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# The Yesterday Review

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A Literary Magazine ● Volume 1, Issue 1, 2025

“First Draft”

## **Masthead**

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*Poetry and Art Editor*

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*Prose Editor*

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*Prose Editor*



## **About**

The Yesterday Review publishes fiction, non-fiction, flash fiction, poetry, artwork and photography by both emerging and established writers and artists. We look for the bizarre thoughts you wrote in a document somewhere and forgot about. We like earnestness, outrage, but above all else, raw and undeniably human.

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## Table of Contents

<i>Sweet Contortionist</i> by Jacob Hatfield.....	1
<i>Photography</i> by Claudia Wysocky.....	2
<i>Defense Secretary Slips On Ice</i> by Paul Hostovsky.....	4
<i>Goatscaping</i> by Paul Hostovsky.....	5
<i>Dream, damaged</i> by Kirsten Sto. Domingo.....	7
<i>Peeling Back The Layers: A Story in Three Acts</i> by John RC Potter.....	9
<i>; zaman zaman</i> by G. Chagall.....	17
<i>The Prospect In Retrospect</i> by Ben Nardolilli.....	20
<i>Bullshit City</i> by Ben Nardolilli.....	21
<i>Failed Gardener</i> by Noll Griffin.....	22



## Table of Contents

<i>Nine Lines of Dialogue From The 2023 Made For TV film Red White and Royal Blue</i> by Merlin June Mack.....	23
<i>Timeliness &amp; Sanative</i> by Michael Moreth.....	27
<i>She Leaves You Meaner</i> by Michael Igoe.....	29
<i>voices</i> by mk zariel.....	30
<i>A Pondsides Alphabet</i> by Jake Williams.....	31
<i>The Rule of 3</i> by Sophia Indelicato.....	33
<i>Art</i> by Donald Pattern.....	36
<i>Unfinished Exit</i> by Claudia Wysocky .....	38
<i>The Voice Is Lost</i> by Bob Carlton.....	40
<i>The Call</i> by Bob Carlton.....	41



## Table of Contents

<i>The Rope Trick</i> by Bart Edelman.....	42
<i>Weren't We Promised the Thieves Would Be Punished?</i> by Ace Boggess.....	44
<i>Distant Decade</i> by Daithi Kearney.....	45



## Editor's Note

Yves Klein's photograph "Leap into the void" is the most apt way to gauge what this journal represents. It is our contribution to celebrating the most innate and human acts and how we occupy spaces. It is an ode to diving in head first. To observing and creating deliberately.

The theme for our very first June issue is **first draft**. There is beauty in the rough and the unpolished. We don't believe in art that is refined. We believe in art that is human. With this pursuit we have gathered raw thoughts from around the world, pencil to paper, crude thoughts, no holds barred.

Once a passion project, this journal has now morphed into a curated platform that echoes necessary voices, the peculiarities in the mundane, and all the oddities that bring us closer.

We hope that you enjoy the issue.

*The Editors*

*The Yesterday Review*







Photography by Claudia Wysocky

**Photographer's Bio:** Claudia Wysocky is a Polish poet and photographer based in New York, celebrated for her evocative creations that capture life's essence through emotional depth and rich imagery. With over five years of experience in fiction writing, her poetry has appeared in various local newspapers and literary magazines. Wysocky believes in the transformative power of art and views writing as a vital force that inspires her daily. Her works blend personal reflections with universal themes, making them relatable to a broad audience. Actively engaging with her community on social media, she fosters a shared passion for poetry and creative expression.

# ***Defense Secretary Slips On Ice***

by Paul Hostovsky

I bet he didn't  
see that one coming.  
Invisible enemy.  
Crushed the phalanx  
of his pinky finger  
trying to break his fall  
on his own front steps,  
rushing out the door this morning  
to the big meeting,  
a big black-and-blue mark  
blooming on his bum now.  
The media isn't saying  
anything about his bum,  
but I bet it hurts like hell to sit  
down at the peace table.  
He's probably wincing right now.  
Which may be why  
we're all still at war.  
Another beautiful fall  
morning, cold and wet,  
the air full of the crisp,  
exquisite smells of death.

# **Goatscaping**

by Paul Hostovsky

This morning I noticed two small green tomatoes in the garden. I guess things are getting started after all. Everything in its own time. And speaking of nature having its way, have you heard of goatscaping? I love the name, the play on words. There's this guy in Dover who owns a natural landscaping company called Goats of Dover—he'll bring his goats over and clear your property of the unwanted weeds and biomass the natural way, letting his goats do all the work. They'll eat anything and everything. I called for a free estimate because the weeds and saplings and poison ivy—and especially the black swallow-wort—have been encroaching on my house like they're going to swallow it up. I want to cut them back, get rid of the invasive species, maybe plant some wildflowers or native vegetation that won't go haywire. So the guy came over last Sunday with a measuring wheel and a clipboard. He had a billy goat's beard and a ponytail and smelled faintly of goat and looked vaguely like a goat himself—you can't make this stuff up. He knew the names of all the plants. And as he perused my property (I have three-quarters of an acre) he taught me the names of what I have, including the aforementioned black swallow-wort. And then he said uh-oh, I see you've got some lily of the valley, pointing at some ground cover that I was familiar with because I have a ton of it. But I never knew the name of it. And I said oh that stuff is everywhere. And he said that's going to be a problem—lily of the valley is toxic to goats. They can eat just about anything but there are a few species that make them sick, and some can even be lethal. And lily of the valley is one. I showed him where it grew on the other side of the house by the forsythia and also among the saplings. He shook his head and sucked his teeth, said sorry, it's a deal breaker—if it were only here and there

I could cordon it off with some electric fencing to keep the goats from eating it. But considering the extent of it, well, nice to meet you. And he climbed back into his pickup. So much for goatscaping, but I'm thinking I might try writing about it, because although I'm not very good at writing about nature, this guy with his goats, who put me in mind of a goat himself, isn't he just begging to be made into a poem?

**Author's Bio:** Paul Hostovsky's poems and stories appear widely online and in print. He has won a Pushcart Prize, two Best of the Net Awards, and has been featured on Poetry Daily, Verse Daily, and The Writer's Almanac. He makes his living in Boston as a sign language interpreter. Website: [paulhostovsky.com](http://paulhostovsky.com)

# Dream, damaged

by Kirsten St. Domingo

Split-apart sky, I always yearn to see you  
your mouth  
unscathed.  
Do you remember when  
spit out my holy grail,  
and  
put  
them  
to  
shreds?

