

POETRY

"Art"

by Terry Miller

# HOWLER DAILY

FIVE FRESH STORIES FOR YOUR WEEK

"Clearing Out My Mother's Home"

by Rohan Buettel

EXPERIMENTAL

"God Seems Smaller than the Sun and the Moon"

by Kalie Johnson



COLLAGE + FRONT COVER ART

"Forget it, Jake, It's Chinatown"

by Marie V. Recalde

ART + BACK COVER ART

"The Hunt"

by Jennifer Weigel

# god seems smaller than the sun and the moon

kalie johnson

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## God Seems Smaller than the Sun

I was alone during the solar eclipse, watched across an empty, unraveling yard as a middle school boy with pimples big as the clouds watched the sun through a box of upside-down Apple Jacks. I held heavy, blacked-out glasses to my face and stared at the sun, dared myself to peek without them; I was always a coward. Quiet rustled in the grass like bird prints in muddy snow or never-finished tree carvings. You knew something was there, but now it was over. The sun was stolen. Lost Sun listing, my rain-soaked flyer with the numbered tabs at the bottom. Take a number if you have any information; I realized no one's answers were enough.

I watched with toes in desperate grass and found myself missing the almostness of electrocution in my eyes while driving, missing the sun when it filters in through morning's frost-tipped windows, the careless rising of the sun like children's scraped knees from intentionally breaking their mother's back. You have to accept pain to cause it; the sun accepted mine with open flames instead of embraces. I never knew I needed the sun until I had to

look away, felt my eyes watch the boy and his cereal box, tilting, tilting against the green grass of gravity. I think now would be the best time to swim, to fall into water, lay in a pool of sunless blue--drowning when the world is fragile.

I go inside and cry, know a new kind of betrayal. It is no longer sun-crisped worms on sidewalks, wiggling, edging towards grass, but convulsing into letters that spell out "you could have saved me." Funny how worms make better use of ABCs. I do not fear ant deaths or burning alive or my father's girlfriend's sun tattoo. I do not fear anything but the sun's disappearance now. When I wake the next day, my only mantra is "I hope the sun will rise today," the only thing I can count on has fallen away, and like broken love, I am left to wonder if it will come back.

My fingers grazed the surface of the sun that day, pried open the fragile wiring that held me from it once before. I let my grandmother tell them it was an accident when I shattered from swinging, hustling, touching with the tips of sticky fingers before I broke

silence for gravel kisses and caterpillar tears that clambered across my face, more a reaction to the fear of knowing I reached the sun than from scratching, grey rocks.

I quit rising with the sun after that, backed against the ridges of my knuckles for support as the sun rolling pins over the wet newspaper in the driveway and floods against my dad packing lunch at 6 am, the smell of cigarettes already clinging to his fingers. Another day, another fight with God. Hands are just placeholders like the rising sun, which coffee-drips into the room, rasps its way to every corner, begs the comforter to part again. Why do we leave bed today? I cannot rise with the sun any longer, fear the beginning of morning, my parents waking.

By noon, you realize the sun was not meant for broken families, fought against the sigh of fatherless children, stumbled over missing mothers and empty closets, coat hangers knocking against each other in dusty bitterness, a constant reminder that someone walked out and never came back. We are hanging by them now, a poorly trained

trapeze artist falling into unemployment. Daytime is slow, chalk up the cracked sidewalk and my father's bible across the brim of the toilet. Leave the family alone; let them mourn.

I take warm rain and lightning strikes for morning kisses now, the rasp of my father's day-old voice is a whistle through the window screen, except it is just the drag of a dying mouse, a gift in the watermelon belly of my youth, the sticking of thighs to wicker chairs.

Children draw wiggles of spaghetti suns, and we tell them never look, never stare, never draw attention, shame, power. It is funny they are all the same. Shame at the solar system; shame at my own religion. My craft scissors in my dry hair, I sit beside my brother, run inside from the scrutiny of the sun, and sip tomato juice. I ask my father if anything bleeds blue. He says our blood is blue, but by the time it meets air, it is red. I wonder if the sun is the same way and pull at the skin from my fingernails. The suns of keratin crawl from my flesh and glaze your skin in prisms of downward spirals and gentle ballerina bounces.

I hold up the glass prism that has fallen off the branches of my grandmother's shrinking cactus, watch

the sun shatter across the room, hit her fireplace, the chair I napped in on Tuesday, and compose itself across her sunflower paintings. The cat wakes up when the room starts dancing, steno green eyes knowing life is at play. God, can you hear me? I set the prism back in the dirt, let the rainbows slide into the grains of the walls, and realize the sun is always gone when someone dies.

