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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

We're born alone and when we die, we're judged on our own merits. All the while we're trying to figure out who we are. Sometimes, we find who that is, even if it takes a lifetime. When we find out who we are, oftentimes, we're compelled to change. Society tells us to change. Loved ones tell us to change. We tell ourselves to change. But in changing, it may be easy to forget to celebrate who we are.

The fact that we strive to be better is what makes us better, but sometimes it's not about fixing, it's about accepting who we are. In a world of screaming voices, we may feel alone. We feel like our voices can't be heard and we can't be accepted for who we are.

How we identify comes in different images: how you see yourself and how others see you. There's only one image we can control of ourselves. So, we must be proud to share who we are, trauma and all. It's where we've come from that has got us here, no matter how bad.

Pride flirts a fine line with arrogance. The difference is pride is how you value yourself where as arrogance acting as if you're better than others. We are all human. Our value is equal. Read more to find out what Pride means to artists and writers around the world.

xoxo
Flora Ashe



"Love is a Basic Human Right"

Tom Sayers is a Manchester-based sound artist, photographer and media researcher. They are a Birmingham City University alum and are interested in media as a site for activism and education.

LOVE
IS A
BASIC
HUMAN
RIGHT



1984

BY: DC DIAMONDPOLOUS

James, as the doctors and staff at St. Mark's Regional Hospital in San Diego insisted on calling him, applied pancake makeup over the band-aid camouflaging the lesion on his chin. He was glad to be home, surrounded by his Nipponese figurines, the ornate lampshades with exotic scarves draped over the top, and his trunk of overflowing satin and silk costumes, boas, several strands of pearls, and oodles of costume jewelry. His move to San Diego had been a windfall—the most money he'd ever made doing drag. He lived to entertain. On stage, he was Jasmine and loved. Standing-room only. Now, he was sick. How long would he be able to afford his apartment in Hillcrest?

The obituaries from three newspapers spread across the coffee table. Circled in black were the names of seven young men.

Jasmine wanted to live, to work again at Glitter Glam Drag. But James didn't.

No can do, James. You're not going to pull me down today. It's Pride. I'm going to party.

Donna was coming.

At St. Mark's, the only person who bathed and dressed him, changed his sheets and consoled him, was Donna, the pretty dyke nurse who was now his source for food, medication, and shots—his entire life.

It was Sunday, her day off, and she promised to take him to Pride. Jasmine had never missed a parade, but James's taunts of looking butt-ugly opened more scabs than he had on his body.

Jasmine dressed in black sweatpants and a gold lamay blouse, brushed her long stringy hair, pulled it into a ponytail, and clipped it with a rhinestone barrette. She applied red lip gloss and blue eyeshadow.

When James fell ill and admitted himself to St. Mark's Regional, the doctor asked how many men he had slept with. *Was he kidding?* "Honey, how many stars are there in the heavens?" Hundreds, thousands, in parks, bathhouses, and clubs, from San Francisco to LA to San Diego. The doctor had kept a straight face when James answered. The nurse turned her back on him.

Gay liberation tore the hinges off closet doors. Men like him left the Midwest for the coasts and found a bacchanal of men, a confectionery of sex and drugs, a feast for the starving who thought they were alone in the world.

James's life had been about dick and where to get the next fuck. Jasmine's life was drag, antique stores, and Vogue Magazine.

When his conservative, homophobic, fundamental Christian parents caught him in his mother's dress and high heels, they demanded, "Get out now and don't you ever come back." He promised them, "I'll live up to your expectations. I'll make the most of a trashy life."

Jasmine grabbed a green boa from the trunk and wrapped it around her neck. You think that'll hide your Kaposi's Sarcoma, James baited. Jasmine tugged at the feathers that made her neck feel on fire.

Grace Jones's "Pull up to the Bumper" boomed from the boombox. Jasmine wanted to dance, but her legs ached. You can't even walk, sucker.

"Shut up, James," Jasmine said, pulling herself up and moving to the window.

When he heard a car, he backed out of view. James never wanted Donna to know what she meant to Jasmine.

He held onto furniture as he made his way to the red velvet couch and sat, poised, waiting.

Donna knocked and opened the door.

"Well, don't you look jazzy," she said, pushing a wheelchair inside with a rainbow flag attached.

You'll look like a sick bastard in that baby buggy, James bullied. Everyone will know you have AIDS.

"I can't go."

"It's up to you."

"Are we so pathetic we need a parade?"

"Yes." Donna pinned a button that read, Gay by birth, fabulous by choice, on his blouse. "We need to pump ourselves up. If we don't, who will?"

"They want all queers dead. Looks like they'll get their way."

"Not everyone. The Blood Sisters keep donating blood, and they're delivering food and medicine."

"Thank God for lesbians," he said and wondered if gay men would do the same if lesbians were dying.

Donna released the footrests on the wheelchair.

"I'm not going. Everyone will know I have AIDS."

"You do, James."

He looked away, not wanting to disappoint the woman who showed him so much compassion and strength.

"What if I run into someone I know?"

"You'll know what to say."

"Like I'm dying of pneumonia. Like all those fake obituaries," he said, kicking the coffee table. "Fucking closet cases. Even in death." Jasmine felt the weepies coming on. James scolded, *Be a man. Only sissies cry*. But Jasmine was a woman, too. "In my obit, I want you to put that I died of AIDS. I want everyone to know."

He held onto the seat of the wheelchair and winced as he pulled himself up. The smell of barbecue wafting in from the open door reminded him of summers back in Kansas City, his mom cooking the catfish that he and his dad caught in the Missouri River, his dog Corky—was she still alive?—joyful memories that always left a wake of loneliness.

Today was supposed to be happy, floats with dancing bare-chested boys, banners, dykes on bikes.

Donna shoved the wheelchair forward. "I've brought water and trail mix."

"Poor substitute for poppers and quaaludes."

Donna laughed, pushed him outside, and shut the door.

The ocean air breathed vitality into his frail body. He raised his face to the sun and began to gather life-like flowers. A bouquet of drifting purple and orange balloons floated high toward the swirling white splashes in a blue background. He heard applause and whistles as he watched a float pass by on Park Boulevard. "Go faster, Donna. I don't want to miss anything." For just one afternoon he wanted to wave the rainbow flag and cheer the parade on and forget about himself and all the dying young men.

DC Diamondopolous is an award-winning short story, and flash fiction writer with hundreds of stories published internationally in print and online magazines, literary journals, and anthologies.

"Love is a Basic Human Right"
By: Tom Sayers





Love is a Basic Human Right"
By: Tom Sayers

Challah If You Queer Me

BY: ALLISON FRADKIN

Everything I need to know about being Jewish I learned from The Nanny:

Every meshugeneh needs a mensch

Don't schlep—get married already!

If you're over thirty and single,
you might be—it's likely—you're gay
(Oy vey!)

There'll be kvetching and kibitzing
You'll become a Jewcy bit of gossip
People will say pish, you're just farmisht
Your mishpochah will plotz
Start packing for your guilt trip
(Guilt: Just Jew it)

But what if you can't forget
about that little matzo ball of fire
you met at the synagogue?
The one with charm and chutzpah
who makes your eyes light up like a menorah
your head spin like a dreidel
and your heart chant Hava Nagila
every time you look at her.

For Hashem's sake, and your own,
don't let some schmendricks
rain on your pride parade
or make you feel like schmutz on a schmatte
or pressure you to take their verkakte-mamie advice:
At least date a non-goy boy before you make it official!

Instead, get them to kiss your keppie like everything's kosher,
because wonder of wonder,
queer-acle of queer-acles, it is.

So trade that guilt for (chocolate) gelt,
break out the bubbly grape juice,
and propose a toast:
to life, to love, to loving your life
and the meydil with the sheyn ponem in it.
Your chosen person.
Your finest Frantasy.
Just do it with justifiable Jewbalance.

I may be hard-of-hearing
but I've got pride
coming out of my ears.
That doesn't mean
communi-gay-tion
is always easy though.
I read lips, you read lipstick.
Let's hear it for the boy?
Here we go again.
I'll sing a different tune, thank you.
In fact, I'll tune you out.
Now don't tympanic—
it's no great hearing loss.
On the advice of Nellie Forbush,
I went and washed that man
right out of my hair and
eardrummed him out
of my dreams.
Sorry to hear that?
That's neither here nor there.
And now I think I'll
turn off my listening ears,
remove the cool-aid from the cups,
and hear what I want to hear:
something laudable,
not audible.
Because here's the deal:
I'm hear
-ing impaired,
I'm queer,
get...
Well, you've heard all this already.
Now hear this:
from here on out,
let's be all ears, not all fears;
let's differentiate, not differenti-hate.
If you don't,
you'll never hear the end of it.
Oh, you heard me loud and queer?
Good.
Glad to hear it.