How cruel of you to let me  
swallow milk already spilled?  
I catch those fragments in my hands, hands that no longer know  
what certainty is.

All along, I've been walking;  
my feet sure that it would take me to heaven.  
Which is the less ill-starred path?

To hold onto  
these jagged-edged remnants that will only wound me?  
Or to throw them  
to the swamp, let them get washed away by rain?  
I've become a lonely spirit,  
weeping over the unmasked face of the dream I beseeched.

How much hope is left for me to clutch?  
Split-apart sky, I always yearn to see you  
unscathed.  
Could you put on some stars tonight?  
I'll have my cup-hands ready,  
waiting.  
Tell me that light will still follow me,

that these jagged edges will smoothen over time.  
How kind of you to let me dream again.

**Author's Bio:** Kirsten Sto. Domingo is a disabled content writer from the Philippines. Her work has recently appeared in Tiger Leaping Review, Ghost Light Lit, and elsewhere. In her spare time, she enjoys watching sitcoms and reading fiction. You can read her poems on Instagram: @fromthepsyche

# ***Peeling Back The Layers: A Story in Three Acts***

by John RC Potter

## **The Third Act**

“You’re in big trouble now!” I shouted out the upstairs bedroom window into the inky black night. At that precise moment when I was feeling very big about it all – telling, more than warning, my oldest sister that she was in for it – the storm window inexplicably dropped with a sudden bang. The middle finger of my left hand bore the brunt of the fallen window, and the nail was shattered in two, with blood gushing from the wound.

Three of us huddled around the bedroom window that particular late evening: my sister, Jo Ann, who was two years older than me, and my sister, Laurie, who was two years older than her. It was the late winter of 1967, the year of Canada’s centenary, which was celebrated across the country. Perhaps more importantly, it was the year that my oldest sister, Cheri, had a turning point in her young life: at 14, she was discovering boys, exploring her femininity, and uncovering the more troubled side of her personality. She had gone with a group of students to Expo ’67 in Montreal earlier that year, which may or may not have been the catalyst for her rebellious and complicated nature to be exposed.

That evening our father, as usual, was working late at the gas station he owned in the town of Clinton. In addition, he also farmed; during his entire life, Dad always had two if not three jobs to provide for his large and expanding family. We lived on a farm on the first side road to the west of town. Our mother had five children by that point, between the ages of 14 (Cheri) and five (my youngest sister, Barb), with my three oldest sisters having been born within four years. This was not untypical of farm wives at that time, nor in generations earlier.

Unfortunately, due to Dad’s long hours at work, it fell on Mom’s shoulders to raise and discipline her brood. When Cheri became a young teenager and became increasingly rebellious and difficult to manage, our mother no doubt despaired. Mom had dealt with bad nerves and sporadic poor mental health for many years, the worst of which had been after my sister, Jo Ann was born, when our mother was in a deep depression for months. Since then, Mom experienced mostly good mental health, and even during difficult times, she was first and foremost an attentive, loving, and caring mother. Although we children all had moments when we tested Mom’s patience, Cheri’s

teenage rebellious streak must have been a great trial to our mother.

On that eventful evening in the winter of '67, our oldest sister had gone out with friends after school and not returned. My other sisters and I knew that Mom was both worried and upset because she suspected Cheri was in with a bad crowd. Our mother would have communicated with Dad at the gas station, but he could not leave work and, in any case, expected that Cheri would soon come home.

As the evening progressed and Cheri had still not come home, our mother became increasingly agitated. It was a school night, and Mom told us to go to bed. My three older sisters slept in the large bedroom at the top of the stairs that had two double beds in it. I had the smaller bedroom just off their room; a curtain rather than a door separated the two bedrooms. Laurie, Jo Ann, and I were in our respective beds when we heard the low rumble of a vehicle coming up the road. We jumped out of our beds and ran to the window in the girls' bedroom that faced the gravel road in front of our house. The car's lights were out, but from the sound, we knew the vehicle was running.

We opened the bedroom window and peered into the night, trying to see what was happening in the car. We were sure that our sister, Cheri, was in that vehicle. Finally, she emerged from the passenger's side of the car: from the inside car light, we could see our sister in her fake fur mini jacket, tight clothing, and go-go boots. I pushed the window up higher to hear what was being said, and at that moment, I yelled out into the night to my sister. Then, unexpectedly, the window fell on my finger.

I ran downstairs and into the kitchen, and my poor mother, already obviously stressed beyond endurance, heard my tale of what had happened. She guided me to the bathroom and turned on the cold water to run over my bleeding finger with its shattered nail. The bathroom was just off the kitchen, and through the open door, my mother and I could see my sister Cheri wander into the kitchen rather provocatively and nonchalantly. Cheri wondered what had happened to me, no doubt, in an attempt to divert attention away from herself.

My mother was shaking with rage and relief, all in one commingled emotion. She had been worried sick that her daughter could have been abducted or in danger, although no doubt common sense told Mom exactly what Cheri was up to during her absence from late afternoon to late evening. My mother, who never or rarely would strike her children, said Cheri would be punished with the belt.

I was staring in amazement from the bathroom, the cold water still pouring over my numbed and near-frozen finger, as my mother chased my sister around the kitchen table. Cheri was laughing, which only incensed my mother further. As Mom went to grab

Cheri, my sister's fake fun fur jacket came off in my mother's hands. Cheri ran out of the house and into the cold winter night on a journey that would have many repercussions for the rest of her life.

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## **The Second Act**

"Look at her...she's not even crying!"

One of Keith's sisters had emphatically stated these words. All eyes turned toward the front porch, where my grandmother was sitting in the same chair in which her youngest son, Keith, had always sat and watched the passing cars on the highway; because he could not go to school, it helped him pass the time by keeping track on paper the number of vehicles and other details. Keith would never sit in that chair and on that porch ever again. He had been a sickly child most of his short life until he passed away in his eleventh year.

"She's not even crying!" my aunt repeated what she had just said to the rest of the family, gathered and grieving in the little house on the highway in the village of Brucefield that day in 1957.

My grandfather, with tears running down his face, turned to his daughters and sons who were gathered with him and said, "Your mother is crying; you just cannot see it; it is more painful to cry inside than out."

My mother was there that day and in tears at the loss of her youngest brother, who had never gone to school because he was to some degree mentally retarded, a term that was used back then but would be considered politically incorrect now.