### **God Seems Smaller than the Moon**

Beneath freckle constellations and baby powder snow, I realize moon clippings cannot survive on their own. I know now that I can dry-swallow the moon in doctor office gulps, drink in stubborn grace that tastes like grape cough syrup, and chuckle at how silly we were back then. It is a nighttime swim you cannot take with me.

Yet, I fear I will never be unaffected by night. Night fooled me, told me the boy who sang me love songs while cradled side by side in the thickening of his comforter did not want real intimacy. Tricked into pinpricks of starry-eyed romance, I felt along the ribbons of his throat when I laid down to hear him sing--deepen, darken nighttime with the soft soaking that told

me this moment was everlasting. Atonement never felt so easy. When the night ended, I skipped beneath the moon, opened the window to sleep aside thunder that shook my pillow with possession. It ended, cycled into the baby tones of emptying night into day, where neither one of us claimed we know the other any longer.

But I used to claim the night with hot-watered conviction. My grandmother ripped me from my bed after every storm. 2 am, 3 am, the draining of nighttime could not stop her. She rattled a strobing flashlight from her rough hands into my own sleeping fingers. Are you leaving? Please shut off the lights. I stumbled in rain boots across sliding grass and searched the top of the mud for worms. I felt invasive, stealing light that did not belong to anyone but the moon to reveal scrawling expanses I'd never wanted to disrupt. Scooping stolen nightcrawlers into buckets wasn't my only nighttime church service. Grandma taught me to kneel in silence and give God my mind. But she could speak in tongues, and I couldn't pronounce my W's. I feared her, begged her to stop. Do not deny God. I removed the window screen and

knelt until the church service I had rambled at the half moon was met with wet mosquito bites or the taillights of my neighbor's car heating up on the waffle crunch snow. I never left the house without a flashlight again.

The first time I saw the moon was in my father's fingernails, the soft crescent hills of calico calcium reflecting the moon I later threw rocks at. I found my guilt in his fingertips; feared it all in the midst of waves of geodes cracking into a nighttime heartbeat. My grandma spoke in tongues again; rhythm matches the crickets. God is talking back and dripping from the base of Van Gogh's moon. He painted that crumbling cookie moon in spiraling yellow that thickened above a sleeping city. We were both made for the night shift. The nocturnal only know the power of religion in waxes and wanes.

They all know the moon. Bukowski wrote of deadbeat winters and turned every icy forgotten father into a gospel. And I, I am battling dusty Mondays, finding the meaning of life in curling L's and \$20 books. Dusty Mondays that dance under nailbeds of satellite suns, dew drops drip from rusting gutters. The moon is careless

tonight. I am riding a journey of night  
upon day and day upon night; I trust  
that love is the meaning of life. The car  
kisses the garage doors, ducks beneath  
hail like lemon cough drops. I wonder if  
God cowers beneath the Sun and Moon  
too.