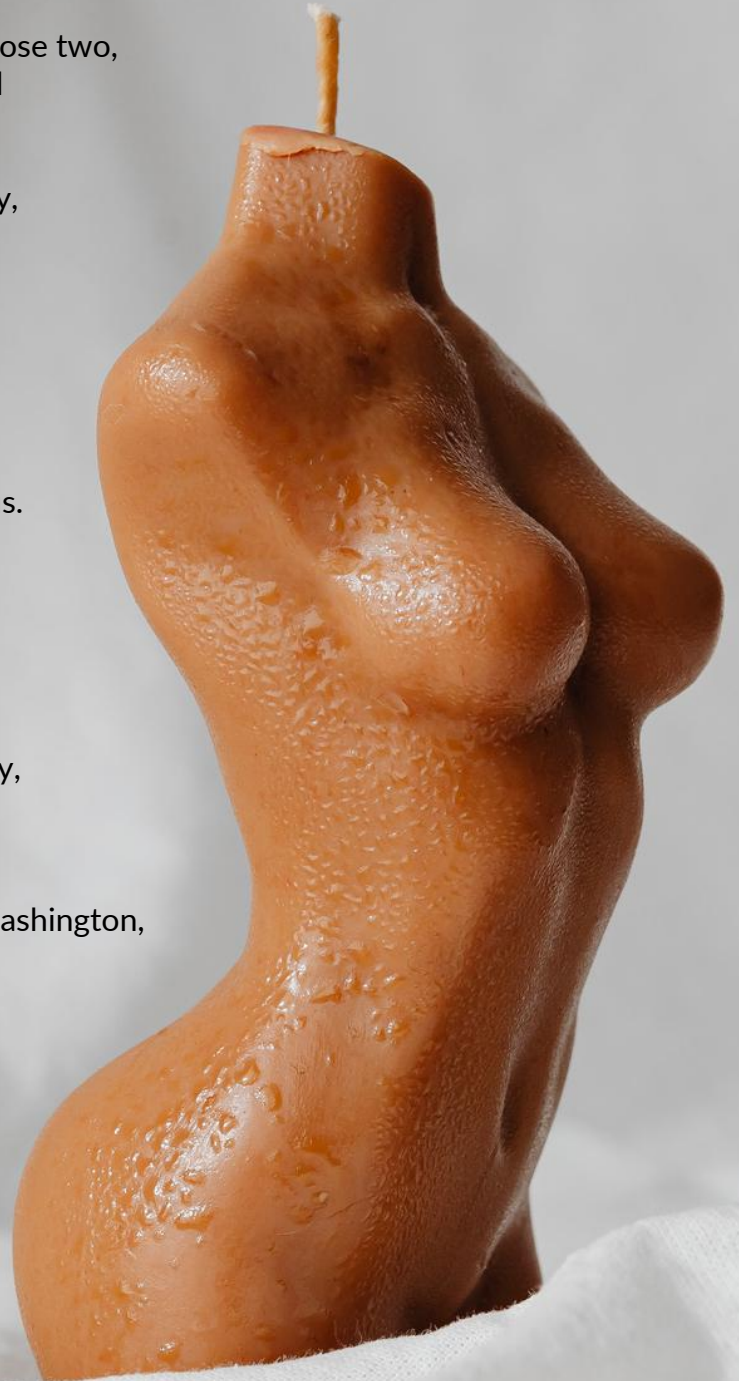


It all started during a vacation from marriage.
 Not mine—Lucy Ricardo's.
 Naturally, Ethel takes a hiatus from her husband too,
 and Lucy moves in with, though not in on,
 her gal pal.
 But all hope is not lost,
 least of all when Lucy lets loose
 with this loaded remark: I hope you boys
 are going to have as gay an evening as we are.
 (You know, they really were pioneer women, those two,
 what with all the accidental advocating they did
 for marriage equality.)

Okay, so maybe that remark really wasn't so gay,
 given the time period in which it was uttered,
 but I chose to take it the right way:
 as permission to
 define, refine, and redefine my sexuality.
 I could do more than identify
 as a member of the LGBT community.
 I could ident-defy:
 as Liberated, Grateful, Bodacious, and Tenacious.

Seeing this revelation
 as cause for celebration,
 I went singin' in the rainbow
 that I prefer dolls to guys.
 Mama said there'll be gays like this:
 those who embrace their sexuality straight away,
 not only because they've figured out
 that the bloom is off the heteros;
 but also because,
 in the words of midcentury chanteuse Dinah Washington,
 What a diff'rence a gay makes
 or something even more fifties-friendly,
 like:
 I love lezzie and she loves me
 Queer as happy as two can be...

Allison Fradkin (she/her) has a gay old time creating satirically scintillating poetry, prose, and plays. Her work has been published in *Synkroniciti*, *Voyage*, *Chaotic Merge*, *Continue the Voice*, *ImageOutWrite*, *Pastel Serenity*, *Sapphic Writers Collective*, and *New Plains Review*.



"Naked Truth"
By: Katerina Orël





"Dum vivimus vivamus"

Katerina Orël is an intuitive and expressive visual artist, who explores the human emotional world and personality, and depicts sensuous self-portraits with full range of feelings. Exhibited widely throughout Russia, Italy, England, Vietnam and South Korea.



"Animus quod perdidit optat Atque in praeterita se totus imagine versat" By: Katerina Orél

"Gulfport Sunrise" By: Ashley Wilson



"Insanity of Desire"

Dahlia Hosny is breaking through boundaries of imagination, Inspired by nature, its colors, forms, and textures.



An Ode To The Feminine

BY: SMRITHI SENTHILNATHAN

Sometimes I wish I weren't a girl.

When it takes me two hours to get sand out of my long hair when it takes ten minutes for my brother, I wish I weren't a girl.

When I get stomach cramps every month and have to sacrifice fifty days per year of my life to the pain, I wish I weren't a girl.

When I am asked to cover up my body and skin, I wish I weren't a girl.

When I see female maids and cooks working day and night for men who lounge around without a care in the world, I wish I weren't a girl.

When I have to go through hours of pain to remove hair from my skin to look 'pretty', I wish I weren't a girl.

When I wear a short dress and eyes fall to my legs instead of my face, I wish I weren't a girl.

When I have to rethink a hundred times before posting a picture of myself on social media, I wish I weren't a girl.

When people tell me to be decent and homely, I wish I weren't a girl.

When I am looked down at for speaking up about my opinions, I wish I weren't a girl.

When I have to work twice as hard to attain half of the credit that men get, I wish I weren't a girl.

When my ideas are brushed aside because of my exterior, I wish I weren't a girl.

When catcalls and wolf-whistles follow me wherever I go, I wish I weren't a girl.

When I'm asked to carry pepper spray with me at all times, I wish I weren't a girl.

When my parents forbid me from going out late at night for fear of predators, I wish I weren't a girl.

When I have to always watch my back from the dangers of this world, I wish I weren't a girl.

When I am mocked and ridiculed and made fun of because of my 'ugliness', I wish I weren't a girl.

When I am asked to harm myself to adhere to societal beauty norms, I wish I weren't a girl.

When news reports of female kidnappings and rapes reach my ears, I wish I weren't a girl.

When my face and body are valued more than my mind and brain, I wish I weren't a girl.

When the patriarchal society around me dictates every aspect of my life, I wish I weren't a girl.

When I am asked not to dream, I wish I weren't a girl.

But there are times when the world shows me that it isn't as bad as I thought it was.

When I wear my hair down and it frames my face, I am glad I'm a girl.

When a shirt brings out my curves and a pair of boots uplifts me, I am glad I'm a girl.

When I see the beauty of women all over, I am glad I'm a girl.

When a random woman defends me from men on the street, I am glad I'm a girl.

When girls travel in groups to the bathroom to help each other, I am glad I'm a girl.

When ten women offer pads to a girl that needs them, I am glad I'm a girl.

When stories of motherhood, hope and new beginnings travel around, I am glad I'm a girl.

When women roam the streets wearing the most marvelous dresses ever, I am glad I'm a girl.

When I run through a field of tulips, my hair and skirts flying around me, I am glad I'm a girl.

When I hear my melodious soft voice and the voices of other women, I am glad I'm a girl.

When I go outside and see all the beautiful women that exist in the world, I am glad I'm a girl.

When I learn about powerful and confident women who fight for themselves, I am glad I'm a girl.

When women in power do their part to make the world a better place, I am glad I'm a girl.

When I look at myself in the mirror and admire my beautiful body, I am glad I'm a girl.

When women uplift each other as men continue to put us down, I am glad I'm a girl.

When I look at what I can create with my mind and imagination, I am glad I'm a girl.

When I'm taught that all powerful symbols such as Liberty, Justice, Hope, and Mother Nature are personified as female figures, I am glad I'm a girl.

When my dreams are encouraged and I am given the liberty to soar, I am glad I'm a girl.

When I think of myself and always see a beautiful, powerful, fearless, worthy girl standing there, I am glad I am me.

The world isn't always a good place, but it's not always a bad place either. Goodness exists in the world and this goodness is born because of the existence of the feminine.

The feminine are the ones who bind the world together and keep it from splitting. The feminine kindness and sunshine, along with the power and confidence of the feminine take the world to new heights.

The feminine will always be the ones who shine out against the darkness of the world.

And I am glad that I am feminine.

SMRITHI SENTHILNATHAN is a teen writer from India. She believes everything in this world has a story and she's made it her life's mission to capture the unwritten stories.

"Serenity" By: Angel Ashleigh



"Light as a Feather"

Angel Ashleigh is a full time artist in Oklahoma City. She does a combination of imaginative mixed media portraits and oil paintings primarily depicting strong warrior women.





The Good Times

BY: THOMAS CANNON

Need another?" I ask John as I go to the refrigerator for beers. I wonder what he thinks of the house. Barb and I just put in new carpeting and got new furniture, but it's small and doesn't look as nice as it could with all the toys lying around.

Barb would be quick to point out that the big stinky recliner doesn't help matters.

"Remember our old frig, Pauly?" John shouts out from the brown recliner, the one from our old apartment that I dragged up from the basement. "Man, that thing was always empty." As usual, John has been able to put down more beer than me.

"Except for beer," I say, handing him a new Budweiser. We both take a good swig like when we used to not be able to drink it fast enough. "So you really asked her to marry you, huh?"

"Yeah, I figured what the hell." John could have dated more. Women were always asking me about him. But he just wanted to go out drinking with the guys.

John says, "Remember the pyramid of cans that took up a whole wall of our place?"

We lived together in the dorms at college and then rented a place after that. Friends were over every night, and we had a lot of after-bar parties. The best thing, though, was doing what John and I are doing right now.

SHORT STORY

I laugh. "And remember when we were drunk off our asses and knocked them all down."

"The girls downstairs called the cops. They thought the house was caving in." John laughs with me now. "The cops saw all those cans on the floor and thought we drank them all that night." We laugh for a good long time. Then I choke off my laugh, remembering Barb and the kids and my death if I wake any of them up.

I know he loves our experiences as much as I do even though he has lived in the same city as me for over a year now and this is the second time I've seen him.

"We drank pretty hard," John says as if it were a badge you earned in boy scouts.

John still does, but I do not want to think about that tonight. "God, did we ever," I say in a low voice, too late to be mindful of my family.

