

Spring 2026



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Cover Art: Наталія Логінова/
Natalia Loginova



Dear Reader,

Thank you for taking the time to read our Spring 2026 issue. This edition holds special excitement for us as it marks our debut with a new platform, Heyzine Flipbooks. We hope you enjoy the updated layout, which combines familiar elements with fresh designs. It's been fun to experiment!

In this issue, you will discover recurring themes of love, loss, grief, self-reflection, the everyday routines of life, nature, and the art of poetry. We hope these pieces resonate with you this spring season.

As you read, we encourage you to engage deeply with the works. Allow the words and images to inspire you. Spring is a time for self-reflection and renewal, and we hope these pieces motivate you to embrace this season of hope.

Warm regards,
Editors at *Remington Review*

Jonquils

Jade Kleiner

Her jonquils in the windowsill
and the growing circles of nothings
in the petals:

last week I went bowling
then returned and her jonquils
had fed something small,
unknown, and ravenous.

When I started getting sick,
I tried for six months not to look in the mirror.
I brushed my short hair like a blind fish.
When I finally looked,
bits of me had gone gray.

I put the jonquils on the sill
as dusk eats the remainder of the day.
Night inhales the color of the world,
and the yellowness in the jonquils diminishes.
Tomorrow, I will dye my hair canary.





Let It Burn *Stevie Sobers*

IN THE ARTIST'S WORDS:

Stevie Sobers is a Bay Area–based mixed media artist whose floral works explore emotion, memory, and self-trust through color and expressive mark making. Working with acrylic paint, oil pastels and layered materials, Sobers embraces intuition and imperfection, allowing each piece to evolve organically. Her florals are less about realism and more about feeling, using bold color relationships and movement to reflect inner growth, vulnerability, and resilience. “Let It Burn” is a part of a larger series titled “Letting Go,” which explores the artist’s intentional release of realism and perfection in favor of intuition, emotion, and expressive mark making.

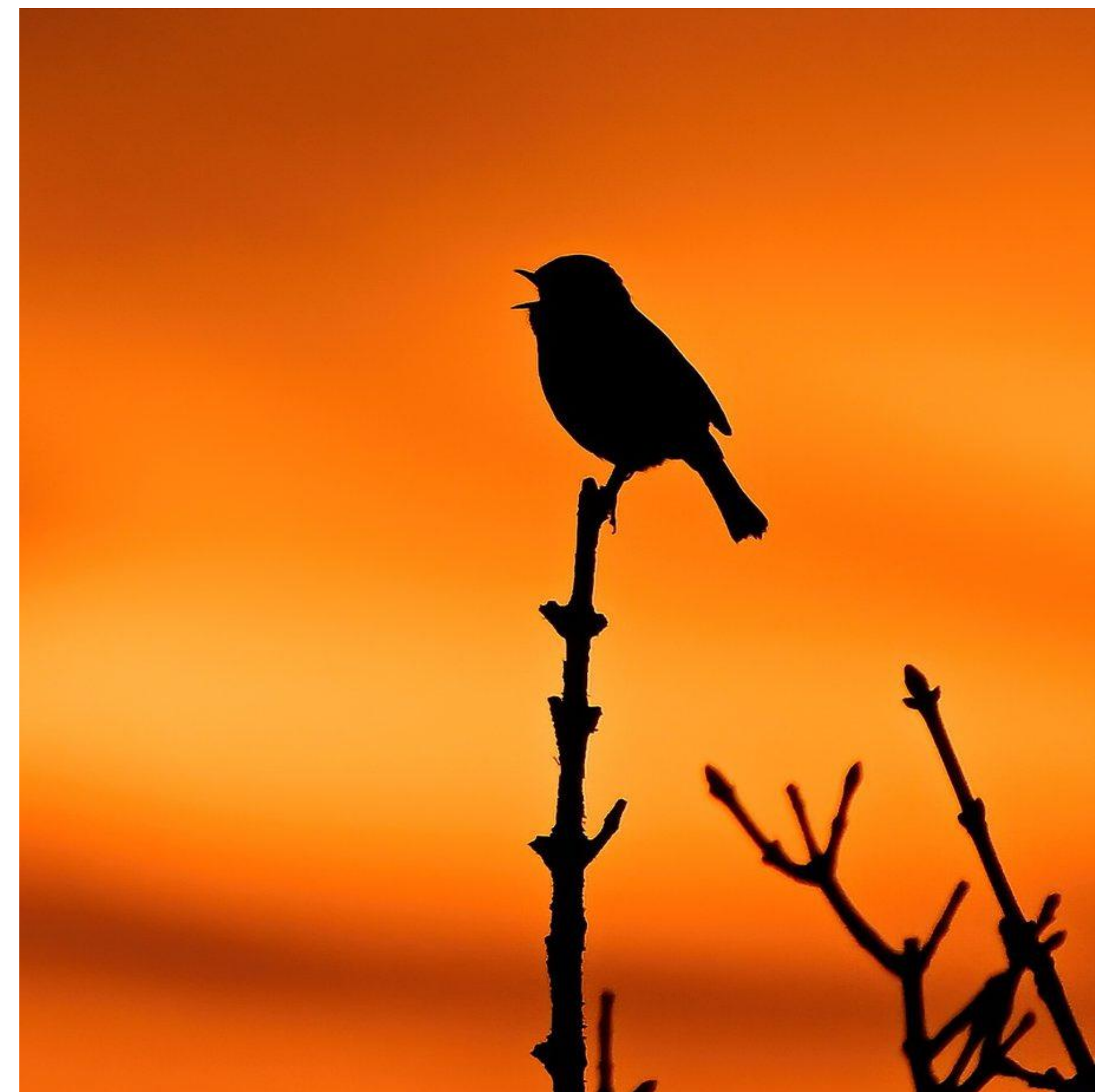
Into the Tangerine *Thomas W. Case*

Some poems seem to write themselves;
I just move the pen.

Others are like lumps of clay;
they refuse to be molded;
they need moisture and time.

Some poems tend to wander like puppies,
and then whine at my soul
when they want back home.

This one is like
a robin that just learned
to use its wings.
It drifts west,
on a gentle breeze,
into the tangerine sky.



Ars Poetica: Cold Feet

Alex Carrigan

After "Ars Poetica" by Archibald MacLeish

A poem should unfurl like
a gown from a tossed box,

lace and ribbons tangled through the air
before they gather on the carpet.

A poem should be a foot
stomping on the dress

as everyone hurries out
of the room.

*

A poem should be a champagne tower
moments before it collapses,

a sticky and bubbly explosion
onto the rented dance floor.

A poem should be the sigh as
someone grabs a broom and bucket

as everyone else hurries away
from the mess.

*

A poem should end with
the disassembly of a canopy

and the returning of gifts
from apologetic parents.

A poem should be the best day
and the worst, but it should remain

in the memory, even as everyone
hurries to the sound of screeching tires.



Tonight

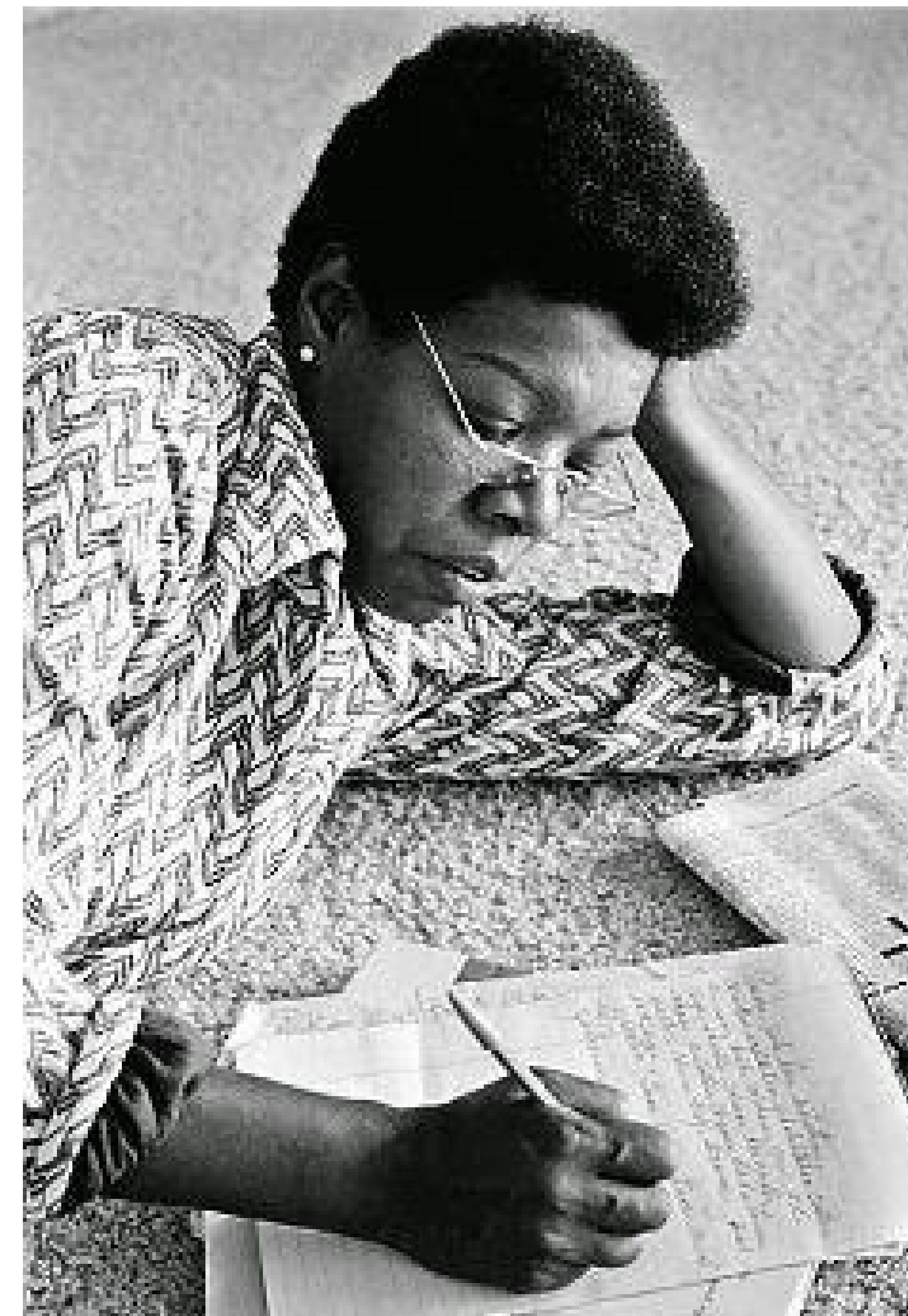
David Milley

Remembering Maya Angelou, May 28, 2014

She would've had something to say,
singer and poet, dancer and sage.
Words flooded to her, through her and from her.
Tonight, she'd have something to say.

In this week like no other, with all weeks the same,
hearing us honor and mourn her tonight,
but grinding our lives out without any change,
at that, she'd have something to say.

Tonight, she rests silent, her mighty voice still,
ranging the world we hunt for her words.
We sing them out loud, her laugh answers again.
Tonight, she has something to say.





My Story

Paola Scharberg

IN THE ARTIST'S WORDS:

I am a handmade contemporary collage artist from Southern Spain living in St. Louis. My collages are cut by hand from magazines and other discarded paper materials. Recently, I have begun incorporating my photographs into the art. My work explores concepts of separation, belonging, our relationship with nature, and the absurd. I create collages from discarded paper materials. Much of my inspiration comes from self-reflection and my perception of the world. I create to make sense of the world around me and to convey the contradictory emotions that often populate my mind. The process to create a collage often takes weeks of searching for images, cutting, placing, thinking, reorganizing, and finally gluing.

My interest in collage began as an urge to save and reuse beautiful images to create a different narrative. The contradicting natures of collage, having infinite possibilities as well as its inherent limitations, are a thrill that has become a core part of life.

When I Die, I Want You to Know *Nala Washington*

I wrote this poem. & another.
I wrote poetry from the aching
reserved for all my almos:ts:
folded grocery lists, sweaters
from last winter, candles burned
only once. More, I'm sure.
There's only one regret: that I didn't
get to love more of your beauty
mark, under your Adam's apple.



Day after
Craig Kirchner

When I'm gone,
the Keurig will still pop the pod,
the mirror will still be you,
you will still wash your hair and do Wordle.

The sun will break the horizon
and create a spectacular new day.
The moon will mourn, as will the ferns
but will become full and bud.

The closet is still my stuff,
the shirts are starched, the shoes have trees
but you will find things
you didn't know about.

The books will have a moment of silence,
but then they will go back to their job
of adding intelligent ambience to
what was supposed to be an office.

We will speak, but there will be no eulogies,
just cremains, and words
in the corners, in the shadows,
whenever you turn around slow.

Plant me with a new tree
as it matures, read to it occasionally,
make sure it understands it will be nourished
with your ashes when the time comes.