In 1957, Mom was only 25 years old, a young mother and farm wife who already had three daughters in the space of four years – two toddlers and a baby. When my sister, Jo Ann, was born in 1956, my mother experienced postpartum depression that deepened and lengthened for many months due to a history of bad nerves. After sessions in the hospital and specific treatments for mental illness that were considered innovative at that time, by 1957, my mother was beginning to recover. Then her youngest brother, Keith – whom everyone in the family doted on – died after a short illness, casting yet another shadow over my mother's life.

During my childhood, my sisters and I would ask our mother about Keith, the boy whose life had been too brief. In particular, I was quite fascinated with the boy I saw in my

mother's family photo album. I was born in 1958, a year after Keith passed away, and for whatever reason, I felt a connection with him. I enjoyed hearing stories from my mother about Keith and how he loved to sit on the porch and count the cars that went by on the highway. I would wonder what it had been like for him to live a life largely at home and somewhat limited by his mental abilities. I knew he was deeply loved by all in his family: for his siblings and parents, he was their adored and special boy.

There was another story related to Keith that my siblings and I never discussed with our mother. Our cousins told us that they had heard a story about Keith and the reason for his impaired mental ability. If true, it meant that Keith had not been born mentally impaired; instead, it happened due to an accident when he was a baby. Apparently, Keith had been left in the care of two of his older sisters when Grandma was not in the house. According to the story, Keith was left alone and rolled off the sofa onto the living room floor, sustaining a lump on his head; however, at that time, it was not considered an injury with future complications. Our cousins told us that our mother had left Keith unattended momentarily. My sisters and I later speculated that if this were true, it might well account for our mother's mental health issues that afflicted her life sporadically from her teenage years and throughout her entire life.

When I was a teenager, I began to do gardening for my maternal grandmother, whose house was just around the corner from the high school. In my final year of high school, I moved in with Grandma, whom I respected and loved as much as one would a parent. Living with my grandmother allowed me to walk to school in mere minutes and to go to my part-time job at a nearby convenience store.

During breaks in the gardening or when living with my grandmother and having time to sit and chat in the evening, I would sometimes ask her about Keith but never mentioned what I had heard as regards the possible reason for his mental impairment. However, my grandmother did tell me that although it was a significant loss when Keith died, it was also rather a relief because she had wondered what would happen to him after she and my grandfather were no longer alive. It had been one of her greatest fears, not knowing what would happen to Keith without her.

I recall a day in particular, sitting in Grandma's attractive and neat living room when we talked about Keith. My grandmother, who raised 11 children, was always a seemingly unsentimental and practical woman and one of the wisest individuals I have ever known. When we talked about Keith that day, she peered across the room and into my eyes: Grandma told me that she had always wanted to write a story or book about her life but suspected she would never do it. My grandmother then said that she hoped one day I would write a story about her life or at least about her youngest son, Keith,

to keep the memory of his short life alive. Furthermore, it should be called 'This Old House' because that had been Keith's favourite song for several years before he died: he would listen to that melody and happily sing along as he sat on the front porch counting cars and watching the world go by.



## **The First Act**

The bogeyman. The creature under the bed. The shadow that is death in disguise. The kind stranger who kills.

Childhood is a wonderful world of the imagination with extremes: at one end, the fantastical and joyful landscape of lightness and hope; at the other, a frightening and jittery underworld of darkness and fear. When I was a child, my mother told my sisters and me a story from her youth. It was when she and her siblings had experienced the mythical bogeyman who became a reality. Of course, our mother did not tell us this real-life tale to scare her children. She was at all times a fiercely protective and loving mother, despite having dealt with a lifetime of bad nerves and mental breakdowns. It seemed to me that our mother told us this story because it was still on her mind after all those years; that she could not be rid of the memory of that night decades before when the bogeyman appeared as the man in the doorway.

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It was in the waning days of the late 1930s. The Great Depression was receding in the

distance, but still being felt by many. In particular, there were still drifters, hobos, and men of all ages and descriptions riding the rails and wandering the roads as the 30s wound down. In the farm country of southwestern Ontario, it was common for these men to try to find temporary work from farmers. Men often stopped by a farmhouse and asked the housewife if they could speak with her husband about doing some odd jobs or being a hired hand for a time. More often than not, there was no work to be had nor even money to pay for wages, or the farmer already had a hired hand. If their husbands did not require any hired help, the housewives would usually provide any drifter with a meal or some food for the road.

At the time, parents would leave older children in charge of younger siblings when necessary. On that particular evening, my mother and her siblings were at home alone. Their parents had gone to a local function, possibly a school or township meeting. In my mother's family, the two oldest boys would have been responsible for their four younger sisters and brother. Their ages at that time ranged from eleven to four years old. At a certain point that evening, the children went to bed upstairs at the old farmhouse in Tuckersmith Township; in each respective room, three children slept in one big bed. The three boys were in one bedroom, and the three girls were in another one nearby; both bedrooms were located near the top of the stairs. No doubt to save energy, no lights were kept burning in the house. It was in darkness. I recall my mother commenting on how dark and quiet that night had seemed. Perhaps she and her siblings felt the absence of their parents, with the knowledge they were on their own.

Creak. Creak. Creak.

The children in their respective bedrooms heard the old wooden stairs give a whispered warning that someone was at the bottom of the stairs. That someone was coming upstairs.

Groan. Groan. Groan.

The worn floorboards at the top of the stairs sounded a hushed alert that someone was now just outside the bedrooms.

"Who's there?" called out one of the boys from his bed. No answer came back.

In the other bedroom, my mother and her sisters lay in the big bed with the blankets up to their noses, peering into the darkness. From both bedrooms, the children could just barely make out a shape in the inky darkness. An apparition. But not a ghost. A man. They could hear his breathing as he moved from one to the other of the opened

doorways of the two bedrooms.

“Is that you, Harry?” one of my mother’s brothers asked the voiceless shadow in the corridor. He was no doubt hoping the figure in the doorway was their neighbour from down the road who was often at their home, and sometimes helped their father on his farm.

It must have felt to the children that the bogeyman had come to life and decided to visit their home that night. My mother and her sisters lay in their bed, hearts beating faster with rising fear. Who was the man in the doorway? Why was he not saying anything?

Then the man turned from the door of the boys’ bedroom and came back to the doorway of the bedroom where the girls were trembling under the covers.

Squeak. Squeak. Squeak.