We both finish our beers. I enjoy lifting the bottle up and taking a swig. John gets up and gets two more while I head for the bathroom. With concentration, I avoid knocking the knick-knacks off the wall. Talking to myself, I say, "As long as I am as drunk as I am, I may as well go on a bender. Just like old times."

I attempt to wash my hands, then zip up and head back down the hall. "Not that I am not as happy now."

"Who the hell are you talking to, Pauly?" John says when I reach the living room. "Look at you. You're going to work, and I got to get out of here before you do."

"Kiss my ass," I say, but I feel my stomach churn. "Hey, remember when we stopped and sat on somebody's porch on the way home from the bars?"

"Until the cops came," John says.

I laugh. "They asked if we lived there and you said, 'As far as you know we do.'"

John takes a swig and looks at the bottle. "Drink up," he says, "this is the last of the beer."

Thomas Cannon is the author of the books *Shattered* and *The Tao of Apathy*. Many of his poems and short stories have been published in various journals such as *Midwestern Gothic* and *Corvus Review*.





"Treasure Island"

Francesco Puliga is an illustrator, comic artist and character designer. He works traditionally and digitally. Now he's working on an art project that depicts a series of abandoned places from different parts of the world.

"Stop" by Francesco Puliga



my scars

BY: TINA CATHLEEN MACNAUGHTON

this one, here, beneath my eye
tells me I survived
this one, here, on my arm
reminds me to take more care
the hard ridge, there,
on the back of my head
says I did not die
the shadow of pink
on my left breast
whispers I am lucky
fine strands of silvery purple
decorate my abdomen
with grace
and speak of
three beings, growing, stretching,
forming
inside of me
my blessings, my sons
faint, scarcely blush lines
seal the entrance of lives
lifted blinking
from my tummy
into the bright light
of this world
my blessings, my scars
they are beautiful, my scars
they tell my story
they say I am alive
remind me I have healed
and will survive
my scars, I honour you with pride.

Tina Cathleen MacNaughton is a writer and poet from Berkshire, UK. She has written and published a collection of poetry, *On the Shoulders of Lions* (Choir Press). Her debut novel, *Delphy Rose* will be published with Troubador in May 2023.



"Pandora Night" James Mellor

Pandora's box represents all the worst things in the world whilst last on hope as the positive which inspire the central sun of the piece. hope. As the Brief Retelling tells it "So now when there is trouble and sadness among us, humans, we have Hoped to make us feel that tomorrow will be better"





"Hindsight" By: Angel Ashleigh



"Pieces" By: Angel Ashleigh



"Washed Clean" By: Angel Ashleigh





"Leaves Fall Slow, Sun Lighten Fast " by: James Mellor





"Irene" By: Sara Caporaletti



Agbaka

"Journey of Discovery"

Oryiman Agbaka is a self taught multidisciplinary visual artist born and living in Nigeria

Real-Life Superhero

BY: JAMES B. NICOLA

Clarification of terms. By hero, I don't mean someone who is simply very good at their job, like most sports or even military heroes, but someone who goes out of their way (beyond the call of duty, say) or risks losing something (career, life, or liberty) to help out at least one other person. Healthcare workers during the plague, for example. Or athletes when they endure death threats: Jesse Owens in Germany, Arthur Ashe in South Africa, Jackie Robinson and Hank Aaron in the outfield.

By super, I mean having a special ability that not everyone has, be it innate like Superman or acquired like Batman. But one need not fight crime or save the world, as in comic books. Many doctors, lawyers, and teachers—like Jaime Escalante (see the movie “Stand and Deliver”)—are super in my book.

That said, the first superhero I ever saw in action was my mom.

It was in a laundromat. Our washer at home must have broken down and I wasn't quite old enough to be left alone. Never before had I seen a vending machine that sold neither candy nor Coke, but little boxes of laundry soap marked with words I was thrilled to recognize in the world beyond our basement, like *All* and *Tide*. Anyway, at some point, the lady went to use the vending machine, which was busted, and was about to waste a dime. Somehow, my mom figured out that the lady couldn't read the little cardboard sign that said “broken” because she spoke only French. Well, Canadian French, which my mom recognized because my dad grew up in Quebec. My mom had been a French teacher (and would be again, as soon as I was a little older). I had also heard my mom speak Italian to her dad and sister, over the years. French and Italian were the languages grown-ups would revert to when they didn't want us kids to know what they were saying.

Anyway, this laundromat was in the neighborhood where my parents lived before I was born, so my mom told the lady where to go to buy detergent. We watched her things while she did so, and you should have seen the lady smile when she came back and said *merci behn*.

On the way home my mom explained that the lady's French was as bad as my dad's—*behn* instead of *bien*, for example. My dad could speak rural patois because all his childhood friends spoke it—but he had had school French, too, and knew the difference. So when he unloosed *très behn* on my mom instead of *très bien* for “very good”, or *behn venu* instead of *de rien* for “you're welcome” (which they haven't used in France since 1763), it was to be either funny or infuriating, or because he enjoyed being corrected by her since he did it a lot. Or all three—which makes sense now that I think about it.

Anyway, the laundromat was the first place I recall hearing a foreign language spoken not for want of confidentiality with kids underfoot, but rather to help someone out—a total stranger, no less. As far as I was concerned, my mom was a superhero. I decided then and there that I would learn French. And Italian.

The first time I used both languages at once was a few decades later in Vienna. Lots of young tourists' budgets require affordable digs like hostels, which fill up by late morning. More than once (and on various continents) have I gone for an early morning jog in some public park or on a beach and seen bagged-up backpackers chased away by cops. Well, the young Austrian lady at the desk of my one-star pension spoke no English, and I spoke little German beyond “do you have a room (*ein zimmer?*)?” But we both spoke a bit of French, so I was in.

No sooner than we get everything settled, when in walks this bronzed youth, my age or younger, from Tunisia. He spoke no German, French, or English. But he did speak Italian (which makes sense when you look at the map). So I finagled in French with the Austrian receptionist and stammered in Italian with the Tunisian kid, and he got the last available room at the inn—maybe in all of Vienna that day because, well, you should have seen him smile.

All of a sudden I felt like a superhero too.

James B. Nicola, a returning contributor, is the author of seven collections of poetry, the latest being *Fires of Heaven* (2021) and *Turns & Twists* (2022). His nonfiction book *Playing the Audience* won a Choice award.

"VIBRAtions-in-light" By: Tiziana Rasile



"In the fluid sound"

Tiziana Rasile is an Italian abstract artist. Her research explores light, through over-positions suffused with chromatic textures and is focused on the possibility of creating a dialogue between scientific and philosophical realities, spiritual and artistic insights.



Something Admirable

BY: MARION LOUGHEED

She was going to do something admirable,
she said, standing at the window:
save a life
meet the queen
cure polio...
Something.

Instead, she met a man with golden
eyes, a golden heart, a golden glow
on her horizon.
She moved into the light until
his golden pathway led her home.

Maybe it's admirable enough,
finding home in the end,
a wayward winding road, decades
like a temporary tattoo.
Maybe the destination, after all,
justifies the turn.

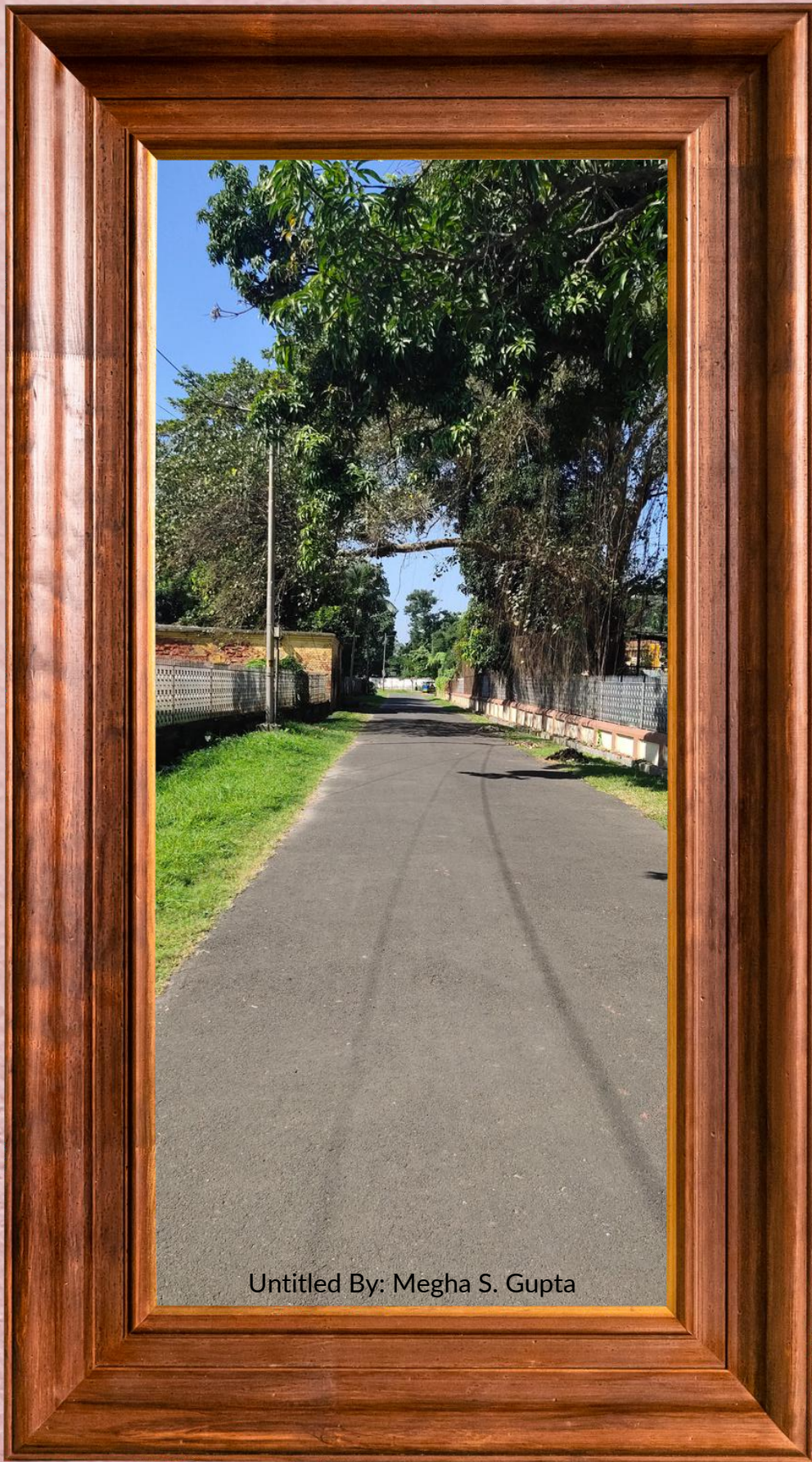


"Untitled"

Megha S. Gupta is a medicine student who has proclivity towards writing stories and poetries inspired by her mother. She has a book named *CRIMSON* published by WriteFluence along with digital publication by *MockingowlRoost*, California Poppy times.