Previously published in Yellow Mama (April 2024).



To the Poet Who Sells No Books at One Reading

Sara Letourneau

After Joy Harjo and Joseph Fasano

Remember the ones who said yes.
Remember the ones who did not hesitate,
the ones who thanked you,
the ones who said they cried because
your grief poem evoked their own loss.
Remember the ones whose eyes lit up
because one of your poems brought them
back to the forest or country they loved,
allowed them to see every leaf or rooftop
again, place their feet on its earth
or cobblestones again, even smell it clearly.
Remember the poems that moved you
and the reasons why.
Remember the dark nights when,
by the light of a single lamp, the words you read
spoke to the small, frightened child
tucked away within, and you felt seen.
You felt heard. You no longer felt alone.

Remember what you hope to do
with the work you now create.
Remember what you hope to do with your life.
Remember how, after the event, you finished
reading a good book before the train
pulled into your station.
Remember the weight of your own books
in the shoulder bag you carried.
Remember the joy of knowing
that this weight exists at all.
Remember the sunset on the drive home,
bursts of gold and orange and the brightest rose
streaking across the sky,
and your gasp when you discovered it.
Remember why you are doing this.

NOTE: This poem is modeled after Joy Harjo's "Remember" and Joseph Fasano's "What to Say to Those Who Think You're a Fool for Choosing Poetry."

Belvedere Light

Robert A. Cozzi

The heat hasn't broken all day. The air hangs thick and syrupy against our skin. Even the pavement seems to breathe, exhaling in slow, hot waves that ripple through the city streets. So, we wait, the way New Yorkers wait for everything: impatiently, but with purpose, until the sun begins to melt into amber and the city's fever cools just enough to move.

By the time we reach Central Park, the nightbirds have started their evening song. Their rasping symphony echoes gingerly through the trees. The air smells of freshly cut grass and warm stone. You tug at my hand, eager. "Come on," you say, already ahead of me in a voice bright with something I haven't heard in weeks... joy.

You want to show me Belvedere Castle. From a distance, it looks like a mirage, all stone and shadow. It's smaller than I imagined, more like a memory of a castle than the real thing. Flights of uneven stairs twist upward toward a watchtower that cuts through the skyline.

With a playful grin, you take the stairs two at a time, sandals slapping the stone as your laughter follows like a mischievous echo. When you reach the tower window, you lean out, wind in your curls.

"Rapunzel!" you cry in a ridiculous high-pitched voice with your hair glowing like liquid gold in the falling light. "Let down your hair!"

Your voice rings out, sharp and sweet against the quiet purr of the park. The last sunlight catches the edges of your face, haloing you in gold. For a moment, you look untouchable, like something Monet painted. Then, you disappear, and I hear your sandals echoing again as you clatter down the stairs. You crouch, scoop a handful of helicopter seeds from the ground (they're called Samaras, you'll remind me later), and sprint back up.

“Rob!” you call from above, your voice breathless, part laughter-part command. “Stand under me!”

I do. The air is heavy with summer, the kind that's thick enough to taste. You open your hand and release them. The seeds drift and twirl around me like hundreds of tiny spinning dancers tumbling through the gold air. I tilt my head back and watch their slow descent. Suddenly, a humid gust rises from the west, stirring everything: the seeds, the leaves, your hair. It falls into your eyes, and you shake it back with that quick, unguarded smile that hits me square in the heart. You're radiant. The kind of beauty that isn't about symmetry or light, but about being fully present in the moment.

The breeze fades to a whisper, and the world pauses with an indrawn breath. The park, the castle, and the city wait, suspended in the space between day and night. And I swear, in that brief pause, you're the most beautiful thing I've ever seen.

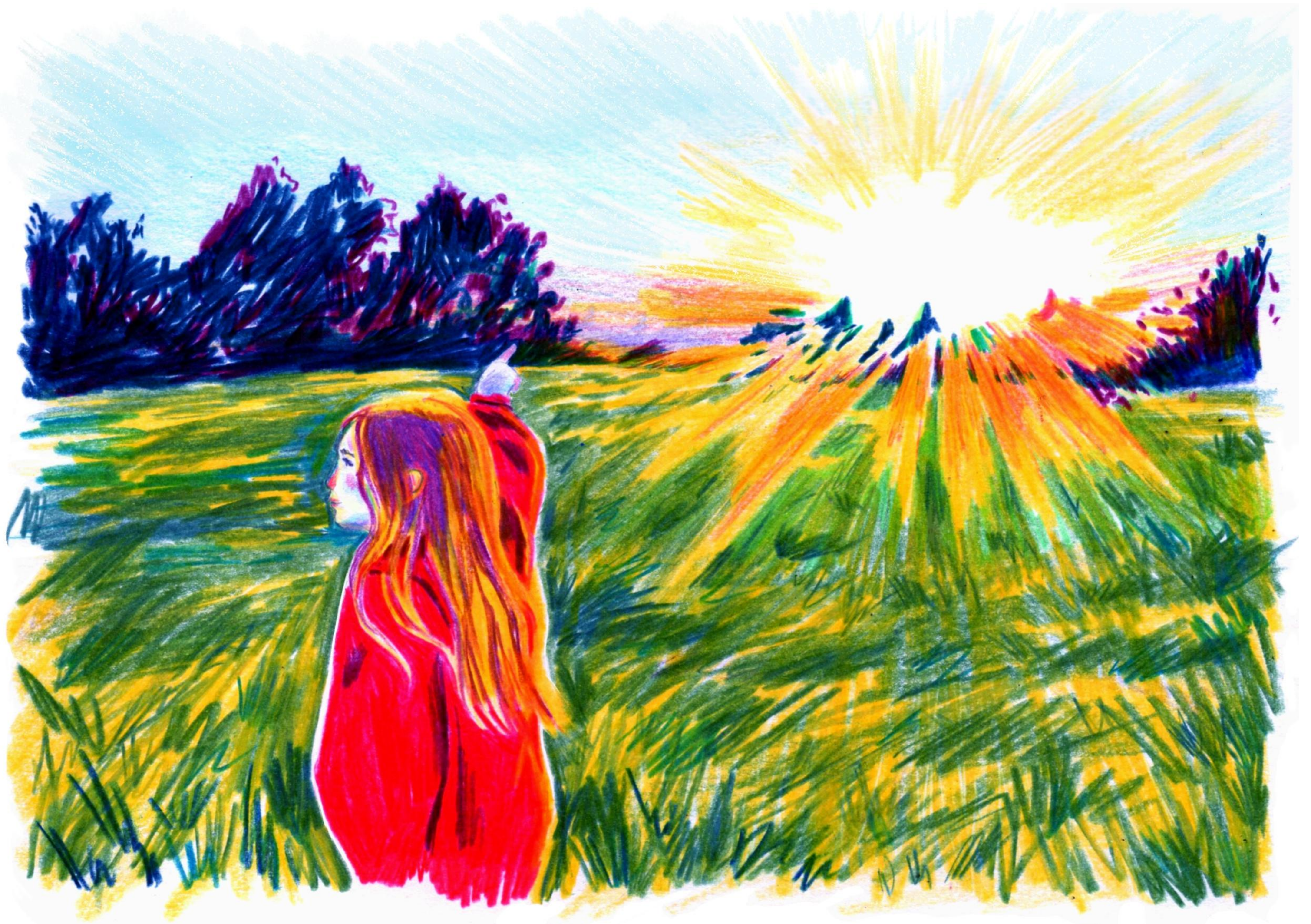
We stay like that longer than we should, both knowing this is one of those moments we'll never find again.

The last of the light vanishes, the air grows cooler, and the city erupts into a glittering web of a thousand streetlights. Your sandals make a soft scraping sound on the stone as you descend the steps with care this time. When you reach me, your eyes are still bright but softer, as if something inside you has settled.

“It’s beautiful up there,” you say quietly.

“I know,” I reply, but I’m looking at you.





Sun View

Isobelle Elizabeth

IN THE ARTIST'S WORDS:

Isobelle Elizabeth explores the magic and wonder of childhood through vibrant color, texture, and playful imagery. Inspired by growing up in the countryside, nature plays a central role in their illustrations, with fields, flowers, and sunlight often appearing as emotional and imaginative landscapes.

Working primarily with traditional materials such as colored pencils, they build layered textures and bold colors to create expressive scenes full of movement and energy. Their illustrations often feature figures interacting with nature in dreamlike ways, reflecting curiosity, freedom, and the feeling of discovery.

Through these works, they aim to capture a sense of youthful imagination and invite viewers to reconnect with the emotional warmth and wonder found in both childhood memories and the natural world.



Spring

Наталия Логинова/Natalia Loginova

IN THE ARTIST'S WORDS:

I am a truth-loving artist with a keen sense of justice and a great desire to change this world for the better, but I start with myself, despite the circumstances and disability of the first group. I see only a little with one eye. Paintings have become a way for me to convey the beauty that I feel and to inspire people's souls with joy. I paint with acrylics, working in the style of romantic realism. Creating works in very unusual and difficult conditions, despite all this, I am responsible for the smallest details. Therefore, my works reflect my stubborn and strong character. I put the most positive energy and love into my works. This is my language of communication with the viewer. I chose landscapes because, in my opinion, nature radiates powerful energy, because it is natural beauty, given to us for natural enjoyment. I paint nature. I do not attach myself to a specific form, because it creates a framework for me that I do not want to feel in my work. During the creation of works, I immerse myself in a dream -- to visit these picturesque corners, it gives me a sense of travel, which I love very much. I often depict places of incredible beauty from my imagination or from photographs, adding special details, to feel the individual romantic world that I feel.

Meet Me in the Park

Kate Miano

Amid all this green,
one branch
turns scarlet.

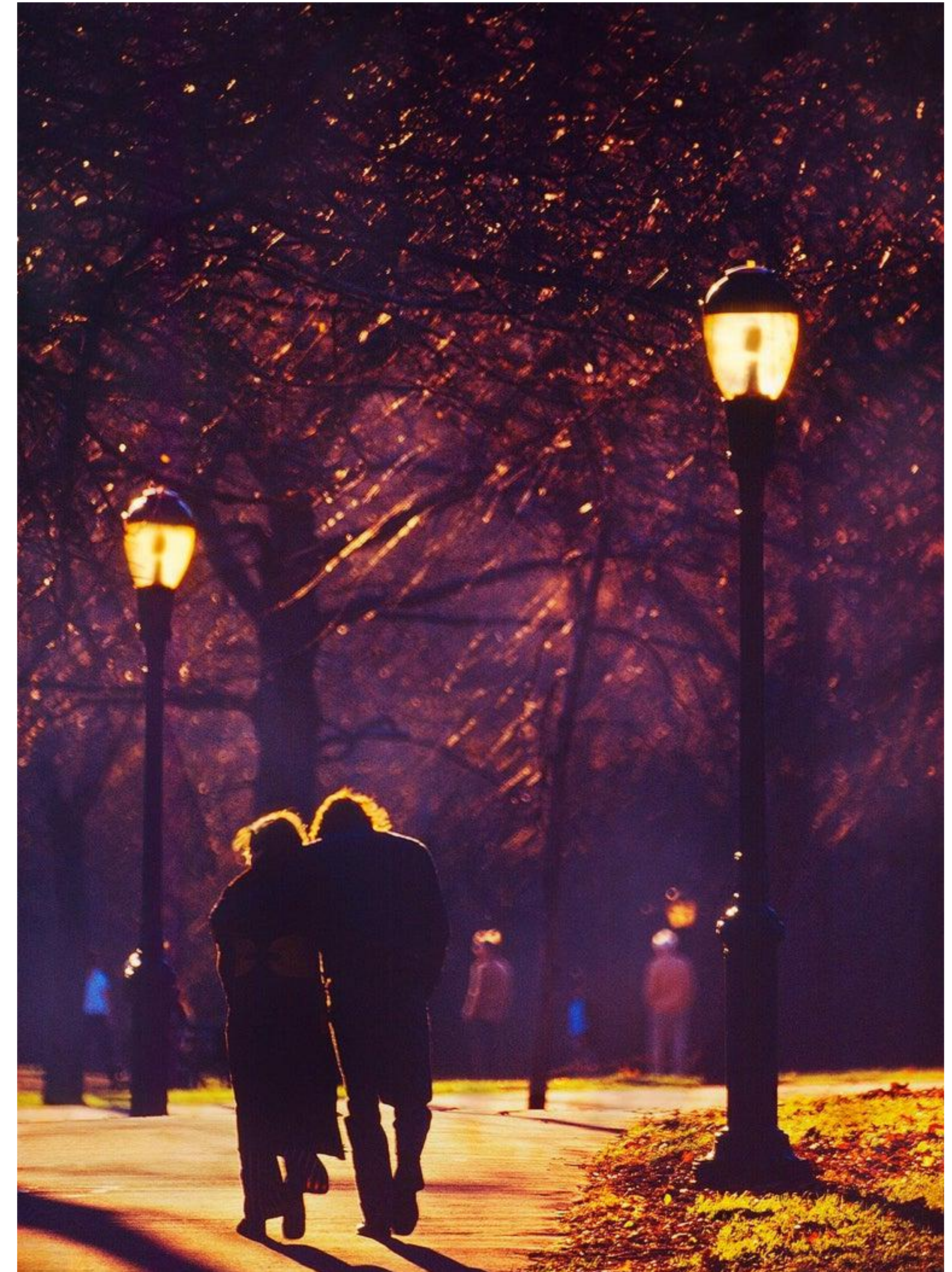
The sky deepens
cerulean to navy,
and the half-moon
is blurred by fog.