The timeworn floorboards in the girls’ bedroom murmured their soft but urgent alarm. The dark shape stood beside the bed. The silence in the room was overwhelming. Suddenly the bogeyman turned and started to walk back into the hallway. He paused outside the boys’ bedroom door one last time, and then began his descent down the stairs.

Creak. Creak. Creak.

Groan. Groan. Groan.

Squeak. Squeak. Squeak.

When the children knew the apparition, the bogeyman had left the house, they all bounded from their respective beds. All of them had been scared within an inch of their lives. They discussed who it could have been, why he had come, and why he had not spoken. When their parents returned home later, the children excitedly informed them about the nocturnal visitor. As parents, they would have wanted to allay fears, not wanting to alarm, or upset the children further.

One wonders if they were worried that something terrible could have happened to their children that night. They assumed it was a drifter or a hobo, who had entered the unlocked farmhouse, perhaps in search of food.

Who was that man?

What were his intentions?

Why did he not speak?

Were my mother and her siblings in danger?

One thing seems clear to me:

sometimes the bogeyman is real.

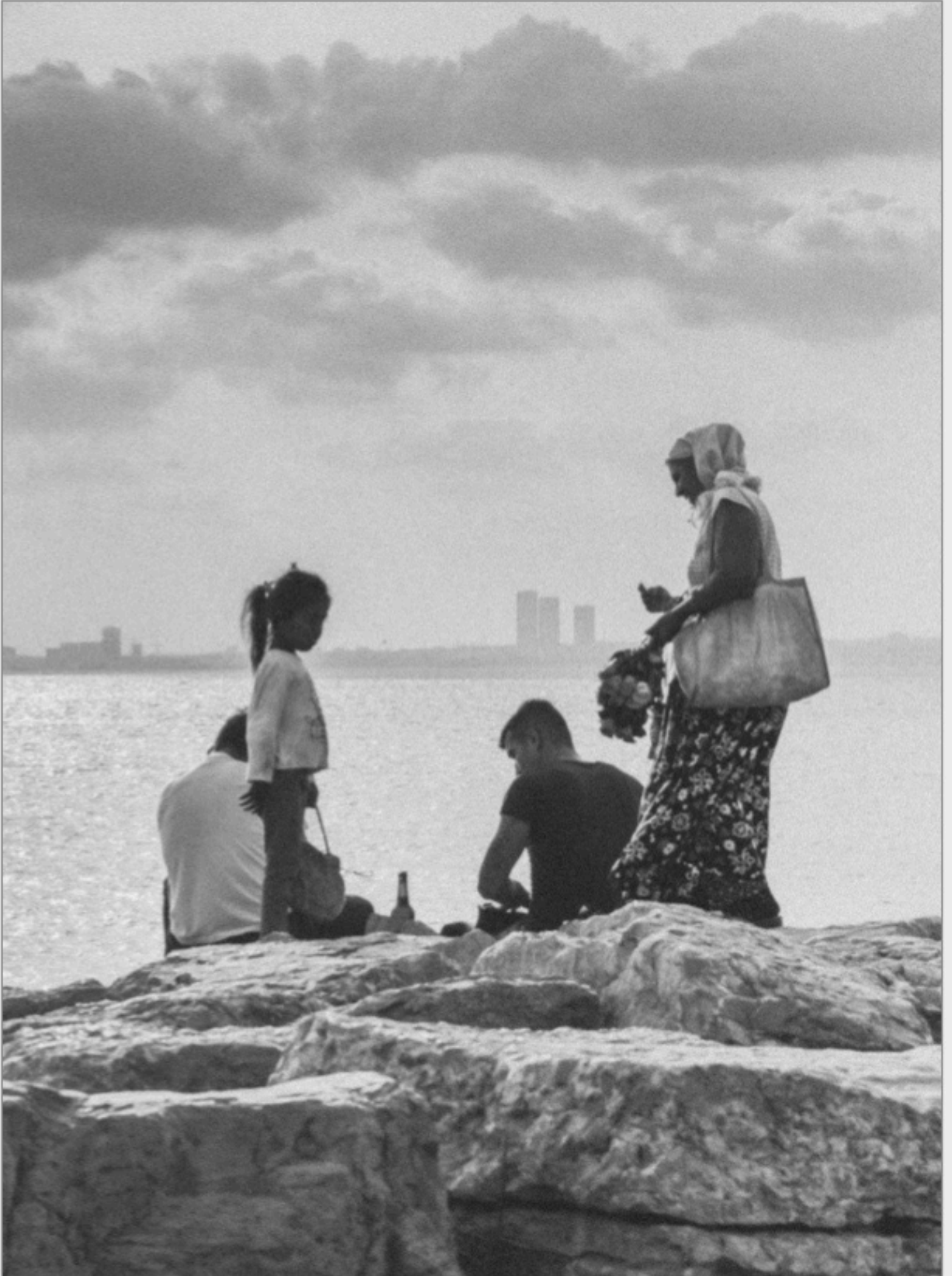
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**Author's Bio:** John RC Potter is an international educator from Canada who lives in Istanbul. He has experienced a revolution (Indonesia), air strikes (Israel), earthquakes (Turkey), boredom (UAE), and blinding snow blizzards (Canada), the last being the subject of his story, 'Snowbound in the House of God' (Memoirist). The author's poems, stories, essays, articles, and reviews have been published in various magazines and journals. Selected publications: PROSE – 'She Got What She Deserved' (Literary Yard); 'Destination: Cannes @ Midnight' (The Brussels Review); POETRY – 'Amanuensis' (New English Review); 'A Year in Israel, Twelve Months in Tel Aviv' (Culterate Magazine); REVIEW – 'Tezer Özlü's Cold Nights of Childhood'; (New English Review); 'Kenan Orhan's I Am My Country And Other Stories' (Bosphorus Review of Books). His story, 'Ruth's World' was a Pushcart Prize nominee, and his poem, 'Tomato Heart' was nominated for the Best of the Net Award. The author's gay-themed children's picture book, The First Adventures of Walli and Magoo, is scheduled for publication. He enjoys duties as the editor of the online journal Masticadores Istanbul.

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**Photographer's Bio:** G. Chagall is a writer, photographer, and educator from Kansas City. His work can be found on his Google Drive, in notebooks around his house, and online at venues such as The Flint Hills Review, Quail Bell, miniMAG, and forthcoming at The Cawnpore Magazine.