Untitled By: Megha S. Gupta

RESERVED

BY: NWOSU PRAYERLIFE

Hated; not loved
Tired; not weak
Quiet; not speechless
Wounded; not dead

Bent; not broken
Beaten; not defeated
Accused; not justified
Betrayed; not condemned

Your feelings; your opinion
My offense; still your opinion
My life style; my opinion
What matters; still my opinion

My strength; your weakness
My success; your nightmare
My failures; my lessons
My stitches; my pains

Not perfect; with flaws
Not immortal; with pains
Not a kid; I cry
Not wanted; I move.

Nwosu Prayerlife is a writer whose works have been published on various magazines, websites and anthologies in Nigeria and internationally including: *Poemify Magazine*, *6th & 7th Chinua Achebe Anthology*, and *News Corner Media*.



"Mustard" By: Jayant Kashyap





"Untitled"

Megha S. Gupta is a medicine student who has proclivity towards writing stories and poetries inspired by her mother. She has a book named CRIMSON published by WriteFluence along with digital publication by MockingowlRoost, California Poppy times.

THE BREAKING OF A HOPELESS ROMANTIC

BY: LYLANNE MUSSELMAN

Breaking News, 1971

A young woman, 14, holds hands with another young woman, 17, on a drive home after taking the 17-year-old's boyfriend his textbooks at Wesleyan College. The 14-year-old feels a thrill she's never had before. Will these feelings torment this "goodgirl?" She starts a diary. Stay tuned.

Breaking News, 1972

A young woman, 15, is enamored with the 27-year-old Hartford City cop. He calls her on the home phone often at 2 am while he works the desk. Why does her mom get her up to take these calls? On a hot summer night, this young woman lost her virginity to the cop around 3 a.m. in his car, in the family's driveway. She worries about what her parents or neighbors might see. Will she continue this unlikely relationship? Will her beloved grandma find out what she's done? What will her art teacher think? More as the story develops.

Breaking News, 1974

That policeman reports to the mom of the girl, now 17, that she's been having sex with a 23-year-old grease monkey. What's more, he reports she may be involved with taking drugs—a lie because the young woman ended the unsavory relationship with the cop. This report happens on the night of the young woman's senior prom, a night when she's had fun and finally felt free.

The next morning, met with these accusations from her mom, she feels humiliated and never wants to be seen by anyone again. Will she survive? Sit tight.

Breaking News, 1975

The young woman, 18, has married a man, 23, who she only met three months ago. She sees it as an escape from untrustworthy men that have infiltrated her life. He pays attention to only her and is not sleeping with others like the cop had been. Her maid of honor, 20, was who really enamored her. Will this matrimony last until death do them part? He doesn't like her friends. Will the young woman feel good about this major decision? Stay tuned.

Update, 1983

Woman, 26, files for divorce after years of verbal and mental abuse from the "trustworthy" husband. A custody battle ensues. Woman, whom he called "stupid and "spineless wonder," wins custody of their two young daughters. Woman then dates several men: one she likes a lot but gets another woman pregnant; one talks marriage, but one Friday night breaks their date due to laundry. To her knowledge, he is still in Fort Wayne doing laundry.

Breaking News, 1986

Woman, 30, marries man she wouldn't even date in high school. On her wedding day, she lay crying on her bed. She knew it was a mistake. All because her mom didn't like his truck at her house at all hours, she warned the woman that she would lose custody of her young daughters. Within six months she files for divorce. He refuses to leave her house which he'd moved into. Another restraining order is filed for a second abusive husband. Stay tuned.

Dateline, 1988

Woman, 32, marries for third time. This man she met through a singles dance in Muncie. It turns out, she's married too quickly again. Her uncle says it's the last wedding of hers he'll attend. She vows this is the last time she'll get married. And now, the rest of the story.

Update, 1989

Woman moves to Sevierville, TN, with third husband and her daughters. He talks gruffly to her oldest daughter and kicks her; he is cruel to her cats. He swings their dog by a chain over a tree limb. She struggles with him over a loaded pistol. She feels he truly will be the death of her. A friend helps her set his stuff outside of their house. She and her girls stay with her friend until he has gone back to Indiana. She feels freedom.

Breaking News, 1990

Woman, 34, meets man, 44, from Maryland at a cat show, where she is with her daughters; she has a booth selling her cat paintings; he is selling cat trees. He asks her out. Over the course of five years, she falls head over heels in love, she writes poems again. They meet every weekend at some cat show across the U.S. The 3rd year in, she finds out he never divorced. After two more years, filled with love, hope, a lot of tears and betrayal, the woman calls it quits. This is the last man the woman is ever with. Watch this space.

Breaking News, 1996

Woman, 40, has first kiss with a woman nearly 20 years her junior, a classmate in her poetry workshop. The woman has returned to college after dropping out to get married in 1975. She dropped out because she thought she was horrid at writing and was afraid of failing her English class. Within months, the younger woman moves in with the older woman and her youngest daughter who is still in high school. The relationship is easy while it lasts. The younger woman has been fighting her urge to transition. The older woman says, "I didn't come out to be with a man." The younger woman moves out while the older one is at her beloved grandma's funeral.

Breaking News, 2002

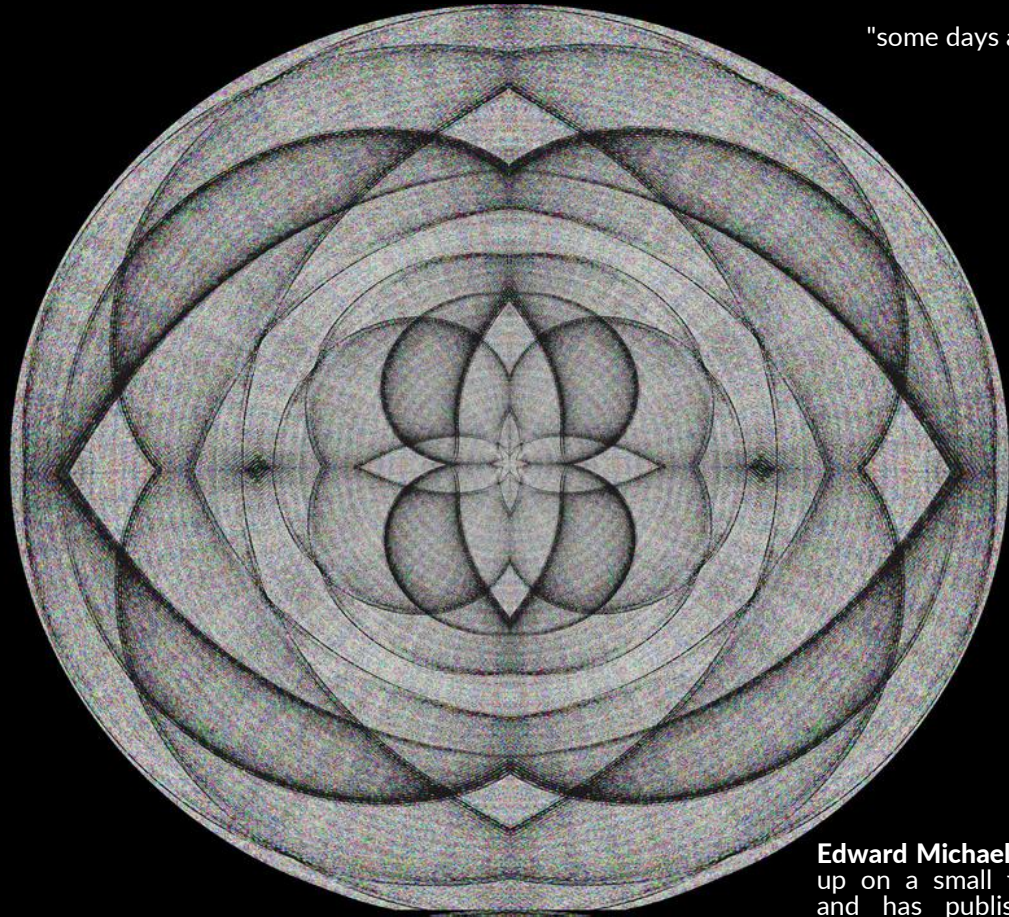
Woman, 46, meets a wonderful woman, 41. They move in together. The younger woman has two teenage children, and their families get along well. They buy a house together; they have parties, travel to New York City to see plays, to Savannah for the ghost tours, everything is good - except the younger woman is an alcoholic. She ends up in rehab twice. She loses her nursing job. The older woman fears she's going to lose the younger to driving drunk. After eight years, the older woman moves into her own apartment with her cats.

Update, 2022

Creative woman, 65, after caring for her mom with dementia, and both parents gone, now lives alone, with her cats—happy and free.

Lylanne Musselman is an award-winning poet, playwright, and visual artist. She is currently working on a series of essays to include in her hybrid memoir, also including her poems and art.

"some days are difficult"



Edward Michael Supranowicz grew up on a small farm in Appalachia and has published artwork and poetry in the US and internationally.

"monkey shines"





"Space and Quill"

Dr. Sonjaye Maurya is a peace ambassador and a visual artist with international repute, published widely, working on the subjects of social issues to bring change. Am a thematic and conceptual artist bestowed with a number of awards and titles.