Frogs and crickets,
sing their last song
until next year.

It's been a weird summer
and I don't know what's next.

Against all my guesswork,
your arms are still
pulling me closer
as the air cools
past what we prepared for.

In your half-sleep,
you kiss my cheek.



A Joy
Eric Spry

“Why are you quiet?” you ask,
gray hair tangled on the pillow,
cold toes nesting beneath my thigh.

Your eyes,
creased with mischief.

I'm under two blankets.
You, one. Menopause.

I can't answer—

the quiet's
small joy.

“Because I made you laugh,” I whisper—
And I want that to be
the last sound of my day.



Kismet

Jillian Stacia

Kiss me at midnight beneath the cedar trees.

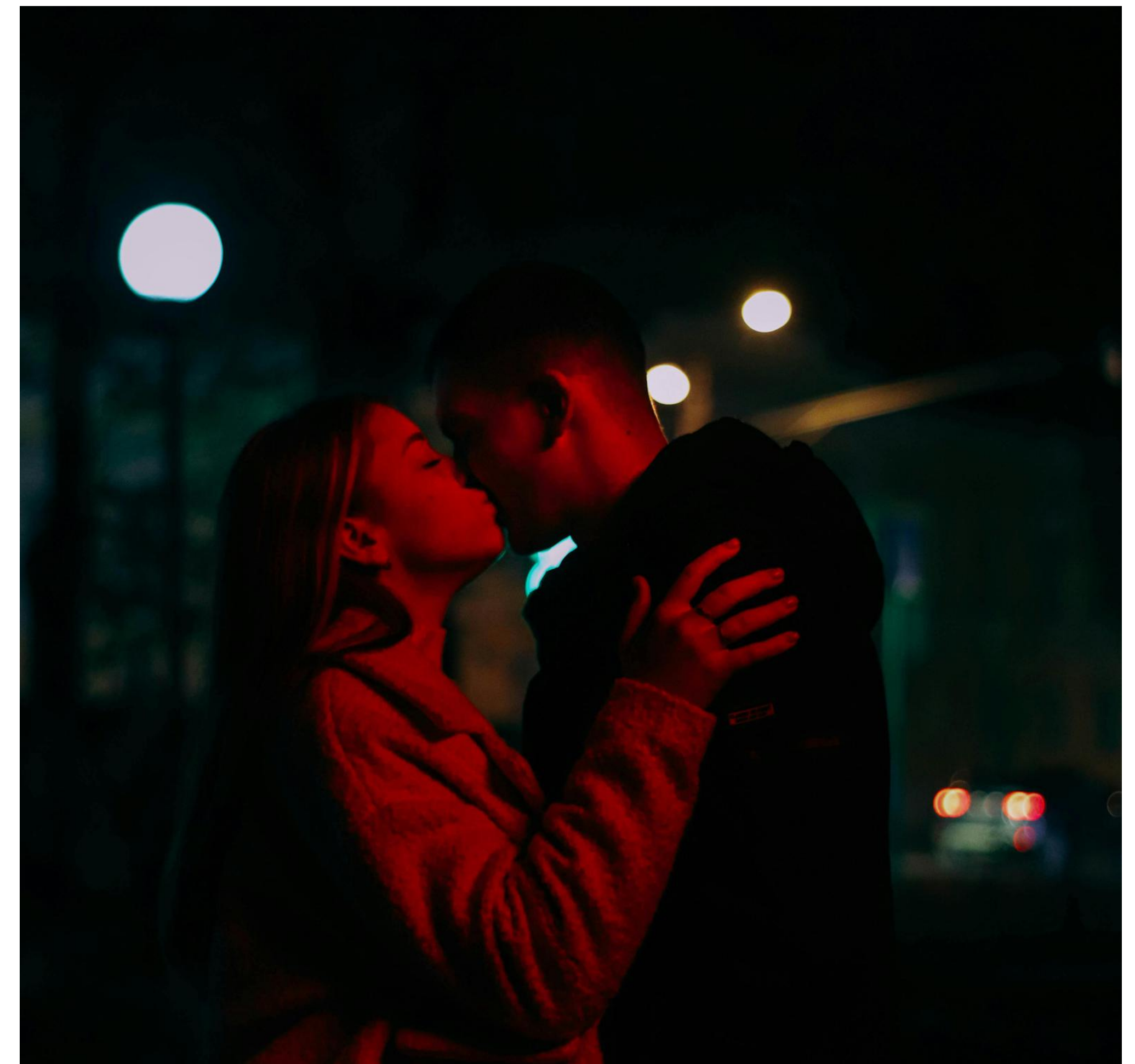
The sky is full of evangelical stars praying for a miracle.

I could be that for you—something to shoot for, a love worth wishing on. The northern lights burn green and fuchsia, little

lilac flowers grating against a satin toad night. Sometimes, I dream of love in a foreign language, maybe serendipity

screams louder overseas. The stars must shine brighter without all this smog. It's not polite to be this honest.

To consult an oracle. To fight so hard to change your fate.



Now/Then

Gabriel Flatto-Katz

I.

I told you that I was scared of time,
so you froze it. I told you that I was scared
of things slipping out of my hands,
so you held your palms out and said
you would catch anything that falls.

On the grass, the evening dew
kissed our backs as we
pointed out constellations
and I cried when the sun rose
because the stars were gone,
but you held me and showed me
that if I looked close enough,
a faded moon still hid in dawn's sky
and you showed me your cupped hands and
glistening, I saw that
you had caught the stars.

II.

I stare at my palms
and tried to find if yours
had left an imprint
like the moon had
that morning.

That morning,
somewhere between dusk and dawn,
I slipped out of your hands
and you slipped out of mine
and, surrounded by
falling stars,

no one was there
to catch us.



The Visits

Christopher Woods

At dawn, she awakens and leaves the bed covered with scattered dream pieces from the long night. In her nightgown, she walks through the dim kitchen, out the back door of the farmhouse, down the steps and then across the dew damp pasture, the light of day beginning all around her. The sun is a pink glow through the trees on whose limbs a few birds, voyeurs of the dawn, watch and wait in silence.

As she nears the meeting place, her heartbeat quickens. There is so much to recall. She remembers the very first time she met him here, so many years ago now, when they were both young. It happened by chance one early morning, how they saw each other in the soft dawn glow, as if for the first time, though they had known each other from early childhood. After all, their families had been neighbors. But she knows how one can look, and then how one can truly see, and it was the latter vision that they shared, almost trancelike, in the moment. It had to do with their age, perhaps. Or it was the rose glow of morning. Or most likely, perhaps they had both had only recently reached the age of need, of want.

Who could explain these things? The truth of it all was that something changed that morning. From then on, their meetings became habit, and prelude. Some mornings, he would cross the fence to be with her. Other mornings, it was her turn. And always, the rose light of dawn covered them with a pallet of calm, of purpose. They were blessed.

So, it is for all those reasons that, this early morning, she walks through the dew and high grass and faint light. It is to see him again. She will not lie to herself. Their meetings now are different. It is still a meeting of need and want, no matter how different they have become in what she calls this period, “the great changing.”

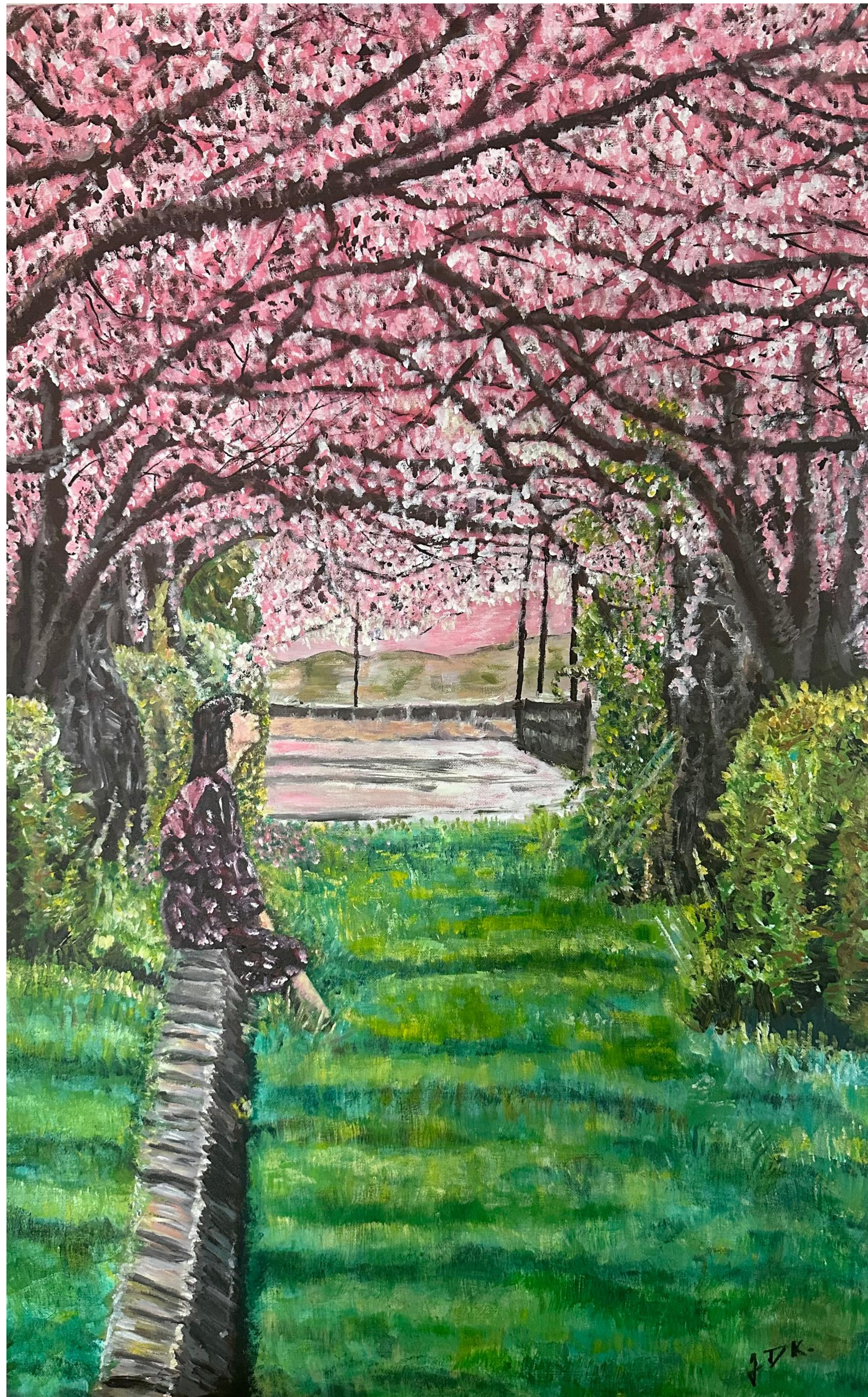
She enters the small grove of trees, the holy place. She senses that he is there already. He has been waiting. She does not like to think of him as someone no longer whole. Or how he died so far away in a desert war. She forces those thoughts away. Now is the moment. This is the ceremony. The masters of wars cannot take away the ritual. But she hopes that the others who died in wars can come back like this, if only fleetingly, in morning ghost light all over the world, to everyone who loves them.

It is his voice she hears first, how it floats on the moist air. Then, she feels his touch, warm and familiar, like always. And although she cannot see him or the light in his eyes, she can feel the outline of his body, the way it was, the way she knew it.

Soon, as the sun begins to rise and the soft light dissipates, she knows the holy moment has passed. His touch disappears. His voice seems to float away and into the limbs of trees. She listens as he leaves her, until he is indistinguishable from the sounds of wind and birds and morning, and then from silence itself.

Previously published in Cezanne's Carrot (2007).





Sakura Stillness

John Den-Kaat

IN THE ARTIST'S WORDS:

“Sakura Stillness” began with a photograph taken by a dear friend. A moment beneath the cherry blossoms that carried a quiet sense of presence even through the lens. What drew me most was the atmosphere within the scene: the soft arching canopy of sakura, the green path opening gently forward, and the solitary figure resting within the landscape as if held by the moment itself.