# ***The Prospect of In Retrospect***

by Ben Nardolilli

Every day brings another, ever higher price for the denial  
of these gifts to the rest of the world,  
as both of us careen closer and closer to the outer suburbs of disaster,  
how many years have I sacrificed, or at least  
cultivated this intricate outlook,  
this particular rhythm, and this chosen outlook  
some might say is prophecy  
of the fire next time and the way around it,  
yet how many times has the public  
ignored almost all of my submissions, my requests  
for a different life made up  
of my mind operating on my time, working  
towards a bundle of ends  
we all can use as partners for a future free of cubicles and ruin

# ***Bullish City***

by Ben Nardolilli

They called me the largest single driver of misinformation,  
more cruel talk at the bar, I just got a cache of details wrong on FSAs  
what am I supposed to do? Survey my neighbors?  
They say I'm the Fourth Rome incarnate, but nobody credits me  
for my portfolio of truths, including the way I've perfected  
text boxes and share it with the kids  
whenever they come by my apartment on Halloween, so what  
if I got the details of our tutoring deal wrong? I'm not their teacher,  
they should be glad they're in school  
while the Tao of positive tests hangs over us all, especially this season.  
Meanwhile, parents still crash my webinars  
and still ask me for receipts, so how am I the divisive one here?  
They want to believe we're on the info frontier? Fine,  
so long as I'm not cast as sheriff or outlaw in this new Western

**Author's Bio:** Ben Nardolilli is a theoretical MFA candidate at Long Island University. He writes poetry, prose, and the occasional political flotsam and jetsam. In his spare time, he likes to go to a law firm and edit documents related to asbestos litigation. Occasionally they pay him for this. Follow his publishing journey at [mirrorsponge.blogspot.com](http://mirrorsponge.blogspot.com).

# **Failed Gardener**

by Noll Griffin

Droplets punch down, diving rain becoming  
a mother sow's underbelly on the scaffolding outside,  
new poison now, I understand and don't want to.  
The storm steers me to the windows like a swimmer's final lap,  
and thunder's peroxide punch disinfects my ears with sound.  
I know this acid on my hand's not safe to drink atop the heat sink.  
The hardware store across the street folds glass panels skyward  
to protect anemic palms, poison lilies, carnivores,  
a crowd of cramped pots watching from the floor.  
My Venus flytrap died last time, it was already crisp on the table  
when I snatched it at a discount. The shiny tag  
requested rainwater to live. I was almost asleep when I realized,  
it's not safe.  
I miss its ovals of birdcage spines on the sill,  
waiting for flies to surprise until it stiffened, black  
from root to tip. I boiled water for the last times,  
for a spiral of coming night.

**Author's Bio:** Noll Griffin (he/him) is a visual artist, writer, and musician based in Berlin, Germany. His first chapbook titled "Tourist Info" is available through Alien Buddha Press. You can find him on Tumblr/Twitter/Bluesky under @nollthere.

# ***Nine Lines of Dialogue From The 2023 Made For TV film Red White and Royal Blue***

by Merlin June Mack

1.) *You've been yucking my yum all day. What's going on with you?* -Vice President of the United State's daughter while speaking to President of the United States love interest. (1:34)

The 2023 made for TV film Red White and Royal Blue is a movie which never saw theatres because if a fish lives above water it will surely die. When you are sitting in your bed watching it on your phone or a tasteful ipad you may think about how when fish are thrown out of water they die an embarrassing death with little to no decorum. Everyone says that the ideal death is one in their sleep, the kind where you don't know that it's happening. Do fish stare up at the top of the lake like it's a ceiling and feel frightened that they will die? Do they go on new diets to prevent it from coming sooner? Is death the greatest yuck to the young man's yum?

2.) *In the reign of Queen Victoria, they were having food fights all of the time* – Prince of England love interest ~ *Vicky! Classic* – president of the United State's son love interest while he does the woah. (14:48)

I am almost certain that neither of the love interests in the 2023 made for TV film Red White and Royal Blue are homosexual. This is because we homosexuals are always haunted by the burning of The Library of Alexandria. You can see it in our eyes. When I watch this film I wonder if it takes place in an alternate universe where Julius Caesar minded his own business. This must be a universe where Julius Caesar never existed because that otherwise is an impossible universe. What do they call Ceaser salads in the universe of the 2023 made for TV film Red White and Royal Blue? Are there Ceaser Salads at all?

3.) *In the so called cake gate controversy...you can already see the potential outlines of the president's campaign could be about next year* – Literally Racheal Maddow (19:26)

My father watches MSNBC like it might fix all the problems of the world. As if one more straight white cisgender man listens to Racheal Maddow's voice Donald Trump might drop dead on the floor and systemic oppression might dissolve like an hourglass never to be flipped over again. I think of this when I watch the 2023 made

for TV film Red White and Royal Blue, though no one wants to think of their father when they watch this movie. I think of locking everyone I know's Dad into a room and forcing them to watch MSNBC together until they all get haircuts like Racheal Maddow and start talking like her. What did she think when she got the email to be in this movie?

4.) *I'm just brushing that working class chip off your shoulder* – father of president of the United State's son love interest while him and president of the United States love interest look out at a comically bad CGI recreation of the Washington monument (20:00)

The Washington Monument is the most phallic of Washington DC's attractions. I have not been to Washington DC, in fact I have not travelled past Utah but if I was in the nation's capital I would make this joke. I've only ever dated people who wear glasses, and I am worried that people who go to small private liberal arts colleges think they know more about oppression than I ever will because I read 50 books last year and they read 70. I feel like when I talk to other middle class radicals we bump up against each other like bumper cars. I won't believe in revolution until they learn to dance like no one's watching.

5.) *So are you still* – son of the president of the United States love interest ~ *Like Stonehedge* – prince of England love interest ~ *Your royal hardness...or Big Ben* – the president of the United States' son love interest (40:29)

At this point in the 2023 made for TV film Red White and Royal Blue I am certain I do not want God to be real. I'd hate to see such a thing cry.

6.) *We're gonna need some pizza* – Uma Thurman who is president of the United States after the President of the United States love interest comes out to her. (1:08:51)

There will never be a woman president of The United States because Julius Caesar once ruled over Rome. The reason Uma Thurman with a southern accent can be president in this movie is because, as we've established, there was no Julius Caesar in the universe of the 2023 made for TV film Red White and Royal Blue. I fell and scraped my knee because I was so distracted thinking about this and I hated the sun a little bit more than I did before. The hardest part of being American is how often I cry over it while it throws its food like a toddler. So much of this might be solved if it had a mother.