"Ganesha Sculpture"
By: Monisha Subramaniam

"Krishna Leela" (Pattachitra painting)
By: Monisha Subramaniam



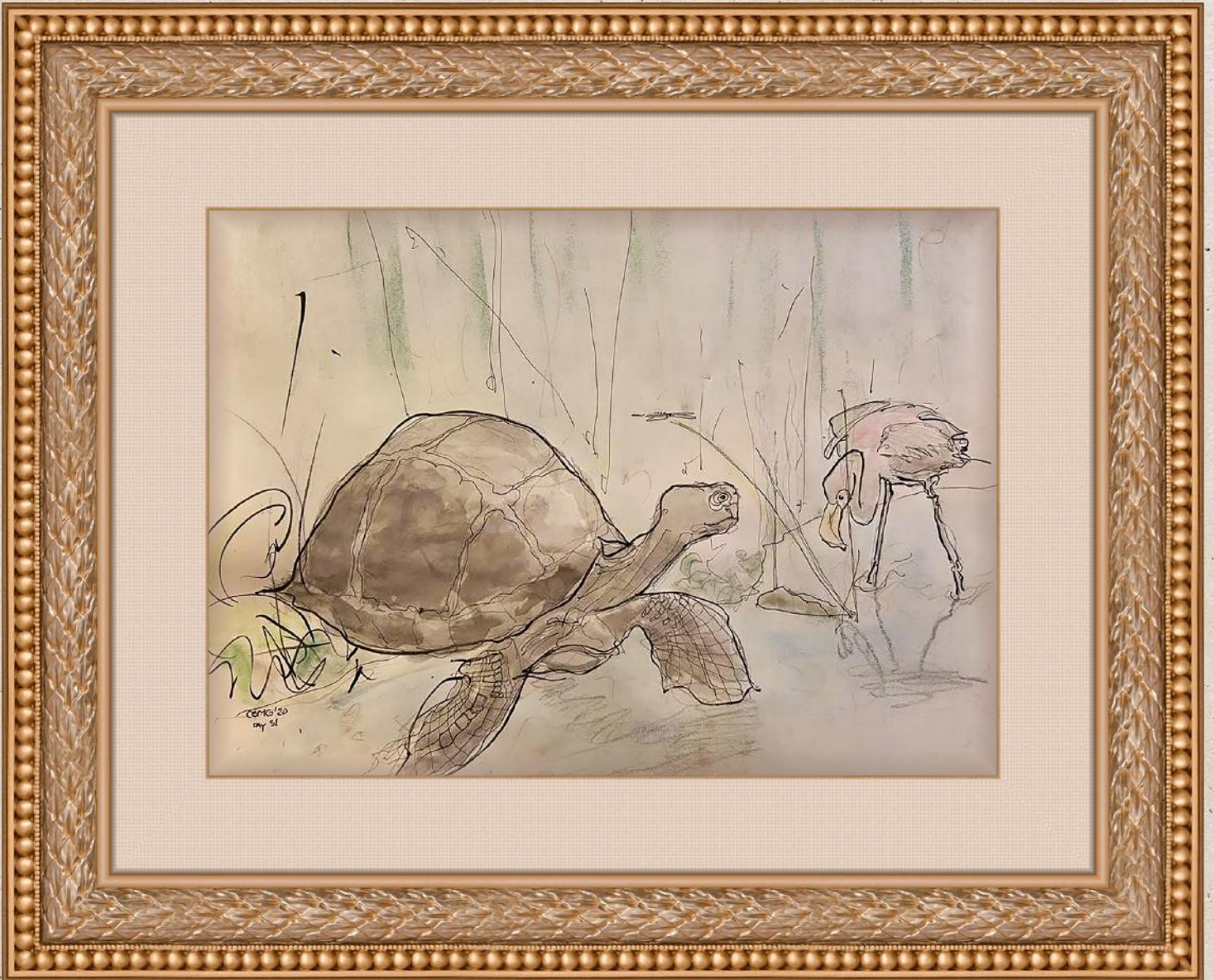
AN ANNIVERSARY POEM

BY: GEORGE FREEK

I open my windows
to let in the spring air.
Birds have returned.
Almost overnight,
Flowers are suddenly there.
The sun rises slowly,
like a woman climbing
from a soft bed. Was it
like that the day we wed?
The wind is a harp,
singing in the trees.
I've invited friends
to drink some wine,
to celebrate our wedding,
as we did,
when you were alive.
While I wait I watch
clouds drift away. It seems
as if they'd barely arrived.



George Freek's poem "Enigmatic Variations" is currently nominated for Best of the Net. His poem "Night Thoughts" is also nominated for a Pushcart Prize. His collection "Melancholia" is published by Red Wolf Editions.



"Tortoise and Flamingo"

Marshall Gilchrist is an illustrator interested in highlighting endangered species of flora and fauna on our planet. Marshall's work is largely done by hand but is in the process of vectorizing them for use in the digital field.

PROUD PALEO PERFECT PEOPLE

BY: MARK BLICKLEY

Asudden, blasting wind makes the tiki torches flicker. In struts Basil, the outlaw tribal shaman, wearing a large furry buffalo hat with protruding horns, a fancy fringed vest that reveals his chiseled chest, and a colorful speedo that houses an abnormally large scrotum. He flexes his amazing triceps and biceps in an exaggerated pose of greeting as he raises his arms above his head, strutting up to the outdoor stage.

"Tribal Members! Proud Paleo Perfect People! You sacred PPPPs! Praise be to the Lard, and all other natural byproducts," shouts Basil.

His audience cheers.

"A blessing on all your heads, from your family of physically and morally undefiled Paleolithic ancestors."

"Homeostasis in the highest!" chants the crowd.

"Sagging and shapeless mainstream mankind doesn't want me to venerate and expose the powerful purity of our superior genes. Using work-swallowing machines and flabby factory farming, they strip us of our true Paleo heritage! The attempted molestation of we Proud Paleo Perfect People began on this very night at the first D.O.A., Dawn of Agriculture's sneak attack on humanity!"

"Outrageous abomination! Homeostasis in the Highest! Praise be to the Lard and all other

natural byproducts!" screams the crowd.

Basil does repetitive, exaggerated sweeping bows to his followers, but in doing so, two large peaches are dislodged from his speedo and fall to the ground. The crowd gasps in surprise and disillusionment.

An embarrassed Basil stutters, "Th-they... those are naturally found and picked fruit. Not harvested from evil orchards!" He raises his flexed arms to distract his followers as he quickly kicks the large peaches off to the side of the stage. He hides behind the lectern to recover his dominance and dignity.

Basil lowers his arms and grips the sides of the lectern. "Quinoa, why is this evening, this night, different from all other evenings?"

"Because it is the joyful commemoration of D.O.A. Eve, the Dawn Of Agriculture, Basil."

"And what is commemorated on this day, Herb?" asks Basil.

Herb screams, "We commemorate on this sacred D.O.A. Eve, the 15, 714th annual remembrance of a terror avoided by our beloved Paleo ancestors, Basil."

"Correct. And what constitutes this terror, Myrtle?"

Myrtle shouts, "It's when humanity rejected their natural Paleolithic pureness of hunter-gatherer for the evil of the Dawn of Agriculture who raped the precious few inches of life-giving topsoil, Basil."

"Norman, why is this D.O.A. evil?" asks Basil.

"It marks Man's fall from our true nature as self-sufficient food providers and into the perversion of farming and mechanized processed foods!" replies Norman.

Basil glares at the crowd. "Myrtle, and what are the two greatest sins created at this Dawn of Agriculture?"

"The sins of grain-growing and animal husbandry, Basil. Modern humans castrate their ranched alpha beasts to more easily herd them into automated slaughterhouse pens."

"You speak truth, Myrtle. Are we animals, Herb? Do we marry fellow beasts?"

"We are not animals, Basil. And we do not marry to destroy sensuality! We are PPPPs,

Basil. Proud Paleo Perfect People! Untainted, loving human beings, not beasts who refuse to be slapped into the sexual shame of polygamy."

The crowd cheers and chants, "PPPP! PPPP! PPPP!"

Basil smiles and motions to them to lower their voices. "And the evils of cultivated grain? Tell me of this wickedness, Norman. This curse against human nature."

Norman recites from memory, "Cultivated grain gave birth to the unnatural, wicked food of bread, Basil. The Dawn Of Agriculture began a... uh— ... a degenerative... and addictive invasion against humanity by seducing mankind with factory-farmed processed foods. It attempts to contaminate and weaken our glorious Paleo primal genes with empty calories and enforced famines."

Basil withdraws a large red book from inside the lectern and holds it above his head: "A reading from the sacred book of Holy Homeostasis!"

"Praise be to the Lard and other natural byproducts," shouts the audience.

Basil lowers the book and opens it, flexing his muscles as he searches for the page. "As the revered Paleo Charles Atlas sayeth, 'Evolution is a conscious process.'"

The crowd cheers, and when the noise dies down Basil resumes reading. "And the man broke the bread, held it out to them, and sayeth, 'Take, eat this bread. This is my body which is given to you.' And what sayeth you, my precious Proud Perfect Paleo People?"

"Hell, no! We are not animals or cannibals!" screams the crowd.

Basil smiles and nods in approval. "Yes, we are not animals or cannibals, my children. 'Tis better dead than bread?"

"Tis better dead than bread!" the crowd echoes. "Better dead than bread! Better dead than bread!"

Basil drinks in the crowd's hysterics before pausing and softly saying, "Yet there is one amongst you that shall betray us with a kibble and a nibble."

“Not on our watch, dear Basil! Not on our watch!” screams the crowd.