As I translated the photograph into paint, the image gradually became less about the place and more about a contemplative space, a quiet interior landscape where trust deepens, acceptance softens the edges of experience, and stillness rises like spring light.

“Sakura Stillness” is not only about blossoms. It is about the hush that can arrive when beauty asks nothing and simply allows us to be present.

Bird Feeder

William Cass

Like usual, Walt stayed under the covers until he heard tittering of the earliest birds. By the time he'd used the bathroom, made his bed, changed into clothes, and fixed coffee and toast, the first blush of dawn had just begun paling the eastern sky above the neighborhood's rooftops. He brought his breakfast outside and took his regular spot on the front step with it. As he ate, the silhouettes of newly-budded tree branches nodded in the yard on the small breeze. Gradually, he could make out the crosswalk fifty or so yards down the street that linked the elementary and middle schools. Her crosswalk. The one she'd guided elementary students across every hour during the day for P.E. classes at the gym they shared with the middle school. No one was out. Except for the birds and the occasional passing car or barking dog, it was quiet.

When Walt finished his breakfast, he returned to the kitchen, washed his dishes, and went into the bathroom again. He stared at himself in the mirror as he brushed his teeth, the stubble on his head more salt than pepper, the skin under his tired eyes loose and sagging. It had grown more since he'd retired from the library down the street beyond the schools a few years ago. Walt blew out a breath, then used the back door to go into the garage. He pulled the string on the tin-shaded lamp over his workbench and a cone of light lit the pieces of the bird feeder he'd been making. He blew away sawdust, turned on the old radio to his classical station, selected a hunk of sandpaper, and started smoothing the section of roof he'd left off on the previous afternoon.

Walt finished the feeder a little before eleven. Its design was simple, basic: a hollow house with a gabled roof on top and a wider, drawer-like bottom to hold the seed and provide a perch. He filled it with birdseed, turned off the radio, and carried it through the back gate and down the sidewalk towards the crosswalk. The replacement crossing guard, an older man like Walt, sat in a folding chair on one side of it. Flowers, cards, and candles were clustered against the fence that separated the elementary school playground next to him. Someone had even placed a framed photograph against the fence; she was young in it, perhaps thirty, about the age Walt had been when she'd started there as the crossing guard.

The fence was made of iron bars three inches apart that were joined by crossbars along the top connected to brick pillars every dozen feet. The playground was empty, though Walt knew it would soon be filled with students frolicking during their lunch recess. The replacement guard raised a hand to Walt as he stopped in front of the collection of remembrances. Walt returned the gesture, then fitted the feeder's wire over the bar in the fence directly above the collection. The replacement guard regarded him as he straightened it against the bar.

“I'm told she used to feed birds here all the time,” the replacement guard said.

Walt looked at him. “That's right.”

“Did you know her?”

Walt felt a heat rise behind his eyes. He said, “Just to nod and smile.”

The replacement guard did both those things. He pointed to the collection at the base of the fence. “I guess she was someone special, though I’m told she lived alone.”

Walt nodded. He said to himself: *like me*. He thought about passing her each day on his way to and from the library all those years and never having the nerve to say a word to her. Those eyes, that quiet, gentle manner. Regret overwhelmed him.

“That’s a nice bird feeder,” the replacement guard said. “Nice way to remember her.”

“Thanks.”

“You going to keep filling it with seed?”

Walt nodded.

“Good for you.”

Walt felt his lips purse. He nodded again and said, “Take care.”

“You, too.”

Walt turned around and headed back to his house. He fixed himself a peanut butter and banana sandwich, poured a glass a milk, and made his customary trip with them out onto the front step. By then, happy shouts of students rose from the playground. A pair of orange-breasted robins flew by overhead in that direction. Walt watched them swoop down to the perch on the feeder, watched the replacement guard follow their descent, watched him chuckle and shake his head. Until a week earlier, Walt had eaten his lunch there almost every day and watched her scatter birdseed at her feet on the sidewalk. Not anymore.

Walt took a bite of sandwich and washed it down with milk. He didn't know what he'd do with the rest of the day; now that the feeder was finished, he had no plans. Really no idea either how he'd fill the days and years ahead. Nothing but time lay before him. He watched one of the birds on the feeder lift off and fly away. A moment later, another replaced it.

Previously published in r.k.v.r.y. lit journal.



Transient Nature *Anthony Van Lam*

IN THE ARTIST'S WORDS:

This painting reflects the balance between life's impermanence and the enduring strength of human connection. An urn symbolises remembrance and the passage of time, while wrens and flowing florals bring vitality, renewal, and companionship. The calm blue palette invites quiet reflection, and bamboo represents resilience, flexibility, and longevity. Together, these elements suggest that beauty and peace arise when we accept life's transience while cherishing the bonds that continue across time.



Books to Be Read

Lorraine Henrie Lins

The shopkeeper died yesterday.

She was a wispy, cardiganed reminder of what I often want to be.

Well-read and slow with opinions, friendly, but not too.

She knew most of her customers, maybe not by name but by their face, their scarf or the genres they would linger in.

She could reference a book by just the sentence you mumbled at her, and gave you its location: section, aisle, shelf, left, right or center.

When she spoke, it was unruffled and rarely ever animated but even in her balanced tones, her love of books, and sometimes her readers, could be picked up, like an accent, if you knew how to listen.

They're having a memorial for her at the church, something she'd most likely have hated were she still here to protest.

But the women who wanted to know her best
insist on baking pies and the men who are married
to them have agreed to it.
There's talk of flowers and small plates
and mourners adding to her legacy
by signing the wall beside the register.
Yet I sit in my chair, the last book from her shop,
spine unbent, pages crisp, and wonder who
will open the doors again, who will love her books.



When Someone Dies, Make Potato Salad

Laura Tate

For my Aunt Isolde

Folks coming in for a funeral
need to eat, she'd say,
as small mountains of potato peels
grew, claiming territory across blue Formica.
She insisted on adding sliced hard boiled eggs,
and there was always discussion of onions,
how they make everything taste better.
I stayed on the outskirts, sometimes recruited
to chop the celery or to taste, once folded together
with two wooden spoons,
the final stage of what was never
just potato salad.
It was putting hands and minds to work,
a distraction from the grieving. It was
feeding the living while burying the dead.
Her second husband was a one-legged man
who loved sailboats and cats.

When he died, she found another one-legged man
who did all the driving,
brought her glasses of brandy
in the middle of the night.

When those days arrived, I hardly recognized her
and she hardly recognized me.

She would have liked her send off:
plates full, no hungry bellies,
children laughing.

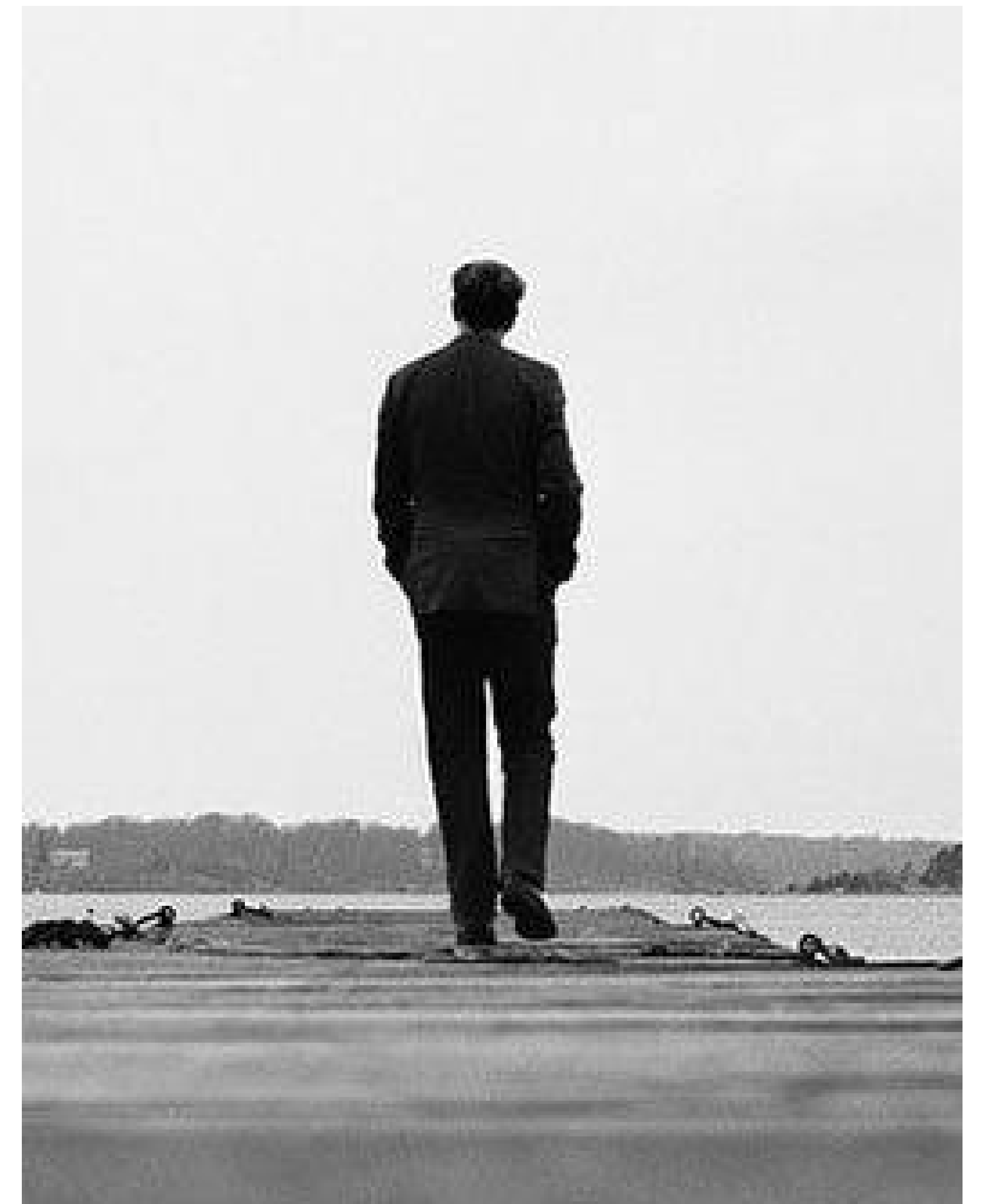
Previously published in OneArt Poetry (July 9, 2023).



Eleanor Rigby
Cynthia Andrews

On Saturday, I bought myself a new wardrobe. On Sunday, I cried for a lost boyfriend who died suddenly, without telling me. On Monday, I went to the library and took out a book and thought about how I would die if I could never talk to him again. On Tuesday, I try on all my new clothes and smile for a while over coffee, but Tuesday night, I think of his ashes strewn around a poet's tree in a dark and desolate park. I just shake it off and grab that new book to read. On Wednesday, I watch videos and pretend I'm all right when I see him staring at me, reading poetry and in my face. On Thursday, I dream all day of his voice, his face, his poem, his touch everywhere, and on Friday, I curse myself for being so stupid and shy.

On Saturday, I dream of how I will seduce him with wet lips anxious to know every part of him again and again, but on Sunday, I cry all day for that lost boyfriend who went and died without even telling me.



Please Tune Into Another Station

Amy Cook

Friday, 9 a.m.

After three days of nothingness, I am grateful for the distraction of my barely-broken-into routine. At the campus dining hall, I grab a cinnamon raisin bagel and thickly slather it with butter. My red bookbag heaves with the weight of the day's textbooks.

The courtyards are almost silent, save for the squeak and shuffle of just-bought sneakers. Some folks whisper, and others linger in tiny groups. I've been here less than a week, and faces and names are still beyond recognition. I keep to myself and think about the hours that stretch ahead. The 606 bus to Princeton after school, the walk downhill to the Dinky train, and then the Dinky to Princeton Junction. This is followed by the hour-plus ride into New York Penn, and the subway to Union Square.

I cannot wait to be surrounded by people I love. I cannot wait to use my voice in a way that feels productive.

As I sit down in Dr. Mendilow's seminar, I find myself nervously flipping through the reading assignment, squinting to read my own notes in the margins. I recall reading this essay (something about the monetization of African tribes) on Monday. But that was a lifetime ago.

Dr. Mendilow arrives on time again. All of the students are already seated, no one daring to be late today.

“Okay,” he says, sighing at the morning’s great work. “Go into your bags and find the syllabus I gave you on Monday.”

There’s a pause.

“I’d like you to rip them up.”

Thursday evening, 12 hours ago

All members of my chorus have been accounted for. Not everyone has a cell phone, and it has taken three days of chasing landlines for the leadership to locate all 200 singers, plus the dozen or so non-singing members, including me. Everyone is okay. Or if not okay, alive.