7.) *You are talking to the patron saint of gender neutral bathrooms in Austin you little shit – father of president of the United State’s son love interest (1:13:33)*

My darling friend who goes to college in Ohio can’t take a dance class next term because they’ve made it law that everyone must go to the changing room of their birth gender. He has just started to grow a beard so this is a bit inconvenient. I want to live in a world with transgender infested bathrooms and changing rooms in Texas. I want to gossip at the sinks with people who aren’t afraid of the way that I walk. England has a higher body count than I ever will. What else is there to daydream about?

8.) *I’m not gonna get any work done until you get these two love sick homosexuals on the phone with one another – the white house publicist? (1:36:49)*

The 2023 made for TV film Red White and Royal Blue is classified as a romantic comedy, but I am growing gills and fins. God, that is all I am these days? I might be married by now if I had a better attitude, but there are some things that only ever seem to work written down and not spoken. Perhaps this is what the problem with the 2023 made for TV film Red White and Royal Blue is. Perhaps it too is a fish taken out of water dying an undignified death. I think this could be why women prefer written erotica and why yellowstone must be contained. Perhaps I will read the book and replace the dust jacket with a more sensible read like Beowulf or the poetry of Robert Frost. There will never be another discovery as great as electricity until we understand chemistry. There will never be a movie like this again until I get laid by a lesbian with a horrible taste in women...among other things.

9.) *Ellen Claremort Diaz has been reelected as president – Literally not even joking Racheal Maddow after they flip Texas blue (1:49:03)*

My father hasn’t been watching MSNBC lately. He realized that a man of his kind couldn’t save the world by listening to Racheal Maddow talk. I used to hear it in the background of our phone calls. I see more flags saluting Trump than Christmas lights in my hometown come December. The 2023 made for TV movie Red White and Royal Blue is science fiction because Uma Thurman is president and the Washington monument is computer generated.

**Author's Bio:** Merlin June Mack (they/them) is a hemiplegic writer from Southern California. Their work explores joy, the real in the unreal and other hyper femme adjacent daydreams. Merlin has been published in magazines such as The Lavender Review, All Existing Magazine, and Twin Bird Review. Their work has also been Best of Net nominated. You can find Merlin on Instagram @merlin\_june\_is\_a\_lover or reading a book with at least one good literary motif in it. Their name is like the bird not the wizard.

Art by Michael Moreth



*Timeliness*

Art by Michael Moreth



*Sanative*

**Artist's Bio:** Michael Moreth is a recovering Chicagoan living in the rural, micropolitan City of Sterling, the Paris of Northwest Illinois.

# ***She Leaves You Meaner***

by Michael Igoe

I was among the possessed  
to employ lesser means  
in pursuit of lesser ends  
They can't make their deals  
unless you force their hand.

It's been over a month of Sundays  
since they were taking the census  
of the hairs on everybody's asses.

It's small consolation  
to engage in worship  
of the towering idols.  
The idol is not a demigod  
a demigod can't be a god.  
Which is why we trace the birthline  
where the ancestor once multiplied,  
assigning numbers to their embrace  
the same way we count raindrops.

By examining her hand  
she is likely the woman  
her fingerprint revealed

**Author's Bio:** Michael Igoe, city boy, neurodiverse, Chicago now New England. Numerous works appear in journals and anthologies (available at [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com), [lulu.com](https://www.lulu.com), [barnesandnoble.com](https://www.barnesandnoble.com)). National Library of Poetry (Owing Mills MD) Editor's Choice Award 1997. Best of the Net nomination 2024. Twitter(X) Michaeligoe5, Instagram igoe590. [poetry-in-motion.org](https://poetry-in-motion.org)

# voices

by mk zariel

What nobody tells you about transitioning is that the voices in your head take it and run with it. The supposed angel on your shoulder, that uptight little gremlin with its dime-store wings and cardboard halo, tells you to pay attention to the stares, the whispers, the people who pretend they can't pronounce your pronouns, the people who know they can be respectful but choose not to. The supposed devil on your other shoulder thinks it's intimidating, but it's not, because it looks embarrassingly like your Pinterest board. Your relatives ask you questions they could search online, and it comforts you like only a figment of your imagination could. The two clichéd supernaturals have an argument, in front of the all-shattering mirror, in the gendered bathroom that makes you and everyone else feel awkward, in the closet. They tear each other's hair while, bracing yourself, you cut off yours. You tell your therapist you struggle with internalized transphobia, and he tells you to brush it off, but there's no way you could take that literally; the voices are yours. You thank your inner voices with an infodump and a quiet smile, and the supposed angel reminds you that all you are is what you think other people think of you thinking of them. The supposed devil reprimands the supposed angel for being confusing. You throw away your dresses and, eventually, they throw away their dispute. You are made of the words thrown like daggers, it is true, but you melt them down and make them shining armor for your new bodymind.

**Author's Bio:** mk zariel {it/its} is a transmasculine neuroqueer poet, theater artist, movement journalist, and insurrectionary anarchist. it is fueled by folk-punk, Emma Goldman, and existential dread. it can be found online at <https://mkzariel.carrd.co/>, creating conflictually queer-anarchic spaces, writing columns for Asymptote and the Anarchist Review of Books, and being mildly feral in the great lakes region. it is kinda gay ngl.

# ***A Pondsides Alphabet***

by Jake Williams

Ash seeds Heisenberg flutters  
Birches grow new green hearts  
Christmas has come and gone  
Dauntless Robins fluff their feathers against remnant Winter chill  
Every blade of grass trembles  
For all of us who hope for Spring  
Grey clouds float above  
Hérons hunched silently  
Inner lives awake from hibernation  
Just one leaf can catch the light  
Kardashians mean nothing to the skies  
Let's ask who might be in our tree  
Maybe the woods listened  
No sapling grew in vain  
Oaks outlive our everlasting  
Perhaps a butterfly will land nearby  
Quintessential beautiful fragility  
Roots talk to roots (this is the real world wide web)  
Slow can be the surest road to travel  
Touch the silence and it will touch you  
Unchain whatever melodies want to be unchained  
Visit the places you had not thought to visit  
Why is eternal, waiting for us to ask  
X is not the only factor; it marks where mystery begins  
Young light has begun to spread  
Zen does not need to ask what Zen is

**Author's Bio:** Jake Williams: I'm a writer based in Cumbria (the North remembers!), just south of The Wall and my previous publications include The RPS Journal, The LWS Anthology, Pulsebeat Poetry, Coldmoon Journal, Discourse Journal and To Live Here: a Haiku Anthology (Wee Sparrow Poetry Press). I was born in deepest rural Dorset when

Marvin Gaye asked what's going on, in a cottage with Owls in the attic and a serious damp problem. Basically, I was Feral Kid from Mad Max 2 if he'd been a character in a Thomas Hardy novel. The woods and fields were as much my classroom as any of the schools I attended-" I found the poems in the fields and only wrote them down" (John Clare). I'll always be grateful for the love of nature my rural childhood instilled in me. As well as wandering (and wondering) around the countryside, I love wandering across disciplines as well, seeing how all the different pieces of the creative puzzle fit together.