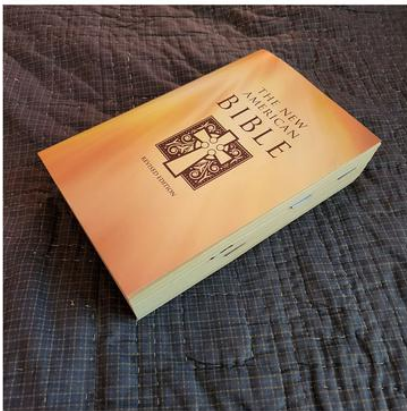
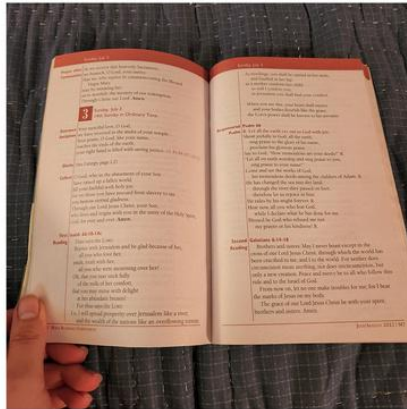
Basil silences the crowd. “We shall wait and watch for evil. Ever vigilant. Wait and watch for evil.

“Wait and Watch! Wait and Watch. Wait Watch! Wait Watch! Wait Watch!” roars the audience.

Basil outstretches his arm in a symbolic communal hug. “Proud Paleo Perfect People, thou are, indeed, the beloved PPPP Wait Watchers!”

“Wait Watchers! Wait Watchers! We are determined Wait Watchers! Better dead than bread! Homeostasis in the Highest! Blessed be the Lard and all natural byproducts!!”

Mark Blickley grew up within walking distance of New York's Bronx Zoo. He is a proud member of the Dramatists Guild and PEN American Center. His latest book is the flash fiction collection 'Hunger Pains' (Buttonhook Press).



"A Day in the Life"

Sara Caporaletti is a multi-media visual artist living in Maryland. Caporaletti received her BA in studio art from McDaniel College and her MFA in interdisciplinary fine art from American University.

"Coral Tree"

Anshika Sarin is pursuing her Master's in Microbiology. She sometimes takes photographs (mostly of places).



Rebirth

BY: TESS KAY

Your dead body and my stained hands. A long curl of brown hair.

Where did it go wrong?

Outside the siren is screaming, yet an absolute silence surrounds the two of us. Time is running out. Or is it standing still? You and I and a brief moment of infinity. I touch you almost lovingly. The dent my fingers leave in your skin immediately disappears, unlike the gash in your heart.

What a sad sight.

Violent death does not resemble sleep. In your eyes there is fear and something akin to astonishment, while your mouth is twisted open in an eternal scream. But no one can hear.

So here we are. Two people who used to be one.

The siren grows louder as the silence in the room becomes even more oppressive. A sudden bout of dizziness. I sit down hugging my naked knees with my naked arms. Somehow I can see the blue sky.

So distant.

You are no more. Just like that. The heart tore in an instant yet for years you had been dying inside of me.

Can you see?

My tears are melting the blue of the sky. No, it is not possible to draw a line. To start again as if you had not lived. To turn the page, to hide my face, to walk away and leave you here.

I wipe away the bloody tears.

My bare feet carry me over the scarred floor against my will. You had to die so I can live.

Forgive me!

The plea barely leaves my lips and my hand opens the door. The blinding sun and the unknown world. I step outside, shielding my eyes.

Is this life?

Tess Kay is a transgender writer, poet and lyricist. She was born and raised in the Czech Republic, spent several years living in Canada and currently resides in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

PHOTOGRAPHY
"3 Trees In Infrared"

Jonathan Brooks' photographs have been featured in countless publications, major movies, an Emmy-nominated short film, and numerous television shows. His work has been exhibited in Miami, NYC, Amsterdam, France, Germany, Greece, Scotland, and the UK.



PHOTOGRAPHY

"Infrared Sun 1" By: Jonathan Brooks



some days i just want to be a dog

BY: IZZY TORRES



IZZY TORRES (they/them) is a queer, chicanx poet and author living in the midwest. Author of several books, their latest, *Carnage*, was released in 2021. <https://izzytorres.substack.com>

punk rock taught
me to be queer

that practicing straight
white, homosexuality is
the same as erasing yourself

but my otherness
is permanent

from rags to flesh
i drip color 'cause
why hide what you
can't wash off

some days being a dog
seems easier, how can
i assimilate if
i remain animal

i am always
the outsider--

genderless
& brown skin

a molotov waiting
to be thrown into
the eyes of
god's moral compass

& now
i've been
lit

& my flames
won't stop
burning

cherry blossoms & suicide

BY: IZZY TORRES

i stole that line from halloween ends
it was the only edgy line worth taking
& theft is a crime that ain't beneath me

laurie strode really tried to sell it
speaking between the two factions of evil
but all it told me was that it's easy
to sell bullshit to anyone who'll listen

people tell me i'm dark enough
to get picked up by ice
when i was eighteen i sold bootleg dvds
at a flea market off the interstate
in a town south of houston

i was cheap, paying tuition
because all that was offered to me
was lifelong debt & unreachable payments

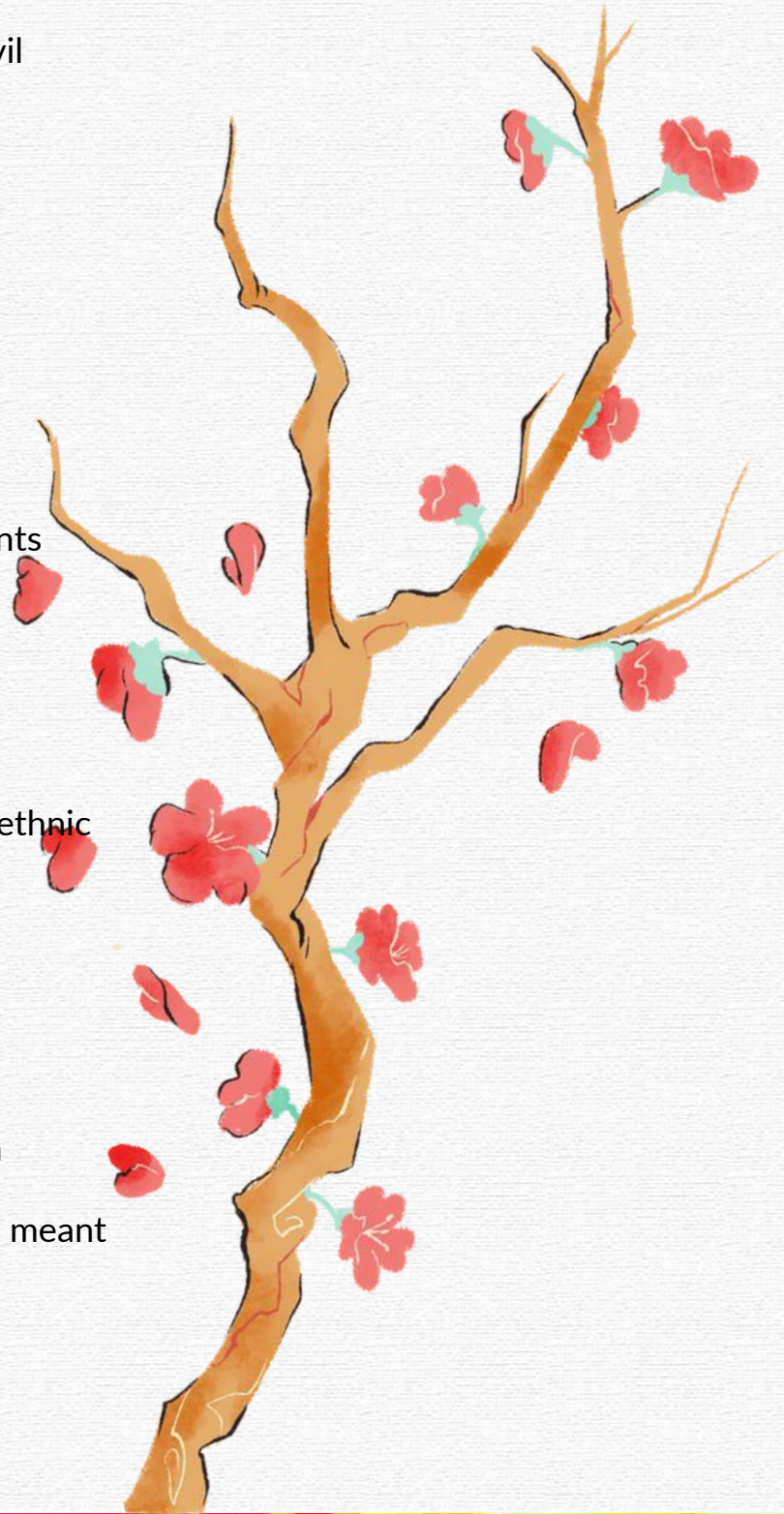
the palm reader in the booth next to me
said i should go into business
he was picked up by ice the next day

i was named after my father
because anything else would sound too ethnic
i would never grow into the man
they dreamt i should become

instead i grew into a genderless queer
stripped an absent father from my body
& plummeted hard into poetry

they still don't know i'm no longer a man
or that i have never felt like a man
or that i never knew what the word man meant
when i could not apply it to my body

secrets grow like cherry blossoms
loud & colorful & hard to ignore
even when the family bubble
is too thick to burst





I was engaged

BY: MARION LOUGHEED

to a boy who looked like a man
when I asked him to move to Canada
he worried about how he could
import his fifth-hand car
across the land border.

He toiled
to save that tired engine, found
replacement doors in scrapyards
off the beaten highway.