I order fried wontons and spare ribs. My roommate is God-knows-where. I read through a series of e-mails: instructions for where to meet the chorus tomorrow evening (Union Square, followed by the march to the West Side Highway and Chambers Street, where the barricade will stop us), a notice that classes will be resuming in the morning, and a note from my friends in L.A. I want to answer that one, but I don’t know what to say. The delivery guy comes with the hot, MSG-busy food. I fold the basket of laundry that’s been sitting under my bed for days, and wonder if we’re just going to go on like this now, making plans one hour at a time.

Thursday morning, 3 a.m.

I watch a ninth episode of *The Golden Girls*.

“Not Lebanese, Blanche. Lesbian.”

“Lesbian. Lesbian. Lesbian.”

I repeat the line in the dark to nobody. My voice is scratchy and unused. When I pass out, I don't bother to set an alarm.

Wednesday, 11 p.m.

Approaching bedtime. I lay back on my light blue comforter and flip through the channels. Terrorists, terrorists, terrorists... oh, *The Golden Girls*. I watch as if I am seven again, my parents out for the night, my siblings in bed. A faceless babysitter might be somewhere in the distance, on the phone, or raiding the fridge. I am perfectly safe, stretched out in a T-shirt that I wear as pajamas.

Tonight, my dorm room is dark, but for Bea Arthur on the TV and a tiny reach of light under the door from the hallway. I try not to think about the laughter coming from the other dorm rooms, a sign that life is marching on for others in a way it is not yet for me.

After a few minutes, a message starts to scroll in italic block letters at the bottom third of the screen. I am so blurred and weary from more than forty hours of near constant vigilance that it takes a second to register them as separate from what Bea is saying. These are not closed captions. It's a message from the outside world. The instructions are simple. *Please tune into another station for the latest news about the terror attacks in New York, Washington, D.C., and Shanksville, Pennsylvania.*

Wednesday, 8 p.m.

They have many angles now of the second plane, footage from folks who brought their cameras outside, after the first plane. The talking head analysis becomes hyper-specific and technical, and I watch the anchors lose perspective, their words slurring somewhere between the TV and my brain.

Wednesday, 6 p.m.

I order wonton soup, and chicken with brown sauce. Delivery. One of these nights, I swear, I am going to make some friends, and eat in the dining hall, with its low-level hum, chatter, and laughter both. I do *have* friends. Many of them are gay men. Some of their musk cologne hangs on the shirt I'm wearing as pajamas.

For now, I eat monstrously alone, and watch the same damn video of the second plane, shot from the same damn angle. Surrounded by books, the Internet, and a university full of interesting people, I find nothing else to do.

I tip the delivery guy with the \$5 bill I find in my wallet.

Wednesday, midday

There are still men from the chorus who are missing, although the list shrinks with each update. They will be found, the Chorus leadership promises. They just haven't checked in. Some newer folks might not even realize that people in their community chorus are looking for them.

I order beef with broccoli. My parents are paying for me to be on a dining plan here, but I don't want to sit alone at a large table, picking at oniony meatloaf, or a bowl of Fruit Loops. Listening to other people's conversations.

Wednesday morning

Elisha packs an overnight bag. She says she's going to stay with her boyfriend, who, from what I can gather, is a man in his 30s that she met at the Quaker Bridge Mall last week. She says it's okay if I still want to watch her TV. I tell her I might not.

Tuesday, 10 p.m.

Today seems not to end. I talk to my mom again, who wonders how she'll possibly get on a plane next week for my brother's family weekend at school. She asks again if I want to come home. I do, but I bravely say no.

Elisha and I both fall asleep watching the footage, again and again and again. I dream about clouds.

Tuesday, 8:30 p.m.

The President of the United States finally appears on TV. He speaks about evil and enemies, and these are words I hear loudly, louder than the thoughts in my head.

Tuesday, 7 p.m.

I think about ordering Chinese food, but I also don't know if it's okay to order delivery during a national emergency. My roommate, Elisha, and I watch footage of the ash-people shuffling; some uptown on the highway, and others across the Brooklyn Bridge. We raid her stash of protein bars. Sixty miles to the south of New York City, the sun is setting as if today did not sever life in half.

Tuesday, 4 p.m.

I wonder, for the first time today, where the President is and then decide I don't care. Fuck that guy. The mayor is doing fine.

Tuesday, noon

I think that I have been holding my breath for some ninety minutes, since the second tower fell. It seems feasible that if there were four hijacked planes, there are five, six... infinity. What will happen to the hijackers whose plans have been foiled by the closing of American airspace? Do they just go back to their lives? I cannot unglue myself from my bed, which faces the TV, and away from the spotless blue day.

Tuesday, 10:35 a.m.

I stand in the now silent laundry room, trying with some gusto to ball up my socks, which are definitely still damp. I drag my basket upstairs and decide to just stay put until the weekend. Is today Tuesday? I am an adult, doing adult things.

Tuesday, 10:30 a.m.

I start to pack an overnight bag, and then remember that I abandoned my clean laundry downstairs.

Tuesday, 10:28 a.m.

Both towers are gone now, and I call home again. It rings and rings. Finally, my mother puts my brother in California on hold. I can't imagine he was even awake. We discuss her coming to get me, if the trains aren't running.

Tuesday, 9:10 a.m.

I finally reach my mother and plead with her to leave work. I insist that a Jewish pre-school in Central New Jersey is the obvious next target. My heart is beating quickly, and my words slur with adrenaline. She is less than convinced, but she has not seen what I have now seen. She has not heard that there are people celebrating in the Middle East. She is also responsible for a classroom full of four-year-olds who might have to be picked up.

Tuesday, 9:06 a.m.

I talk to Muriel, the sweet, older secretary at the school where my mother works. She does not seem to know what's happened. Muriel says she will try to pull my mom out of the classroom, if I can just call back in a few minutes. I agree, and then I call back immediately. The phone just rings.

Tuesday, 9:03 a.m.

A second plane bullets into the other tower. I am perfectly sober, but suddenly unable to tell what is real. My stomach aches with hunger. I can barely hear what the television people are saying, because a thick static has filled my ears. I was on Sixth Avenue *last night*, the blocky towers looming over my merry band of chorus friends. My body fills with black tar dread.

I don't make a sound, but after a minute or so, I hear students crying down the hall.

Tuesday, 8:55 a.m.

A freshman boy with a scruffy beard bounds down the basement stairs, into the dorm's laundry room, where I am impatiently waiting for my jeans to dry.

He clears his throat, and the half-dozen of us all look up.

“Some asshole flew their plane into the World Trade Center,” he pants.

That was dumb, I think, but run up to my room anyway to turn on the TV.

Tuesday, 8 a.m.

My first thought is that today is a *beautiful fucking day*. My second thought is that I stayed out too late last night. I love Tuesdays, and this is going to be a productive one. I don't have Tuesday/Thursday classes; this is a luxury afforded to upperclassmen, unburdened from the dizzying rhythm of the core curriculum. Unlike the quaint campuses that dot the northeast corridor, off-days at a commuter school aren't used for rest or recreation. People *work*. People do laundry. I am going to do my laundry today, and then I'm going to re-read that African essay that Dr. Mendlow assigned. I only skimmed on the train last night. I wish I had gotten more sleep. I'm starving.

Monday, 11:30 p.m.

Tipsy and glad for the successful evening, I take the subway to Penn Station, the train to Princeton Junction, and the Dinky train to Princeton. Finally, after a frantic uphill, mile-long walk, I slide onto the last 606 bus of the night back to my dorm in Lawrenceville. The chilly night air is soaked with Christmas-y piano chords. We are at the start of something. When I get back, my new roommate is fast asleep.

Monday, 10:15 p.m.

My father, who sings Tenor 2 with the chorus, approaches me at the bar. “Don’t you have homework?” he laughs, looking at his watch.

“I have Tuesdays off,” I retort. “Plenty of time.”

“Don’t stay too late. It’s a long trip,” he says, paying for his old-fashioned in cash, handing me the \$5 bill he receives as change, and taking his drink towards the piano.

Monday, 7 p.m.

I am sitting at the upright piano at the LGBT Center in Greenwich Village, surrounded by members of the New York City Gay Men’s Chorus, where I serve as assistant to the pianist. September is always a funny time to sing Christmas music, but the concert comes up quickly.

Many men are attending their very first rehearsal; lots came from work, wearing fine suits, smelling of musk cologne. The youngest are damn excited to put on their name tags, to take their collated copies of *Joy to the World*, and later, after rehearsal, to drink to a successful season.

Monday, 9 a.m.

Dr. Jonathan Mendilow is a lanky professor with oversized glasses, a receded hairline, and a kind face. He arrives precisely on time.

This is my first day of classes as a transfer student. I'm optimistic that finishing my education close to home will be better than the fraught years I spent, homesick, in the deep-red fields of Ohio. I have a full day today; five classes, and then a two-hour commute to rehearsal in the city.

When he speaks, our professor's accent is very specific, reflecting years in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, and then at Yale. His words sound like marbles, neatly rounded and polished.

“Good morning. Welcome to Political Science 360: Terrorism, Revolution & Political Violence. If you somehow intended to be in, let's say, a lighter course, now is the time to go.”

Widows Club
Jacqueline Jules

We meet for potluck dinners and movie nights.
Create text chains for spur-of-the-moment plans.

Careers and husbands behind us,
we have the freedom to visit a museum
on Tuesday or go out for sushi on Thursday.

Comfortably situated in a senior condo,
I haven't been so social since my college days,
sharing wine and secrets in a dorm.

I remember café nights with Nancy,
who dreamed of trips to Thailand,
Susan, planning law school, and Alice,
determined to be an actress.

Existence didn't feel ephemeral
the way it does now. I bonded freely,
unbothered that we'd graduate,
scatter in search of jobs or love.

I didn't know Nancy
would die of a stroke at 30,
Susan would move to London, and
I'd never hear what happened to Alice.

Or that fifty years later,
in a living room of lined faces,
I'd be so willing again to bond,
if only for a few short years.



Coffee for Faith

Rebecca Aguias

I order a coffee using your name, just so others, and myself, can hear your name being spoken once again.

I show strangers your pictures. Look, wasn't she the most beautiful woman in the world? I thought so.

I write your memory with my left hand, in cursive, a story of who you were and who loved you.

No one loved you more than I did.

Gone, never forgotten.

Loved, deeply within my bones and the crevasses of my soul.



Nectar

Atlas Charles

Ada and I were sitting on top of our apartment building the other day, surrounded by the city below. The world's problems could be heard in the many sirens, reaching far beyond the streets they raced down. She had followed me up there ten minutes ago but hadn't said anything yet. My head told me to be annoyed with her, but I couldn't be. Old Lady Ruth's garden beds lay behind us, a haven of strength in the city's drought. Ada and I were out of place next to them with my split ends, her bun, and our pajamas. Usually, she had on makeup, heels, and an intense glare aimed at all who distracted her. Honestly, I hadn't recognized her when she first sat down and handed me a mug of tea.

“Drink this first,” she had said. Of course, I had taken it. I knew what she was doing. I sipped the tea and hissed when it burned my tongue and spilled onto my sandals to stain. Otherwise, the silence between us remained. After many minutes, we became comfortable in the quiet, which made me comfortable enough to break it.

“Why—”

“Ruth died yesterday night,” Ada asserted. My following shock kept my mouth shut, though my eyes widened. I looked back at the garden beds, jaw slack. “In her sleep,” Ada went on, “a good way to go.”

“Sure,” I agreed, taking a controlled breath and a second try at drinking the tea. It was still too hot. “That is good.”

“You don’t seem so confident in your words.” Ada saw right through me.

I shrugged, “I suppose that death in sleep is painless, but it’s boring. Ruth was an international diplomat who traveled the world. She was anything but boring.”

Ada smiled amusedly, and I realized that I had never seen her laugh before. We weren’t close friends, but for all that she smiled and for how many times we had exchanged building gossip, it was a hefty realization. “So, you expected her to die while piloting a fighter jet, or in a shootout?”

“I didn’t expect those things to happen; I just think it would be more poetic if they had.” I flashed an empty smile at her.

“I think it’s poetic that her death was calm. It balances out her life,” Ada countered and sipped her tea. My smile slowly dropped as my vision moved away from her and back to the rooftop.

“Ada,” I regretted starting the sentence as soon as her name left my mouth. I hadn’t known how to word the silly question at the tip of my tongue. “Never mind.” I shook my head but continued organizing my thoughts, if only to give myself something to do. I mourned the

humor of the moment before, wishing I could go back to that giddy feeling. More tea burned my mouth as I tried to chug it and failed. Still, the heat down my throat was worth it for the calming chamomile.

The garden seemed to have grown eyes to stare at me. I wondered, would it wilt and die without Ruth? Would someone step up and care for it? The first was likely, and the chances of the second were painfully low. Our apartment complex wasn't that kind of community (I snuck a glance at Ada) usually.

Sometime in the long seconds of silence that followed, my thoughts turned off. I didn't allow them to. It just happened. I suppose peace sneaks up on you when you least expect it. The night air licked at my cheeks. It was warm with a crisp breeze that made me squirm.

