, *why vandalism?*, *Dark and Dreary*, and *Sex and Murder*. Find proof that he is kind of a badass here...

Kelsey Blair has a bachelor's degree from the University of British Columbia and am currently pursuing my Masters in Cinema Studies at the University of Toronto. She's been published in *Glossolalia*, *In My Bed*, *SWAMP*, *Toward the Light*, *Inscribed*, *Qarrtsiluni*, *The Moose and Pussy*, *TORO* and *Cinephile*. She likes her coffee black, her tea green, and her strawberries in all forms but jam.

Sara Lier is a writer currently living in New Jersey. Her poems have recently appeared in *Inkwell*, *The Sow's Ear*, *So to Speak*, and *Cloudbank*.

Chloe Burns loves to write. She has been mentored in writing for four years and attends whatever writing courses she has time for. She has been published in the magazine: "Magpie," and participates in the three-day novel contest yearly. Chloe is also the editor for a non-professional magazine, "Need to Read."

Rhonda Melanson

Emily Stephens

Robin McCarthy lives and works in Washington D.C. Previously unpublished, she has enjoyed developing a thriving writing group to encourage regular high-quality creative writing. Robin writes poetry, short fiction and creative non-fiction.

Eliza Kelley is a Dakota portrait artist, writer and teacher in Buffalo, NY. Her work centers on the voices of the nameless, dead or alive, the ones who invent new street dances, play guitar at the metro, and sing vodka lullabies to donated tombstones. Recent fiction, poetry, and essay publications appear in RKVRY, Yellow Medicine Review, Pedestal, CONTE, Origami Condom, Trillium, among other magazines, journals and anthologies.

Amanda Zutz

Sergio A. Ortiz has a B.A. in English literature from Inter-American University, and a M.A. In philosophy from World University. He is a retired teacher. His poems have been published or are forthcoming this in: Salt River Review, Yellow Medicine, Autumn Sky Poetry, Rust and Moth, Presence-Haiku, Shamrock, 3LightsGallery, The Smoking Poet, The Journal of Truth and Consequence,

Ganymede, Collective Fallout, Breadcrumb Scabs, Mobius: The Journal of Social Change, and The Driftwood Review.

Josh Stewart

Psycho Kanev is 28 years old. He loves to listen to sad music while he drinks slowly his beer. His work has been published in Welter, Gloom Cupboard, Off Beat Pulp, Nerve Cowboy, The Chiron Review, The Guild of Outsider Writers, Mad Swirl, Side of Grits, Southern Ocean Review, The Houston Literary Review and many others. He loves to put the word down and not talking on the cell phone for days. He is nominated for Pushcart Award. He lives in Chicago. His new collaborative collection "r", containing poetry by him and Felino Soriano, as well as photography from Duane Locke and Edward Wells II is now available at Amazon:

http://www.amazon.com/r-Psycho-Kanev/dp/0979129494/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1245429788&sr=1-1

Fiction writer, poet, and playwright J. J. Steinfeld lives hidden away on Prince Edward Island. He has published two novels, Our Hero in the Cradle of Confederation (Pottersfield Press) and Word Burials (Crossing Chaos Enigmatic Ink), nine short story collections, the previous three by Gaspereau Press —Should the Word Hell Be Capitalized?, Anton Chekhov Was Never in Charlottetown, and

Would You Hide Me? — and a poetry collection, *An Affection for Precipices* (Serengeti Press). His short stories and poems have appeared in numerous anthologies and periodicals internationally, and over forty of his one-act and full-length plays have been performed in Canada and the United States.

Ariana Potichnyj

Jordan Rankin was born and raised in Mabou, Cape Breton and has a B.A in History from St. Francis Xavier University. Also, he has taught ESL in Changwon, South Korea. His future plans include hoping to incorporate some of his ‘witty’ humor into future writings and continuing to travel the world until 'Ugly Pig Monster' carries international significance. This is his first published work.

Guy Cranswick

Anna Stitski is a Toronto, Ontario area based writer. She writes children's stories, short stories and the occasional poem. She is currently working on her first YA novel. One of her short stories appears in, *Canadian Voices*, an anthology recently published by Bookland Press.