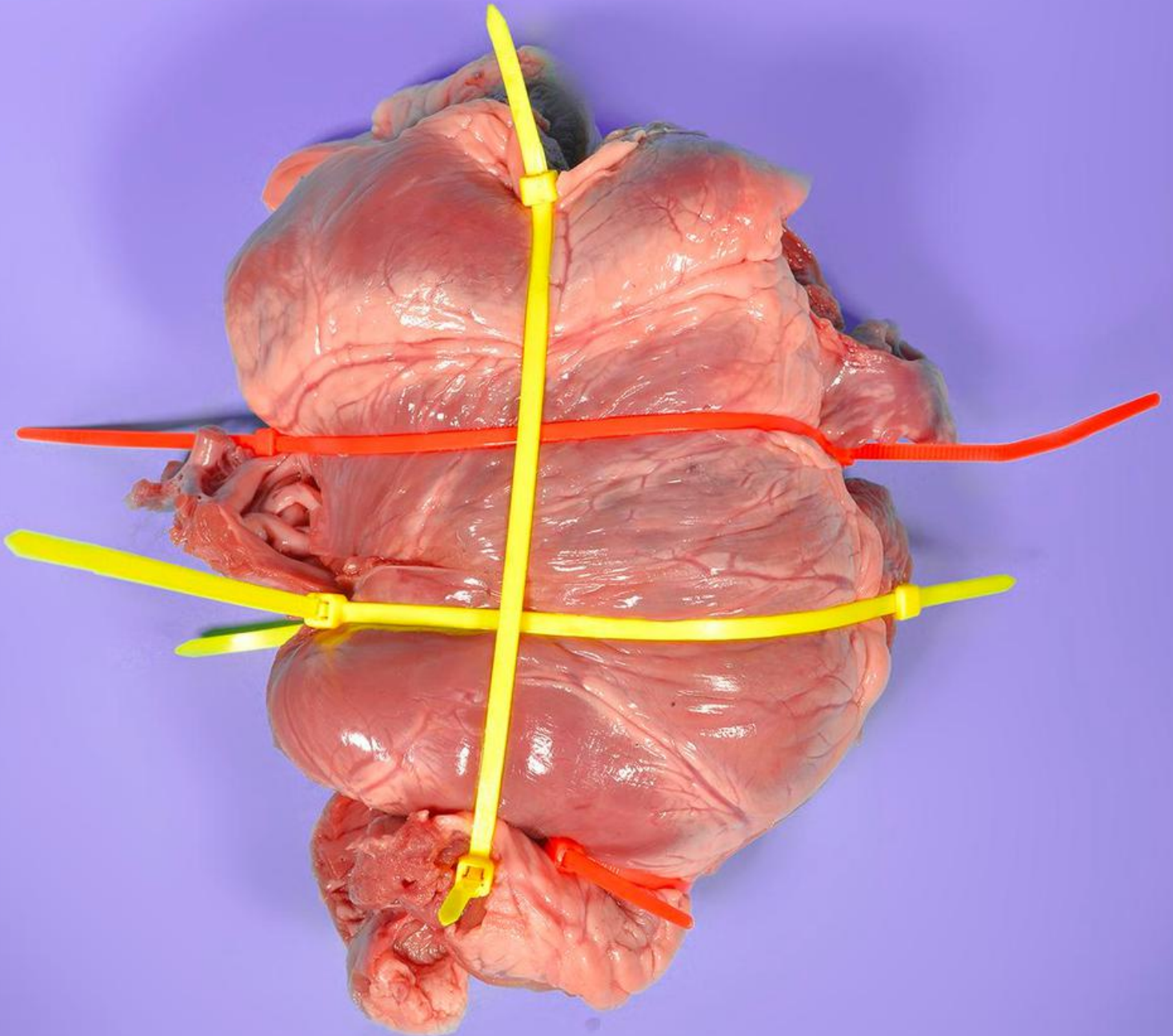
When I visited I
sat
for
hours
watching him play games with online friends.
He invited me to play but I
lacked the skills and he lacked
patience
to teach me how.

One day I asked him to join me for a walk.
He said, "I've seen this place already."
He said, "You can go ahead on your own."

So I did.

MARION LOUGHEED grew up in Canada, Benin, Belgium and Germany. Her writing has won two major contests and been published in various outlets. She is a the founding editor of Off Topic Publishing.





"i am proud to have fixed my broken heart #2 "

H.H. Paulsen says that "The Essence of the Image" is the central research approach that Paulsen have been following for years. As a social scientist with a doctorate specializing in the sociology of art, the question of the effect of the image has always been of central importance to me. In the tradition of the best-known art sociologist, Paulsen made my way from art to image to photography, including research material. Images are social and cultural symptoms of their field of origin.

“I am not . . . that”

BY: MIA AMORE DEL BANDO

She told me she’s been with women before
But she’s definitely “not gay”

Detached from one-night-stand dreams
Taking in compliments she’s heard before
Drunk on tequila and conceit

Were on the mattress discussing the weather
And our careers
But her eyes sneak glimpses of my exposed chest
And the gloss on my lips

She whispered I was pretty
In the middle of my words crowding the hotel room
She wasn’t listening about the time
My mother said being gay was a sin
And made me read a scripture from Leviticus

Her hand inches to mine
In half-sympathy and full attraction
Glitter on her nails
Stacked on my feeble hand
I want to retract and ask her why

But she laughs at my joke
And smiles
I am only an experiment
Not a soul

Maybe I’ll tell my mother
I am not gay
And it doesn’t count

This is just a kiss
This is just a woman
All the minor details
Fade and she takes me in

Mia Amore Del Bando was born and raised in Long Beach, California. She featured in *The Art of Everyone*, *You Might Need To Hear This*, *Flora Fiction*, *Wingless Dreamer*, *Poets Choice*, and others. She is a faithful friend, difficult daughter, and selfish lover.

"Who gets to tell the story matters" By: Sherry Shahan

Who Gets to Tell

the Story Matters

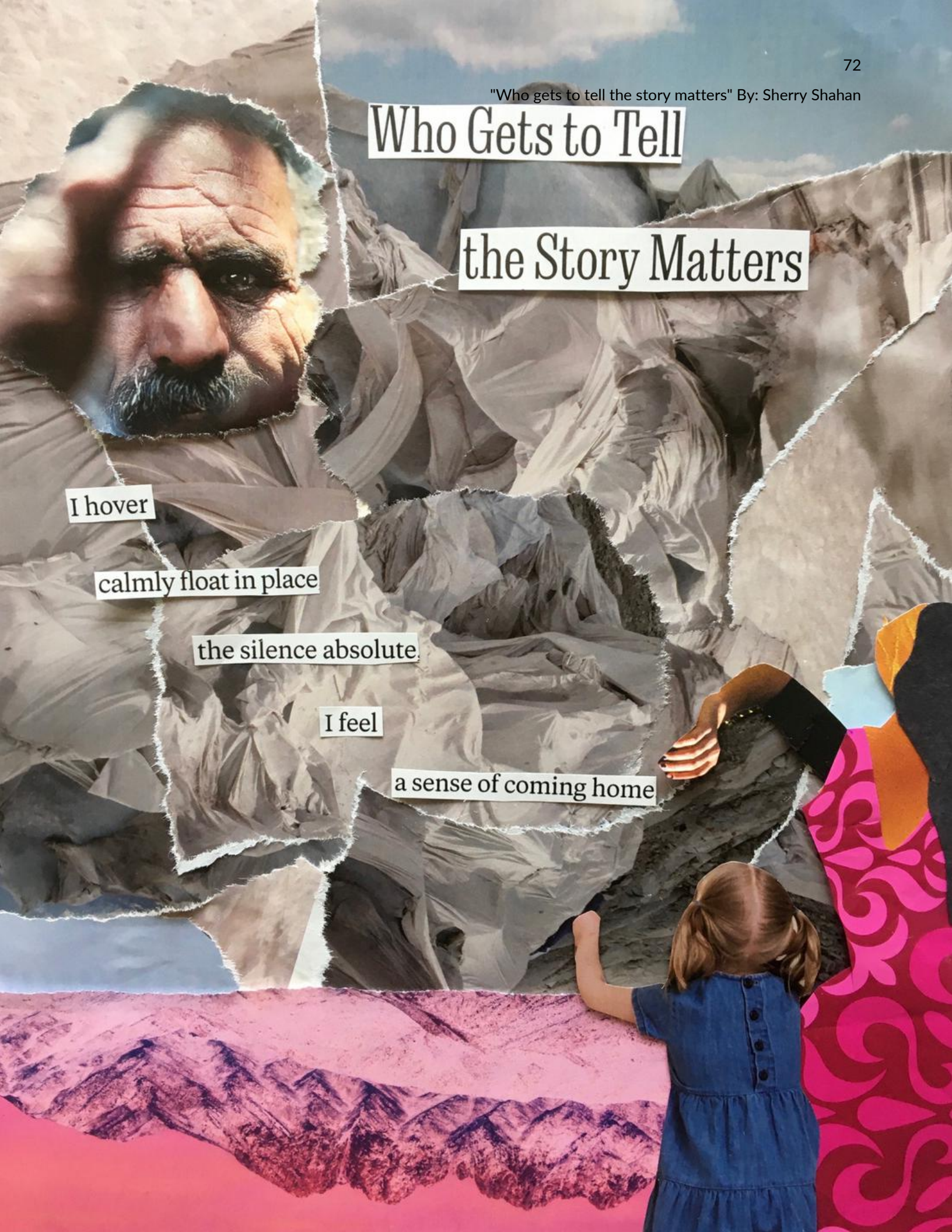
I hover

calmly float in place

the silence absolute.

I feel

a sense of coming home



THE YEAR THAT





"Grateful"

Sherry Shahan's art has appeared in magazines, newspapers, literary journals and anthologies. She holds an MFA from Vermont of Fine Arts.

PHOTOGRAPHY

"Chakrata, Dehradun" By: Jayant Kashyap







"Feline"

Jayant Kashyap is a poet, essayist, translator and artist. His work appears in *POETRY*, *Magma*, *Hebe* and elsewhere.



BY: DANIEL SCHULZ

I've got Daddy Issues:
I hate fascism.

I'm ideologically indoctrinated:
I obey no one.

I'm lobotomized:
a queen of hearts.

I'm a catechism
without an answer,

an answering machine
with all the wrong replies.

[Because that's what freedom is:
I don't need your lies.]

Daniel Schulz is a writer and 2022 pushcart nominee known best for his publications in *Fragmented Voices*, *Versification*, *A Thin Slice Anxiety*, *Word Vomit*, *Dipity*, and the catalog *Get Rid of Meaning*.