“Ada...” I tried again, still in a trance, “Do you not care?” She looked over at me. Her eyes moved across my face, trying to understand what exactly I had asked. Seeing as my brain had shut off, I didn't really know what I had asked either. The proper wording hadn't come to me yet, and it never would. I had just asked the question and expected something, needed anything, from it.

Once her eyes stopped tracing my lingering words and tumbling the inquiry over in her mind until it was polished, Ada sighed.

“I used to care too much,” she stated simply. I thought she was going to end it there, but the woman kept proving me wrong. “Once upon a time,” Ada continued (and I felt myself leaning in, as this is how all classic stories start), “I lost. But because I lost, winning became much sweeter. Even ninth place as opposed to tenth was nectar.” She shrugged, “It’s a story, but not much of one. I’m not much of a writer.” She glanced knowingly at me. She did it in a way that made me wonder if she knew I would later write about this very conversation. She couldn’t have known that I write about everything and anything (because every moment is fleeting and begging to be a story), but she probably surmised. I do not wonder, however, if she only talked to me because she knew that I would write about it. Ada knew as well as anyone that my writing wasn’t going anywhere but back to my inbox, with a rejection attached.

“What are you trying to say?” I thought out loud. It came out more snappy than I intended because I knew exactly what she had meant. I blew on the tea, hoping I could soon succeed in downing it painlessly.

“Something that borders on nothing,” Ada tried.

“Copy and Paste advice?” I translated.

“But give it flair,” she said in a monotone way that forced a laugh out of me. It was my first laugh in at least a week. I had come to the rooftop with tears in my eyes and was suddenly struck by how quickly the current conversation had turned my mood around.

“That garden needs someone,” Ada stated. She motioned to me, “You have plants.”

I again looked at Ruth’s garden, “I don’t have time for it.”

“You can’t just abandon a legacy.” She scoffed. Then, she motioned to my hoodie, “You went to Brown.” Ah, yes, Brown. My mind immediately went to the office job offers that I should have taken because the only special thing about me was that school’s name on my résumé. “Your kids would be legacy students.”

I chuckled, “No one likes legacy kids.”

“You say you have no time, but we both know you’re lying,” Ada blurted out.

“Ada—” I warned. She cut me off with a finger to my lips. I sighed. Being my next-door neighbor, I realized, meant she knew my comings and goings. “I suppose that I have as much time as I make. I am unemployed, after all.”

“Self-employed,” she corrected. For the neighbor I only ever spoke to when we happened to be outside of our doors at the same time, she was sure making a conversation I wanted to pursue. Turns out that flattery works a great deal on me.

I scoffed at her remark, “I refuse to be an unemployed person masquerading as a self-employed one. That’s an insult to all the small business owners out there.”

“Did you know I work in marketing?” Ada asked. I looked over at her, shaking my head.

I hadn’t known that much about Ada. I had thought we were two clashing beings before she had brought my favorite tea up to the rooftop and gone all manic pixie dream girl on me. “I can help you,” she said.

“I couldn’t ask that of you.”

“It’s a matter of finding time that’s always been there. Anyhow, I like my job, and I like your work. I’ve read your blog.”

“Gosh, you really want me to take care of that garden.”

Ada smiled and then giggled. Pride swelled in my chest at finally eliciting a laugh from the woman. “I really want you to do as the garden does, and grow,” Ada stated with finality that raised the hair on my arms. She downed her tea, beating me at my own game, and hopped off the ledge onto solid ground. “I expect you to return my mug,” she reminded me, and then left.

It took another hour, but eventually, I, too, had downed my tea and returned my feet to the concrete roof. As I walked to the door, I let Ruth’s plants brush against my leg and wind around my hand.

Ada sits on my couch as I write this. She’s already stolen my streaming service passwords and burnt popcorn in my microwave. Once again, I can’t bring myself to be annoyed.

Especially since I've done the same to her. Ada may have a fancy job and all the right words, but we're not as different as I had once thought. It's only been a week, but life is better. I mean, I've gotten one more book sale this month than I did last, and it really is like nectar.





Blue Ocean Floor

Katie Hughbanks

IN THE ARTIST'S WORDS:

My art focuses on the impact of water, air, and light - these are primal elements we all need for life, a need that inextricably links us all. In an ethical world, we (humans and animals) would have free and abundant access to clean and fresh water and air. In an ethical world, we would preserve resources for the generations to come. This artwork celebrates water as a life force. As a photographer, I offer you a moment of stillness and reflection. Water, air, and light—these are life.

Bitter
Ashley O'Neil

The taste I left in your mouth
must have been like the melon; ~~unripe~~
still forming.

You expected me
ready at your whim.

Wanted to bite,
find sweet
juices running down your chin.

How I stung
your lips, my name
pressed to your tongue.

Rind so dry,
it turned
your lips in.





DE LOCOS *Gabriela Farnell*

IN THE ARTIST'S WORDS:

Art is a way of life and a way of playing; playing to play is creating freely from prejudices. All my work is sustained in my absolute admiration for the works of those who preceded me from the very beginning of time, in this pleasant possibility of trying to emulate them with the almost irresponsible freedom of a child who plays to copy his elders. My work is a respectful tribute, a version of plagiarism, and cheeky play. Pure pleasure in doing. And it does not pretend more than to give the viewer the chance to allow, for a while, the possibility of pleasant play, as well.

Honey
Wesley Orion

I remember honey mornings.
Sticky, warm, sweet between the covers--
slow-moving,
sunlight tar.
Mellow.
Roll, twist, stretch.
Sugar sunrise on my tongue.



What Is It About *Andrena Zawinski*

What is it about the breeze
ballooning curtains into a sail,
nostalgia's smile rushing in across
the face of a mother standing back,
arms akimbo, nose in the air watching
sheets she strung out on the line swell
pregnant with wind under Monday's
washday sun.

What is it about the finches' warble
in the crabapple tree as it delivers
its fruit to the ground, she gathering
them into apron pockets to turn them
sweet for jam. What is it about
the routine of pulling wooden pins
from the line, then the folding,
then the holding sheets close
to the nose, the breathing in their
perfume of soap flakes and bleach.

What is it about the heaving up
of a basketful of neat bundles
of folds onto the hip like she
once did as a child, both smiling
up at the sun and another wisp
of wind floating in.

*(Previously published in Andrena Zawinski's Origami Poems
microchapbook, Of Love & Wonder).*





Lilac
Jacelyn Yap

IN THE ARTIST'S WORDS:

The photograph was taken in Hokkaido, Japan, in late spring. These flowers mark the end of spring and the start of summer.

You Look Just Like Your Mother

Sydney Rose

I've been told I look just like my mother for the majority of my life. For the longest time, I didn't see it. To start, I had bright, blonde hair during childhood and grey eyes with just a hint of blue. My mom had green eyes and dark hair, which she claims is "dark blonde," but anyone with eyes can see it's brown.

Before I was ten, I would hear from family members about how they thought, lookwise, I favored my dad's sister. This is the resemblance I saw more of, as she was a fellow blonde with light eyes. These were the things 10-year-old me considered to be the only attributes of similarity. I didn't think to consider my mother and I had the same glint of mischief in those different colored eyes, or the same shimmer when tears welled up watching a sad movie together. Not to mention, our hair had the same frizzy, wavy texture even with different shades to it.

My mom's mother would always lean in to whisper to me, as if it were a secret, "I know everyone thinks you look like Julie, but you look just like your mom."

I've seen baby pictures used as proof of the resemblance. My grandmother has stacks of photos with my mother on her hip, posed in a cowgirl uniform like the native Texan she is, or in

her cheer outfit from middle school. None of these made me suddenly think we were identical. I continued to brush it off.

Friends would come over to my house to play games or eat dinner and I would hear plenty of comments fly about how alike my mother and I were once they saw her. It probably helped their case when we would show the same passion about winning card games, yelling “In your face!” and doing a little celebratory dance. I would always have such pushback and claim to not see it myself.

After my parents divorced, being told I was like my mother came off as an insult from my father’s mouth. She was associated with loudness, brashness and the classic case of being a woman who was “too” independent. I sometimes would reject that we had these qualities in common, pushing myself down to be more quiet or beating around the bush to get out what I want to say in a gentler way.

It is hard to deny we have the same laugh, but I still tried to. Once, a family friend commented on how alike we sounded, and my mother pushed past the topic before I could even rally my defenses and argue against it. She’s described as having a “laugh like a machine gun,” and I didn’t want the machine gun laugh. I wanted something that was my own. I’ve answered my grandma’s call to my mom before and had to clarify, “No, this is Sydney,” when she didn’t hear any distinct difference in my voice from her daughter’s.

As I grow older, my hair gets darker and my face more defined. I embrace my independence, like I was always taught to do, but stay gentle in ways. I get told how alike my mom and I look even more now. The same slant of the nose, the same downturn of the mouth, the same nose scrunch when we see something we don't like.

Online friends who have only seen pictures of the two of us gush about her being my twin. Friends from college are amazed when they see the person dropping me off appears just like I do. Roommates would gape, "You look just like your mom!" when she came to visit. Imagine the uproar when we would say the same thing at the same time.

It's a large part of our relationship, I think. Being a single mom raising one daughter, she shaped me in whichever way she could, and it was my job to reject it or embrace it. I was set to be her 'mini me,' and for the longest time, I didn't allow myself to be. The woman who shares my interests, my laugh, my face.

I've been under the same roof as her my entire life and it wasn't until we were thousands of miles apart, when I was living alone, that seeing our pictures together and matching the features one to one brought me comfort. The memory of watching a bad movie, but still both rating it three stars or yelling in sync at one of the cats getting into something they shouldn't. Now, I hear her yell at the cats alone over the phone.

Scarred from my old defenses, when a stranger or acquaintance tells my mother, “She looks just like you!” her usual response is, “She doesn’t think so,” or “She hates that.”

But, I don’t hate it. I now savor the instances of someone comparing our smiles or seeing our photo and gasping at the resemblance. I’m allowed to be my own person while still being similar to my mother, which I thought wasn’t a possibility for a while. My denials were attempted acts of independence, which was exactly like her in its own way.

My eyes may be a bit lighter, I might have dyed my hair a bit darker and my voice might be a bit quieter, but I am just like my mother in so many ways.





On the Threshold

Maria Golosnaia

IN THE ARTIST'S WORDS:

My practice explores the threshold between visible and invisible, centering on fleeting gestures, memory fragments, and inner visions that hover between clarity and dissolution. Archetypes and symbolic states—memory, vulnerability, and transcendence—take form through familiar yet transformed imagery: faces, hands, women, and children. These become signs of intangible experience, described not by words but by images that arrive first as premonition and at the same time as moments of epiphany -- profound realization or insight.

Inspired by Byzantine frescoes, Proto-Renaissance, and Russian icon painting, I work in tempera, employing localized color, reverse perspective, and luminous contours. Each element carries symbolic weight, contributing to a unified whole. For me, painting is not reflection but preservation: it seizes what slips away and transforms it into something more significant. I seek to create works that suspend the viewer, inviting contemplation on presence, memory, and the hidden dimensions of experience.

Slip Slidin'
Beck Reynolds

Nan taught me to jive on the kitchen tiles.
She would slide me between her feet

as effortlessly as an omelette
slips out of the frying pan, landing

on her floral-edged plates
in a little puddle of grease.