# ***The Rule of 3***

by Sophia Indelicato

I am 23 years old, and getting up at 6:30 am for a car inspection where I am required to meet my father. My usually stock-white room is now colored in the pre-dawn grey. I look with passive disbelief at my cheap Target clock, remove what would be multicolored blankets in a different light, and tread to the bathroom with the slowness of an adult now often inconvenienced in the early hours by forces above themselves. My friend is on a couch somewhere in the living room, visiting from out of town.

The house, like me, is in a transition period. Before I moved in, it used to be something I particularly enjoyed (a red-brick house with different colored walls, wood and more wood, rocks in the garden and ornate chandeliers, a home fit for magical fairies or eclectic parents) and now is struggling under its new identity (black painted doors, white walls, cheap gold handles and some light fixture called 'the Sputnik,' a house better suited, in my opinion, for a JC Penny mannequin). While there is active construction happening in the basement, the rest of the house is suffering growing pains with the new design. The wooden floor creaks in protest as I walk to the bathroom. I shiver as I brush my teeth, moving a discarded towel over the tile with my bare feet. I would discover later that the heating has cut out, and would remain so for several days. I think about the friend from out of town that's staying on my couch, with just the one blanket.

If being young is being fiery, being a young adult is being submissive, which is something I am learning piece by piece. I have watched my landlord (my roommate's mother, actually) slowly turn what I would consider my dream house into my worst nightmare for the sake of "modernizing." At first, when the mosaic tile was ripped away to make room for chalky black granite, I had to bite my tongue. When there was discussion over the stained-glass windows, I imagined chaining myself in front of them for days in protest. You just can't mess with something like that. It's immoral. But now, as I listen to the construction workers destroying the retro wooden walls of the basement, I think nothing. I spit out my toothpaste. I have, by 23, learned the most valuable lesson in life; that change is always going to happen, and it's done by the hands of those with the most dough.

Maybe once, I would have been outraged by having to disrupt my schedule by my father's ridiculous standards for car inspections (the reason it's so early is because he "knows a guy" who's getting me in before hours), but today I do not complain. I get dressed and walk through the dining room thank God the table's still wooden: the landlord's son threatened to paint it black) and to the door. He is the one who has paid for my car, after all, and I am the

subservient adult child. This might be less dramatically described as picking and choosing your battles, but to me, it feels like laying my head obediently before the axe.

In the dim light, I look with urgency to the couch in the living room. The friend, who is not really a friend but an ex I can never truly part from (you know how queer people are), is missing. Their luggage is still here, their phone...

Last night we had stayed up late talking on the couch, laughing, and musing over what our future might look like. We, because of the rule of three, are also in a transition period. In an inconsistent timeline of breakups and odd friendships, we are in a phase best described as friends who love each other but, because of "life circumstances," cannot commit to a relationship. We show affection in passing: testing the waters more gingerly than Narcissus, a supportive word when it feels appropriate, or in the case of last night, a head on a lap, just for a second, with a sigh of relief.

I laugh to myself, looking at the couch. I realize the ex/best friend is just so curled under the blanket I couldn't tell they were there. I shiver, putting on my coat, cursing the landlord but not the house. I send them a text from the car: "If it's too cold, just go to my bedroom." As I drive the twenty-five minutes to the county I grew up in, the ex/best friend leaps with astounding energy for 7am to my hardly warmer bed. We live by no label, being in this liminal space, but this feels appropriate enough an offer given the cold.

Like my bedroom, my hometown is grey, and it's not because of the time of day or the time of year. It's a suburban area in the county, and it is dominated by roads. It's primary function, at least to me, is to lead you somewhere else, somewhere more interesting. My adolescence, and up until recently, my young-adulthood, can best be described as a long-term dissociation while driving over never-ending stretches of road pavement. It's something I'm trying very hard to forget, and have tried even harder to leave.

My father, the Americanized son of Italian immigrants, has me get out of the car so he can drive it into the shop. Clearly something I'm unable to do on my own. I wait in a little room, cluttered with ads and license plates. I have a glimpse into the shop and analyze the bold, red font of the banners hanging on the walls.

My father walks in and tells me about a job opportunity he's heard about through his work. I am shocked, but not surprised. I currently have three jobs (another learned piece: parents won't believe you have a real job unless it's one where you sit at a desk). I tell him this and he remarks he has no idea what jobs I have, and I pretend not to be hurt. My father and I are not in a transition period; we are in the midst of an indefinite duel, in which neither of us can draw our guns. Needless to say, we suddenly have a hard time speaking to each other. I am

embarrassed and confused after a long-time war with my mother (I came out last year) in which he held silence about for over a year. I had my one impulse of speaking to him about something intimate and now I don't know how to carry myself. It's like I betrayed my masculinity to him (I am a woman). He is hurt by my silence over the last couple months (I was dying at home, and besides, had an opposite work schedule in which we never saw each other) and my "sudden" leaving (I spoke about moving for eight months. He didn't see why I wanted to). I expect he feels abandoned, but was never given the words to articulate that to me. Like him, I don't know how to apologize and assure him that I love him. Stunned by our genetic stubbornness, I ask him about car maintenance to prove I'm invested in what is happening today.

He answers everything I say with a scowl. I'm about to tell him about this movie I am writing, but the mechanic comes in and I don't finish my statement. I hug him, and he calls me to make sure I know the correct turn to make out of the parking lot.

It just starts to rain as I walk into the house. I jump into bed with Kate. I am so happy. The rain is pattering on the window, but only for that second.

Hope's in the random. The sporadic. It comes in the night.