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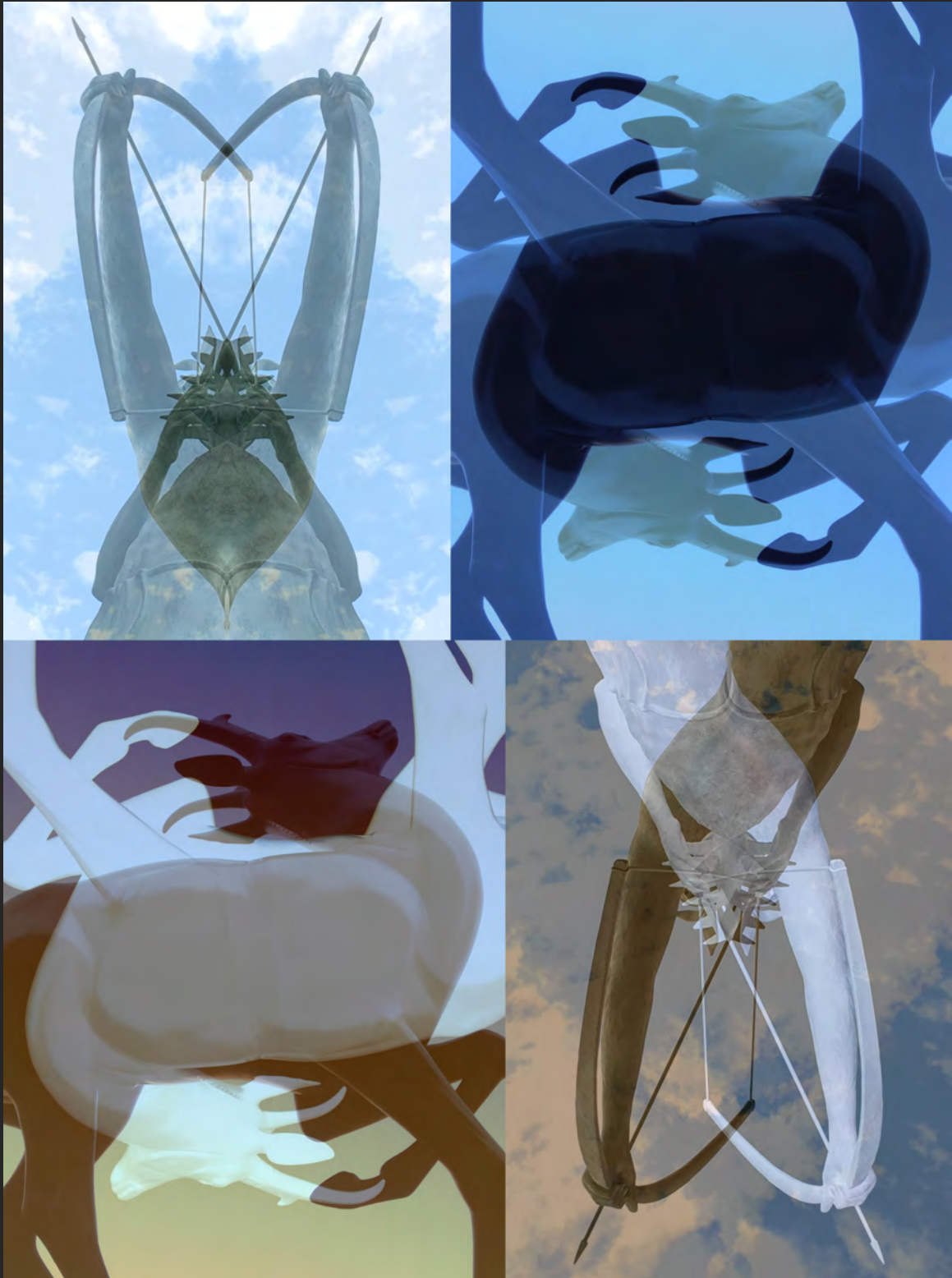
- ▶ **Kalie Johnson** is a 25-year-old living near Chicago. She's published in BW's *The Mill*, California State's *Watershed Review*, *Fatal Flaws Literary Magazine*, *The Bookends Review*, *Coffin Bell Journal*, and *The Quillkeeper's Press*. She is looking forward to being published with *THAT Literary Review* and *Jet Fuel Review*. When she's not writing, she enjoys seeing the world, hiking, roller skating, and camping.

You can find her writing Instagram at @thingsfeelwrite.

# the hunt

## jennifer weigel

- ▶ **Jennifer Weigel** is a multidisciplinary mixed-media conceptual artist. Weigel utilizes a wide range of media to convey her ideas, including assemblage, drawing, fibers, installation, jewelry, painting, performance, photography, sculpture, video, and writing.



the hunt





crossing over

# art

terry jude miller

- ▶ **Terry Jude Miller** is a Pushcart-nominated poet from Houston. His works have been published in numerous anthologies.

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# Y

*“You’d think it was a giant  
with a vague face*

*a face you recognize  
but can’t really describe”*

- Naomi Shihab Nye

it’s like a little parasite  
that you don’t mind

so parasite might not be the right word  
maybe symbiote

that’s one of the things it does  
makes you think one thing

that leads to another thing  
and soon the meadow is full

of flowers—all of them talking  
at one time—writing their ideas

on petals—flinging their words  
in the air—saying look—look—look

and you look and you smile and you cry  
and you grieve and you grow nostalgic

that’s why you love your little symbiote  
even when it wakes you at 2AM

to whisper something beautiful  
in your ear

forget it,  
jake, it's  
chinatown  
marie v. recalde

- ▶ **Marie V. Recalde** is a writer, artist, translator, and Southern California native living abroad. Join her adventuring on Instagram at [@imaginarymarie](https://www.instagram.com/imaginarymarie)



# clearing out my mother's home

rohan buettel

- ▶ **Rohan Buettel** is an Australian poet who lives in Canberra and whose haiku and longer poetry appear in a range of Australian and international journals.

# T

The gift not given joins others  
at the bottom of the cupboard,  
gradually accumulating,  
awaiting the right time  
to be brought out, the ideal present  
for birthday, christening, Christmas.  
The bunnykins bowl languishes,  
mother rabbit washing bunny kids  
in a large tub. Some out, some in,  
some trying to escape, all the playful fun  
of bath time, water and suds.  
Bunnies scamper round the rim.  
The bowl perfectly new  
in a cupboard full of things unused,  
bought in anticipation  
of a grandchild never delivered,  
still awaiting the right occasion  
in a house now being emptied.  
How do we value the gift not given?



# HOWLER



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