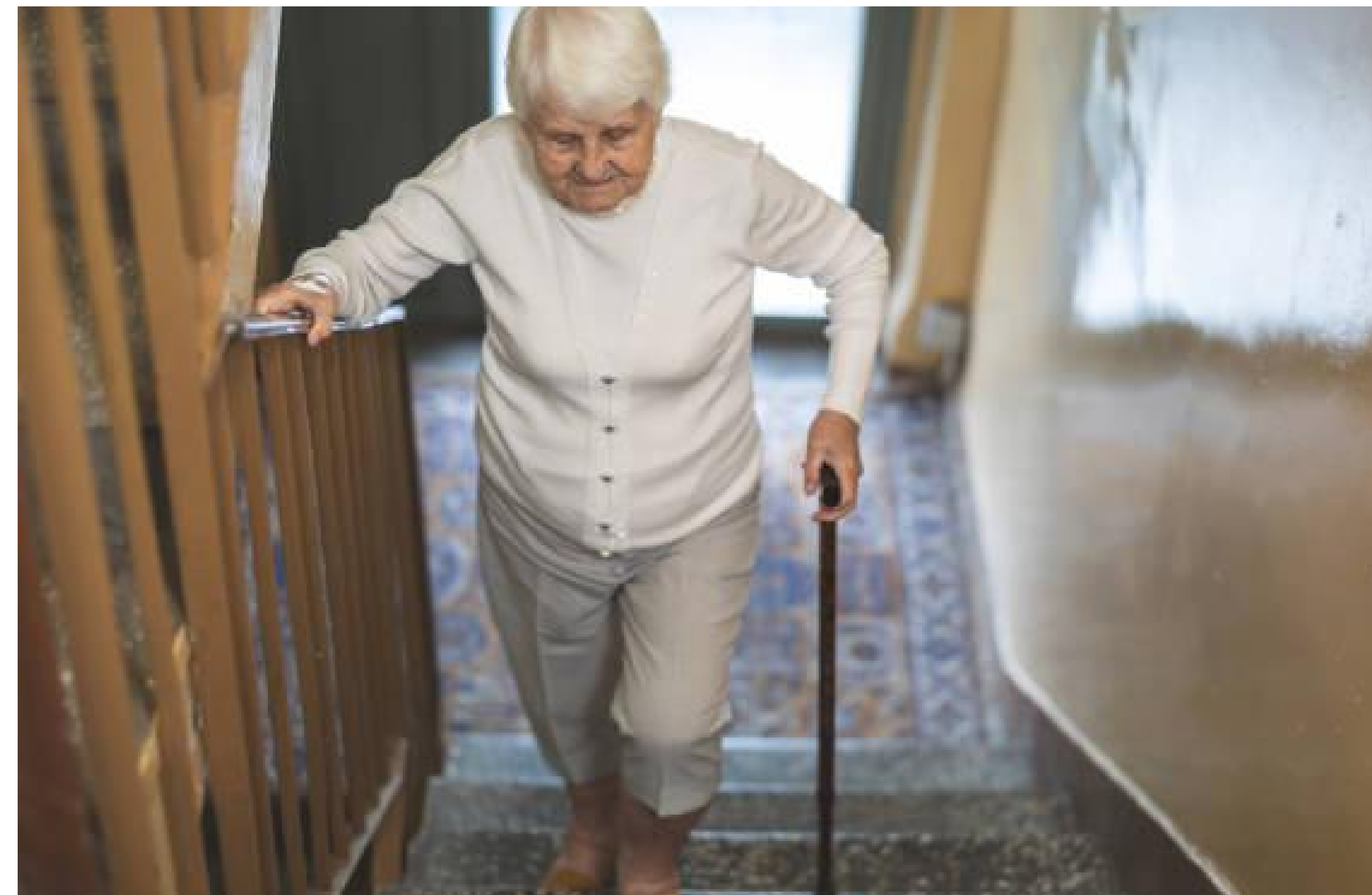
I'd reach that point of no return
where I felt I was about to slip loose,

go smashing through
the frosted glass conservatory.

Every time I'd somehow swing back,
find myself upright. Now

I lean over the arm of the sofa to watch
her feet shuffling along those tiles.

Hope if she goes sliding,
I'd know how to catch her.





Blooming Ukraine

Наталія Логінова/Natalia Loginova

IN THE ARTIST'S WORDS:

I am a truth-loving artist with a keen sense of justice and a great desire to change this world for the better, but I start with myself, despite the circumstances and disability of the first group. I see only a little with one eye. Paintings have become a way for me to convey the beauty that I feel and to inspire people's souls with joy. I paint with acrylics, working in the style of romantic realism. Creating works in very unusual and difficult conditions, despite all this, I am responsible for the smallest details. Therefore, my works reflect my stubborn and strong character. I put the most positive energy and love into my works. This is my language of communication with the viewer. I chose landscapes because, in my opinion, nature radiates powerful energy, because it is natural beauty, given to us for natural enjoyment. I paint nature. I do not attach myself to a specific form, because it creates a framework for me that I do not want to feel in my work. During the creation of works, I immerse myself in a dream -- to visit these picturesque corners, it gives me a sense of travel, which I love very much. I often depict places of incredible beauty from my imagination or from photographs, adding special details, to feel the individual romantic world that I feel.

Summer Serenade

Alexandra Lennard

The crickets' summer serenade is stark against the darkness — save for the bulb above the front step, faithfully casting a halo that just embraces the sliding doors of our van and sees our tiny bodies into Nana's arms.

One by one, we're hugged and tucked into the yellow warmth of her one-bedroom apartment.

As Nana shuts out the night, the cluster of brass bells on the knob jingle lightly.

The crickets give way to Rice Crispies crackling in the kitchen, the hum of the air conditioning, and the thick cackle of a woman rich with the knowledge of her worth.



Dog Days

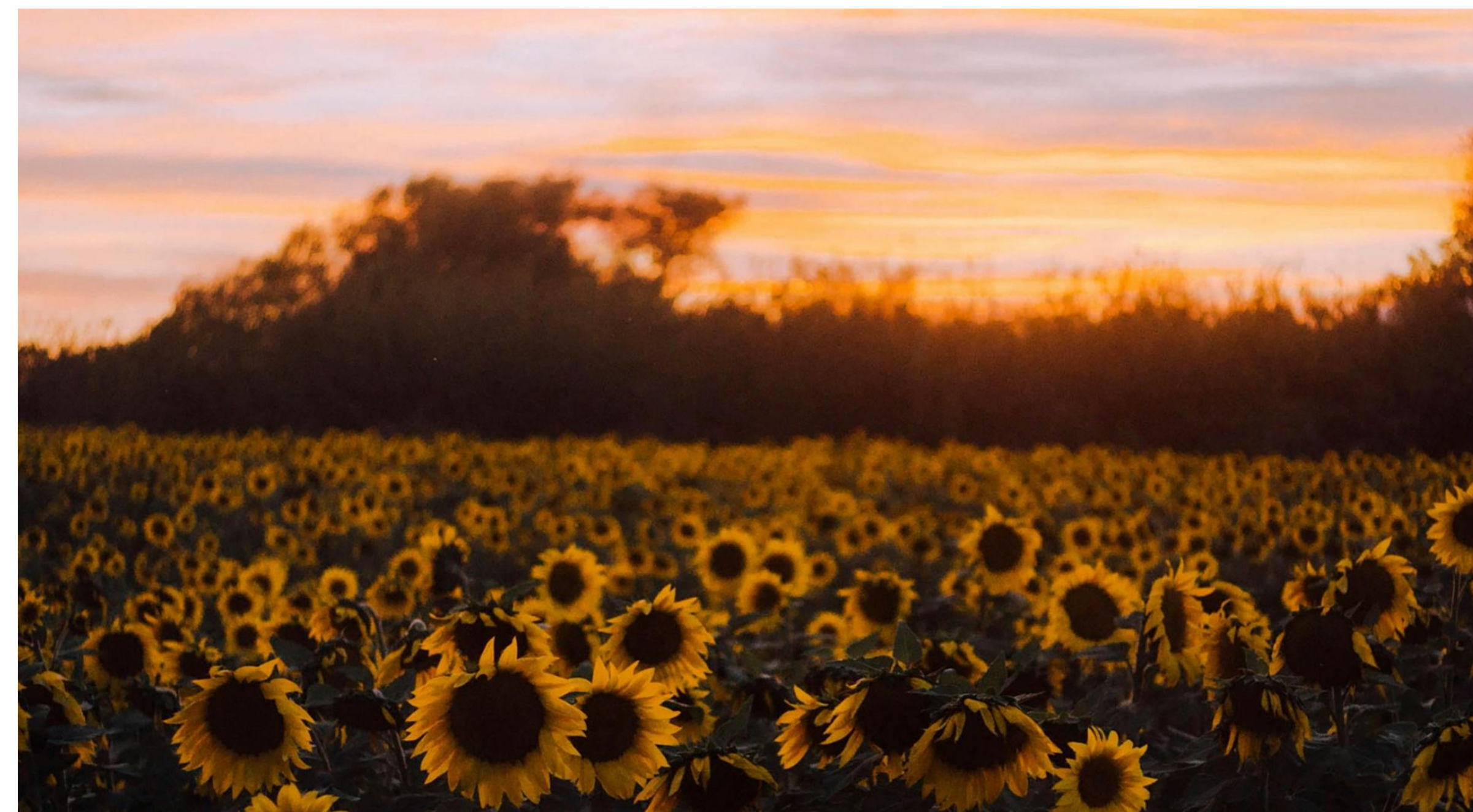
KB Ballentine

It could be the mountains

shifting in the dawn, the haze
that crazes these July days.

It could be the weeds,
stubborn and clutching
the soil while gardenias
and roses brown and curl.

It could be the sunflower,
witness to goldfinch adoration
or laughter from the camp
downriver, splashing paddles
and arms. It could be the chimes,
searching for a breeze that sings
summer's song, sun stretching
full height before looking away.



Contributors' Notes:

Rebecca Agauas is a woman who lives in Michigan. She is a person living with chronic illnesses and is an advocate for the chronic illness community. Agauas has a love and passion for writing, and considers writing a form of self-expression and self-reflection. She has self-published two books and has been published and received recognition from various literary magazines. You can find Agauas on Instagram @rebeccaagauas.

Cynthia Andrews is a veteran of the NYC poetry circuit, and has had readings in such venues as The Knitting Factory, Cornelia Street Café, St. Marks Church, and The Nuyorican Poets Café, where her performance was one of the first to be archived at Poet's House. She has been widely published in various literary journals and anthologies, including *ALLOUD: Voices from the Nuyorican Poets Café*, *The Voice Literary Supplement*, *The 2020 Beat Poets Anthology*, *Long Shot*, *Red Fez*, *La Piccioleta Barca*, *The Button Eye Review*, *Drunk Monkeys*, *The Brooklyn Review*, *Global Poemic*, *Chronogram Literary Magazine*, and *Tribes Literary Journal*. She is the author of two chapbooks: *Saving Summer* and *Homeless* (The New Press), and one poetry collection: *A Little Before Twelve* (Poets of Queens). She has been a favored guest poet on cable TV and radio, including Teachers and Writers in the Morning and WBAI New York. Nominated for a Pushcart Prize twice and a finalist for the Downtown Year of the Poet award, she holds an MFA in Creative Writing and resides in Queens, New York.

KB Ballentine's latest collection is *All the Way Through* (2024, Sheila-Na-Gig Inc.). She has eight previous poetry collections with Blue Light Press, Iris Press, Middle Creek Publishing, and Celtic Cat Publishing. Published in *North Dakota Quarterly*, *Atlanta Review*, and *Haight-Ashbury Literary*

Journal, and others, her work also appears in anthologies, including *Women Speak* (2024) and *The Strategic Poet* (2021). Learn more at www.kbballentine.com.

Alex Carrigan (he/him) is a Pushcart-nominated editor, poet, and critic from Alexandria, VA. He is the author of *Now Let's Get Brunch* (Querencia Press, 2023) and *May All Our Pain Be Champagne* (Alien Buddha Press, 2022). He has appeared in *HAD*, *fifth wheel press*, *Sage Cigarettes*, *JAKE*, *Inlandia Journal*, and more. Visit carriganak.wordpress.com or follow him on X @carriganak for more info.

Thomas W. Case was born in Oxnard, California, and currently lives in Iowa. He has published four books of poetry, and his work has appeared in numerous journals and online publications. Case's poetry is often raw, gritty, and reflective, exploring themes of human experience, humor, and the surreal.

William Cass has published over 400 short stories and won writing contests at *Terrain.org* and *The Examined Life Journal*. He's been nominated once for Best of the Net, twice for Best Small Fictions, six times for the Pushcart Prize, and had three short story collections released by *Wising Up Press*.

Atlas Charles is a young Cherokee writer born and raised in Oklahoma. Her most notable work is as a singer and songwriter on the Cherokee language compilation album *Anvdivnelisgi*. She has also given a TEDx talk titled "More Than Just Words" about indigenous language preservation. Between endless schoolwork and musical theatre rehearsals, Charles fills documents and journals with nonsense thoughts that occasionally become short stories and poems.

Amy Cook is the author of “Where There’s Smoke, There’s Blue Sky: The Hallmarks of 9/11’s Imagery in Prose” (*Assay: A Journal of Nonfiction Studies*), and is a recipient of a 2026 Exploring Judaism LGBTQ+ Writers Fellowship. Finalist for: *Tablet’s* First Personal Essay Contest, *The Good Life Review* Honeybee Prize, and *Grist: A Journal of the Literary Arts’* ProForma Competition. Her essays and poems have been featured in more than three dozen journals and anthologies, including *Anti-Heroic Chic*, *the Los Angeles Review*, and *Bacopa Literary Review*. She is an Editorial Assistant for *CRAFT*. She attended Rainier Writing Workshop (MFA 2025) and *Kenyon Review* Writers Workshop. Find more at www.amycookwrites.com.

Robert A. Cozzi, a New Jersey native, has been keeping a daily handwritten journal since the ninth grade, when a teacher first encouraged him to take his writing seriously. That practice, intimate, unfiltered, and enduring, remains at the heart of his work. His writing often explores memory, connection, and the way love and friendship persist even beyond loss. His work has appeared in publications such as *Bending Genres*, *Squid Literary*, and *Cosmic Daffodil*. Cozzi's debut novel, *Fate Has Handed Me a Wildcard*, is scheduled for release by 21 Chieftans Press in 2026.