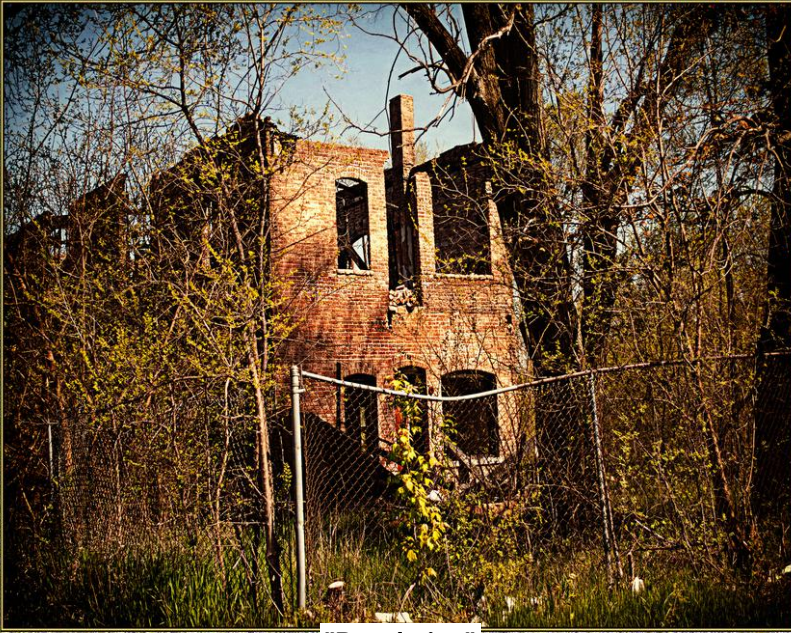


"Home at last" By: Phyllis Green
In the background is "The Blue Horse," by Cezar. The painting of the blond woman with a zebra background is by Phyllis Green.



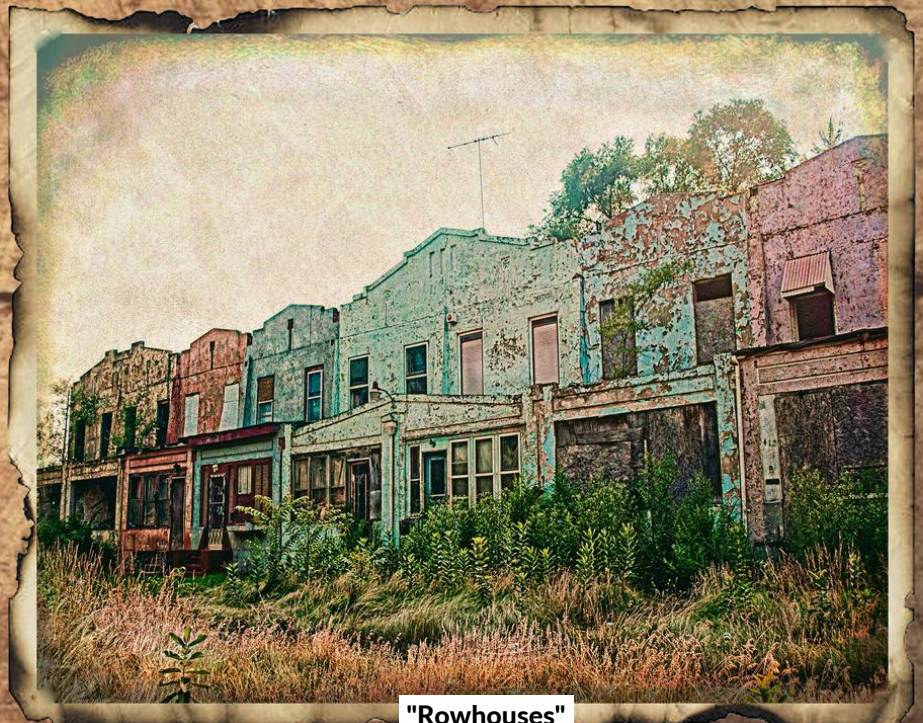
"Solitude"

Phyllis Green is an author, playwright, artist, and photographer.



"Desolation"

B.A. Brittingham is mesmerized by two worlds beyond the one seen by most of us everyday: that of words and the space inhabited by unforgettable images. These are pictures of the collapse of Gary, Indiana in the aftermath of the steel companies collapse.



"Rowhouses"

Poet's Corner

BY: LOU FABER

I am the one
who hears the poetry of gunfire
tearing through the great square
who tastes the villanelle
of the ashes from the crematory
who reads the sonnet
of barren fields, starving children
who sees the pantoum
of children sacrificed to the gangs
who hears the quatrain
of crack babies in withdrawal
who touches the rondel
of the young lovers embrace
who knows the palinode
of the giggling child at play
who writes the sestet
of a world beyond understanding

LOU FABER is a poet and blogger living on the Treasure Coast of Florida with his wife and cat. He has been widely published in the U.S., U.K., India, Australia and elsewhere.



Untitled By: Megha S. Gupta





KODAK PORTRA 400



6A



Languor

BY: GEORGE FREEK

I've grown tired of
looking at dead trees,
weary of the moon,
which now looks like
it has a fatal disease.
Crows sit in branches
gazing at my bones.
They look unfed.
They scream at me.
It's a disturbing sound.
My friends have departed.
My wife is dead.
I watch the sun set
on my decaying home.
I stare down a road,
which leads nowhere.
I sink into my unmade bed.

George Freek's poem *Enigmatic Variations* is currently nominated for Best of the Net. His poem *Night Thoughts* is also nominated for a Pushcart Prize. His collection *Melancholia* is published by Red Wolf Editions.

Nomenclature

BY: LOU FABER

I have gone
by many names,
some chosen,
some inherited,
some thrown at me
in anger,
in scorn,
in friendship.
Names add
nothing to who
I am, who
I choose to be,
who I am seen
to by the those
who throw around
names as if
they were magical
incantations, elixirs
with great power
that fall
at my feet
like shattered
icicles of my
not caring.

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"Cake" By: Jayant Kashyap

FREEDOM BREATHE

BY: DOROTHY JOHNSON-LAIRD

(Inspired from listening to Oumou Sangare's singing)

your music is a warm breeze across my face
Is the night air shimmering across my body

If I dream I can fly
I can be a bird moving out across the open sky
I can flow through clouds and over the moon
flowing with the night breeze under steady wind

movement not trapped by discipline, by order
there is a power in your voice
there is celebration in your voice
there is the beautiful color of indigo held in your voice

a flower grows upwards from my heart
a flower finds its space in the air
gently leaning into the sunlight
the sun rains on the flower's petals
the sun nurtures the flower to live and breathe on this earth

If I can dance, I can breathe
the sun can rain on my body
the sun can open my heart

In your voice, I hear the passion of the flower
I hear the flower singing in the four directions
to innocence, to wisdom, to introspection
the quiet winter helps us grow from within
even as we yearn for a deep love
to be desired and held with real care by a man

If I listen to your voice Oumou, I breathe
breathe away all the scars that linger on my heart
I open as the flower petals under the sun

listening to your voice, I move outwards, unafraid
I touch freedom
I touch the spirit in my hands and eyes
I breathe freedom
I dance
I breathe freedom

Dorothy Johnson-Laird is a poet and a social worker who lives in New York City. Dorothy has a passion in African music and has published journalism with www.worldmusiccentral.org. Recent poems were published by BeZine and Aji, among others.

"Gulfport Sunrise" By: Ashley Wilson





"Dusk"

Anshika Sarin is pursuing her Master's in Microbiology. She sometimes takes photographs (mostly of places).

PARTICIPATION MYSTIQUE

BY: JEFFREY LEWIS

I discarded the mask others wear
and rinsed the grease paint away.
A clown with masquerade smiles
I grew so many faces
I was a stranger to myself,
in a place where loss and gain held sway
on a stage of my own design.

I have broken the unspoken treaty.
That compromise between myself
and the expectations of society
where all of your tomorrows mirror yesterday.
I am no one's reflection;
the face in the mirror is mine.

J. L. Lewis lives on a farm in the Ohio valley with his wife, daughters, and lots of cats. His work has appeared in numerous periodicals as well as several anthologies. Underground Books will release his chapbook, *Seasons of Passage*, in April.



PHOTOGRAPHY



COURAGEOUS

BY: ASHLEY WILSON

People tell me that I'm courageous
Because I was forced to face a series of
Traumatic events that the "average" person
May break to. But somehow, I don't know
How to describe what being courageous is.
Am I courageous because I faced
My biggest fear in front of jury by trial?
But how does that make me courageous
When I didn't have a choice?
It was either give up or stand up for myself
When no one else would.
I guess that's what courage is but if you
Were to ask me I would tell you
It doesn't feel good and I wouldn't recommend.

I don't need to prove to the world
That my love for you is real.
I don't need to show anyone
That what we have transcends the
Various lives we've lived together
And apart. I'll always be with you.
You helped me become
The person I've always meant to be.
You knew who I was before I did.
You found me, like an abandoned
dog, picked up off the streets.
You chose me and allowed me
To find the right ways to love you.
Because before you, I didn't know
What unconditional love meant.
What I thought was love
Wasn't really love at all.
And I've learned to let go
Of the people who can't love me
Back because of you.

Technically, I would live if I lost you.
But if I lost you, I wouldn't want to live.



“You must feel so alone.”

“I do.”

“You must want it to end.”

“Please, make it stop.”

“You don’t see another way out.”

“There’s another way out?”

“No. There’s no hope.”

He holds the gun to his temple. His hand shakes. Tears fall down his face. He doesn’t want to be here anymore. He can’t be here anymore. What’s it all for? He studied and studied, all to get here. All to realize that this isn’t who he wants to be.

Snot and tears soak his shirt as he ruminates in his own failure. He wanted to be a lawyer his whole life, but four weeks into his first semester at law school broke his reason. The pressure he feels to be the best stems from his parents and their third-world ideology. When he called and told them about how he was struggling in Criminal Law, they just told him to go to the library and get out of his dorm.

He spent all his time at the library. It’s not like we don’t all feel the same way. Maybe, we talk about it because we’re envious that his suffering has ended. Or has it transferred to the world around him? The sky cries and the school mourns the loss of one of our own.

I wish someone would’ve told you that you’re worth it. If only that’s something we could tell ourselves.

Ashley Wilson is a writer, photographer, wife, and student from St. Augustine, FL.

"Gulfport Sunrise" By: Ashley Wilson





"Asheville Sunset" By: Ashley Wilson



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