**Author's Bio:** Sophia Indelicato is a filmmaker and writer based in Los Angeles, CA. When she isn't making stories, she's looking for salamanders in the woods. Her work appears in A Moment Zine.

**Art by by Donald Patten**



*Mask Gleaners*



*The COVID Card Players*

## Art by Donald Patten



*The COVID Nightmare*

**Artist's Bio:** Donald Patten is an artist and cartoonist from Belfast, Maine. He creates oil paintings, illustrations, ceramics and graphic novels. His art has been exhibited in galleries throughout Maine. To view his online portfolio, visit [@donald.patten](#) on Instagram.

# ***Unfinished Exit***

by Claudia Wysocky

I keep thinking  
about the time in high school  
when you drew  
me  
a map of the city,  
I still have it somewhere.  
It was so easy  
to get lost  
in a place where all the trees  
look the same.  
And now  
every time I see  
a missing person's poster  
stapled to a pole,  
all I can think is  
that could have been me.  
Missing,  
disappeared.

But there are no  
posters for people  
who just never came back

and you haven't killed yourself  
because you'd have to commit to a  
single exit.  
What you wouldn't give to be your cousin Catherine,  
who you watched  
twice in one weekend get strangled nude  
in a bathtub onstage  
by the actor who once  
filled your mouth with quarters at

your mother's funeral.  
The curtains closed and opened again.  
We applauded until  
our hands were sore.

But you couldn't shake the image of  
her lifeless body,  
the way she hung there like a  
marionette with cut strings.  
And now every time you try to write a poem,  
it feels like a  
eulogy.

**Author's Bio:** Claudia Wysocky, a Polish writer and poet based in New York, is known for her diverse literary creations, including fiction and poetry. Her poems, such as "Stargazing Love" and "Heaven and Hell," reflect her ability to capture the beauty of life through rich descriptions. Besides poetry, she authored "All Up in Smoke," published by "Anxiety Press." With over five years of writing experience, Claudia's work has been featured in local newspapers, magazines, and even literary journals like WordCityLit and Lothlorien Poetry Journal. Her writing is powered by her belief in art's potential to inspire positive change. Claudia also shares her personal journey and love for writing on her own blog, and she expresses her literary talent as an immigrant raised in post-communism Poland.

# ***The Voice Is Lost***

by Bob Carlton

the voice is lost  
in machines  
of devious  
blandness  
soft anonymity  
the unremark  
able usurpation  
of our ability  
to make  
the simple  
declarative  
our loss is lost  
in a vast  
ignorance  
masked as  
leisure leading  
us grinning  
to ersatz pleasure

# ***The Call***

by Bob Carlton

the call  
emanates from  
far away  
and echoes  
the initial  
mess  
age  
even though no  
horizon  
presents itself  
from this  
far away

**Author's Bio:** Bob Carlton (@bobcarlton3.bsky.social) lives and works in Leander, Texas, USA.

# **The Rope Trick**

by Bart Edelman

Learn the rope trick—  
By all means possible.  
To hell with the knots.  
They just get in the way.  
You'll survive; trust me.  
But never disclose the secret.  
Keep it stashed away,  
Where no fool can find it.  
Whatever your intentions—  
Whether lasso or noose—  
They're mere distractions,  
Keeping you from success.  
How you handle fate,  
The moment it arrives,  
Remains the only concern  
You need to contemplate.  
Still, practice day and night.  
Let a bit of the cord unravel,  
Strand by strand, if necessary.  
After all, it's only your life.

**Author's Bio:** Bart Edelman's poetry collections include *Crossing the Hackensack* (Prometheus Press), *Under Damaris' Dress* (Lightning Publications), *The Alphabet of Love* (Red Hen Press), *The Gentle Man* (Red Hen Press), *The Last Mojito* (Red Hen Press), *The Geographer's Wife* (Red Hen Press), *Whistling to Trick the Wind* (Meadowlark Press), and *This Body Is Never at Rest: New and Selected Poems 1993 – 2023* (Meadowlark Press). He has taught at Glendale College, where he edited *Eclipse*, a literary journal, and, most recently, in the MFA program at Antioch University, Los Angeles. His work has been widely anthologized in

*textbooks published by City Lights Books, Etruscan Press, Fountainhead Press, Harcourt Brace, Longman, McGraw-Hill, Prentice Hall, Simon & Schuster, Thomson/Heinle, the University of Iowa Press, Wadsworth, and others. He lives in Pasadena, California.*

# **“Weren’t We Promised the Thieves Would Be Punished?”**

*by Ace Boggess*

—Dean Young, “How to Be a Surrealist”

I have walked with them in their cellblocks,  
worn their lavish uniforms, been one of them,  
among them, stood in line in the chow hall  
for a tray so gourmet we identify it as caviar.  
Why did the champagne smell like watermelon?  
Why did our squared-off limos  
have wire mesh across the windows?  
We were the elite, living off pomp,  
our pillows the softest kind of hard.  
How could that be punishment?  
Our fortunes grew by sixty cents an hour  
as if we were pilfering, picking pockets,  
waving knives & broken bottles.  
Yes, Sir, we were glorious,  
at the height of fashion in ill-fitting khakis.  
Don’t you ever worry about us.

**Author’s Bio:** Ace Boggess is author of six books of poetry, most recently *Escape Envy*. His writing has appeared in *Indiana Review*, *Michigan Quarterly Review*, *Hanging Loose*, and other journals. An ex-con, he lives in Charleston, West Virginia, where he writes, watches Criterion films, and tries to stay out of trouble. His forthcoming books include poetry collections, *My Pandemic / Gratitude List* from Mōtus Audāx Press and *Tell Us How to Live* from Fernwood Press, and his first short-story collection, *Always One Mistake*, from Running Wild Press.

# **Distant Decade**

by Daithí Kearney

*Walking through clouds of memories  
Flooded fields reflect clarity  
In blue skies overhead.  
A time for conversations with  
Distant friends that,  
Despite the gap, flow freely*

*“All’s good and everyone’s well,  
except poor Tom who passed away;  
we’re still at it anyway  
each and every Tuesday”.  
Before the year is out I promise;  
Each of the last ten.*

**Author’s Bio:** *Daithí Kearney is a musician and dancer from Kerry, now living in Louth. His poetry is inspired by his surroundings and his young family. His poems have been recently published in Paddler Press, Patchwork Folklore Journal, Field Guide and Martello.*





volume I issue I

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