Isobelle Elizabeth is a multimedia illustrator based in East Sussex, England. Working primarily with traditional materials such as colored pencils, their practice focuses on vibrant color, texture, and expressive imagery. Inspired by childhood memories and growing up in the countryside, their work often explores themes of nature, imagination, and youthful wonder. Through whimsical, nature-filled scenes, they aim to capture emotion, energy, and a sense of magic within everyday moments.

Gabriela Farnell was born in Lanús, Buenos Aires, Argentina in 1967, where she currently resides and works. Self-taught, she has developed a personal and characteristic style, fusing a classic aesthetic - supported by careful and polished drawing - with the playful spirit of Latin American magical realism. Farnell's approach is characterized by a notable openness to experimentation with various artistic media and materials, which she reinterprets in unconventional and innovative ways. Farnell has exhibited her work in numerous exhibitions, individual and group, since 1992. Her work has been reproduced in *Arte y Artistas* (Peru), *Niji Magazine*, *CP Magazine* (Mexico), *Ophelia Magazine* (Argentina/Chile), *GalaArt Revista de Arte* (Spain), *Boomer Magazine #3/Identity* (London, UK), and others. All her updated activity, with reproduction of images of all her work, can be found on her personal blog, ESPACIO FARNELLIANO at gabifarnell.blogspot.com/.

Maria Golosnaia (b. 1996) is a Moscow-based painter whose practice is a deep and continuous inquiry into the transformation of cultural heritage. Her artistic journey began with a thorough mastery of classical techniques at the Ilya Glazunov Russian Academy of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture, which she later re-evaluated through contemporary frameworks. Golosnaia's paintings serve as a bridge across centuries, juxtaposing the spiritual gravitas of Eastern Orthodox traditions with the fragmented nature of modern identity. She has exhibited her work at the New Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow and the MARQ Museum in Argentina, and participated in art fairs like Miami Art Basel (Miami, 2022) and the international contemporary Blazar art fair (Moscow, 2024).

Katie Hughbanks (she/her) is a writer, photographer, and teacher whose photography has been published nationally and internationally in more than 80 magazines. She is the

author of two chapbooks, *Blackbird Songs* (Prolific Press, 2019) and *It's Time* (Finishing Line Press, 2024). She teaches English and Creative Writing in Louisville, Kentucky.

Jacqueline Jules is the author of *Manna in the Morning* (Kelsay Books, 2021), *Itzhak Perlman's Broken String*, winner of the 2016 Helen Kay Chapbook Prize from Evening Street Press, and *Smoke at the Pentagon: Poems to Remember* (Bushel & Peck, 2023). Her poetry has appeared in over 100 publications. Visit her online at www.jacquelinejules.com.

John Den-Kaat is an Australian poet and visual artist based in Brisbane. He is the author of the poetry collections *A Mirror for the Flame* and *See the Dark; Feel the Light*. His work explores stillness, thresholds, and the quiet transformations that shape a life, often moving between poetry and visual art. His artwork has been exhibited at the Tweed Regional Gallery, Australia. More of his work can be found on Instagram [@john.den.kaat](https://www.instagram.com/john.den.kaat).

Gabriel Flatto-Katz is a writer and high school student from New York. His work focuses on themes of love and time, and has been featured in two editions of *Live Poet's "American High School Poets,"* The Brooklyn Public Library's "Teen Writing Magazine," and *Parallax*, his school's creative writing magazine. When he isn't writing, Flatto-Katz enjoys acting in musical theater, debating, and taking Saturday afternoon walks in Central Park.

Craig Kirchner loves the aesthetics of writing, has a book of poetry, *Roomful of Navels*, and has been nominated three times for a Pushcart. He has been published in *Chiron Review*, *Remington Review*, *Main Street Rag*, and dozens of others. He houses 500 books in his office and about 400 poems on a laptop; these words help keep him straight. Kirchner has an interview at *Spillword* and can be found on Bluesky.

Jade Kleiner is rooted in New England. Among other places, her poetry can be found in *Free the Verse* and *manypor(I)ds*, her haiku in *Cold Moon Journal*, and her fiction in *Bright Flash Literary Review*. She is currently revising her post-scarcity novella, *Ship of Plenty*. She is transgender and has practiced in the Plum Village Tradition since 2020.

Anthony Van Lam works in Neo-Gongbi, a contemporary reinterpretation of the classical meticulous Chinese painting tradition. Rooted in disciplined linework and balanced composition, his practice combines watercolor with digital techniques to extend the language of Gongbi into the present. Through this hybrid approach, precision becomes more than technique — it becomes a framework for storytelling. His works explore personal history, reinterpret cultural memory, and examine identity within a contemporary context. Rather than replicating tradition, Neo-Gongbi allows heritage to evolve naturally, creating space where individual experience and collective memory coexist with clarity, restraint, and quiet emotional depth.

Alexandra Lennard is a recent graduate of Emory University who enjoys reading, writing, and spending time with her two dogs and two cats.

Sara Letourneau is the author of *Wild Gardens* (Kelsay Books, 2024). She is also a book editor and writing coach at Heart of the Story Editorial & Coaching Services; the cofounder and cohost of the Pour Me a Poem open mic in Mansfield, Massachusetts; and the co-editor of the *Pour Me a Poem* anthology. Her poetry has won the 2023 Beals Prize for Poetry. Her latest work can be found in *The Ekphrastic Review*, *Ibbetson Street*, *Moss Puppy Magazine*, *Silver Birch Press*, and *WAVES: A Confluence of Women's Voices*. Letourneau is also the author of the

Substack column *The Wild Garden of Poetry (and Life)*, which you can read at saraheartofthestory.substack.com/. Visit her online on Facebook @heartofthestoryeditorial, on Instagram @sara_heartofthestory, and on LinkedIn @sara-letourneau.

Lorraine Henrie Lins is a Pennsylvania county Poet Laureate emeritus and author of five books of poetry. She's a founding member of the "No River Twice" improvisational poetry troupe and serves on the board of "Volta Center for Writing Arts." She's delighted to have work published in a wide range of literary collections, including *The American Poetry Journal*, *Isele Magazine*, *The Black Fox Literary Magazine*, *The Journal of New Jersey Poets*, *Philadelphia Stories*, and a small graffiti poster in New Zealand. Writing, poetry in particular, allows Lins to put a peaceful space in the chaos of this ever-changing world.

Наталія Логінова/Natalia Loginova was born in 1987, in the Cherkasy region of Ukraine. As a child, drawing was her favorite subject at school. At the age of 12, she left drawing because she could not create something truly perfect. The desire to become a lawyer and protect human rights arose. In 2005, she became a social security lawyer. She tried to get a job in her specialty, but no one wanted to hire a person with a disability. Completely disappointed with the system, at age 25, she started reading philosophical and spiritual literature, as well as psychology. She forbade herself from painting because she considered herself inferior. At age 29, Loginova met a wonderful person who opened her eyes to reality. An artist from Paris held a chromotherapy seminar in the Cherkasy region. They were given the task of painting a picture without a form. Loginova was shocked. Since then, she gradually let go of her far-fetched fears and began to create. Every year, the level of her artistic works grew significantly. Loginova took part in several festivals, where she managed to sell several paintings.

Kate Miano lives in Brooklyn and has an English degree from Suffolk University. She has previously been published in *december magazine*, *Sunlight Press*, and *Schuylkill Valley Journal*, among others. She can be found on Instagram: @kate.c0m, and on X: @_katemiano.

David Milley's work appears in *3rd Wednesday*, *Bay Windows*, *RFD Magazine*, *Neologism Poetry Journal*, and *Last Syllable*. His collection of poems, *Tiller and Shears*, will appear under the Aldrich Press imprint this fall. Milley lives in New Jersey with his husband, Warren Davy, who's made his living as a farmer, woodcutter, nurseryman, auctioneer, beekeeper, and cook. These days, Warren tends his garden and keeps honeybees. Milley walks and writes.

Ashley O'Neil is a writer based in Michigan. Outside of writing, she is an avid gardener and maker. She has recently gotten back into sharing her work publicly after a long hiatus. She loves to write outdoors. She has previously been published in *Thorn & Bloom Magazine*.

Wesley Orion (he/him) is a Queer, Trans, and neurodiverse writer who lives and works in the Columbus area. He writes to empower his voice and the voices of others with a focus on fostering a space of pure ambition, representations of adversity, and the unity of storykeepers.

Beck Reynolds is a British writer interested in food, family, and fantasy. Her poetry has appeared on *Poetry Worth Hearing* and in *Kill Your Darlings*. She volunteers at the Oxford Poetry Library and organizes a free workshop series for emerging poets.

Sydney Rose is a writer, teacher, and traveler from Houston, Texas. She aims to better her craft with each new place and each new person she meets, shaping her worldview the further she goes.

Paola Scharberg is a collage artist and photographer. She was born in a little coastal town in southern Spain and moved to the United States in 2012. She is a self-taught artist with a passion for nature and sustainability. For many years, Scharberg collected images that she found in magazines, and in 2019, she began to cut and glue them together. Since then, collage has become her main medium. She often explores the concepts of distance, self-exploration, nature, current events, and the absurd. She started incorporating her photographs into her work. She has no formal training in art but received a Bachelor's degree in Communication from UMSL in 2021. Scharberg creates collages during her free time. Over the last several years, her work has been exhibited in several galleries in St. Louis, including 31 Art Gallery, Art St. Louis, St. Louis Artists Guild, Koken Art Factory, Soulard Art Gallery, and others. She has also had work shown in Madrid and in her hometown of Rota, Spain.

Stevie Sobers is a Bay Area-based mixed-media artist whose floral works explore emotion, memory, and self-trust through color and expressive mark-making. Working with acrylic paint, oil pastels, and layered materials, Sobers embraces intuition and imperfection, allowing each piece to evolve organically. Her florals are less about realism and more about feeling, using bold color relationships and movement to reflect inner growth, vulnerability, and resilience. Her piece, “Let It Burn,” is part of a larger series titled *Letting Go*, which explores the artist’s intentional release of realism and perfection in favor of intuition, emotion, and expressive mark-making.

Eric Spry is a poet whose work explores attention to place and moments of quiet revelation, often rooted in the natural world. His poems move through seasonal landscapes, memory and silence, shaped by grief and moments of hard-won grace. His work has appeared in *Penwood Review*, *Clepsydra*, and *As Surely as the Sun Lit*, among others. He lives in Arizona, where desert light and open spaces shape his work.

Jillian Stacia is the author of the upcoming poetry collection, *SET THE BONE*, published by Arcana Poetry Press. She was selected as an Honorable Mention for the 2025 Jack McCarthy Book Prize and short-listed for the 2026 Central Avenue Poetry Prize. She has been nominated for several awards, including the 2025 Best of Net and the 2025 Pushcart Prize. Her poetry has been featured in several literary magazines and anthologies. Find her online @jillianstacia to read more of her work.

Laura Tate's poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in *Ink in Thirds*, *One Art Poetry Journal*, *Thimble Literary Journal*, *A Curious Moon*, *Anti-Heroine Chic*, and *Sky Island Journal*, among others. She is a grandmother and retired elementary school teacher who is soon to relocate from the Washington, D.C. area to Southern California.

Best of the Net nominee **Nala Washington** is a poet, writer, and educator completing her MFA at Texas State University. You can find her words currently/forthcoming in *South Florida Poetry Journal*, *Midnight & Indigo Lit*, *The Hemlock Journal*, *Mouthful of Salt*, *The Santa Clara Review*, and more. She made the poetry longlist for the 2025 DISQUIET Literary Prize and was the 2023 BIPOC Scholarship winner for FAWC. She currently participates in Austin Poetry Slam and Every Word Poetry in Texas.

Christopher Woods is a writer and photographer who lives in Texas. His monologue show, “Twelve from Texas,” was performed in NYC by Equity Library Theatre. His monologues have been performed most recently at Equity Library Theatre in NYC, The Invisible Theatre in Tucson, and the Pro English Theatre in Kiev, Ukraine. He has received residencies from The Edward Albee Foundation and The Ucross Foundation.

Jacelyn Yap (she/her) is a self-taught visual artist who ditched engineering to make art because of a comic she read. Her artworks and photography have been published by the Commonwealth Foundation's *adda*, *Chestnut Review*, and more. She can be found at jacelyn.myportfolio.com/ and on Instagram at [@jacelyn.makes.stuff](https://www.instagram.com/jacelyn.makes.stuff).

Andrena Zawinski is the author of four full-length collections of poetry, the latest *Born Under the Influence*. Her work has been lauded for its appreciation of nature, spirituality, social concern, and craft and has most recently appeared in *Bayou Review*, *Black Bear Review*, *Descant*, and *South Carolina Review*. Born and raised in Pittsburgh, PA, she now lives in the San Francisco Bay Area.



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"The idea is to write it so that people hear it and it slides through the brain and goes straight to the heart."

Maya Angelou