

Main Squeeze



vol. 11

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MAIN SQUEEZE



Volume 11

2026 Masthead

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Rae Armantrout
CRINGE

1

Headed for the cool kids' table
at the old folks' home,

you wish.
I'm just fixillating here.

I can't tickle myself,
but I can sometimes

surprise myself
by thinking.

2

Corporations have been 'neutered,'
says the CEO
with his Star-Trek mullet.

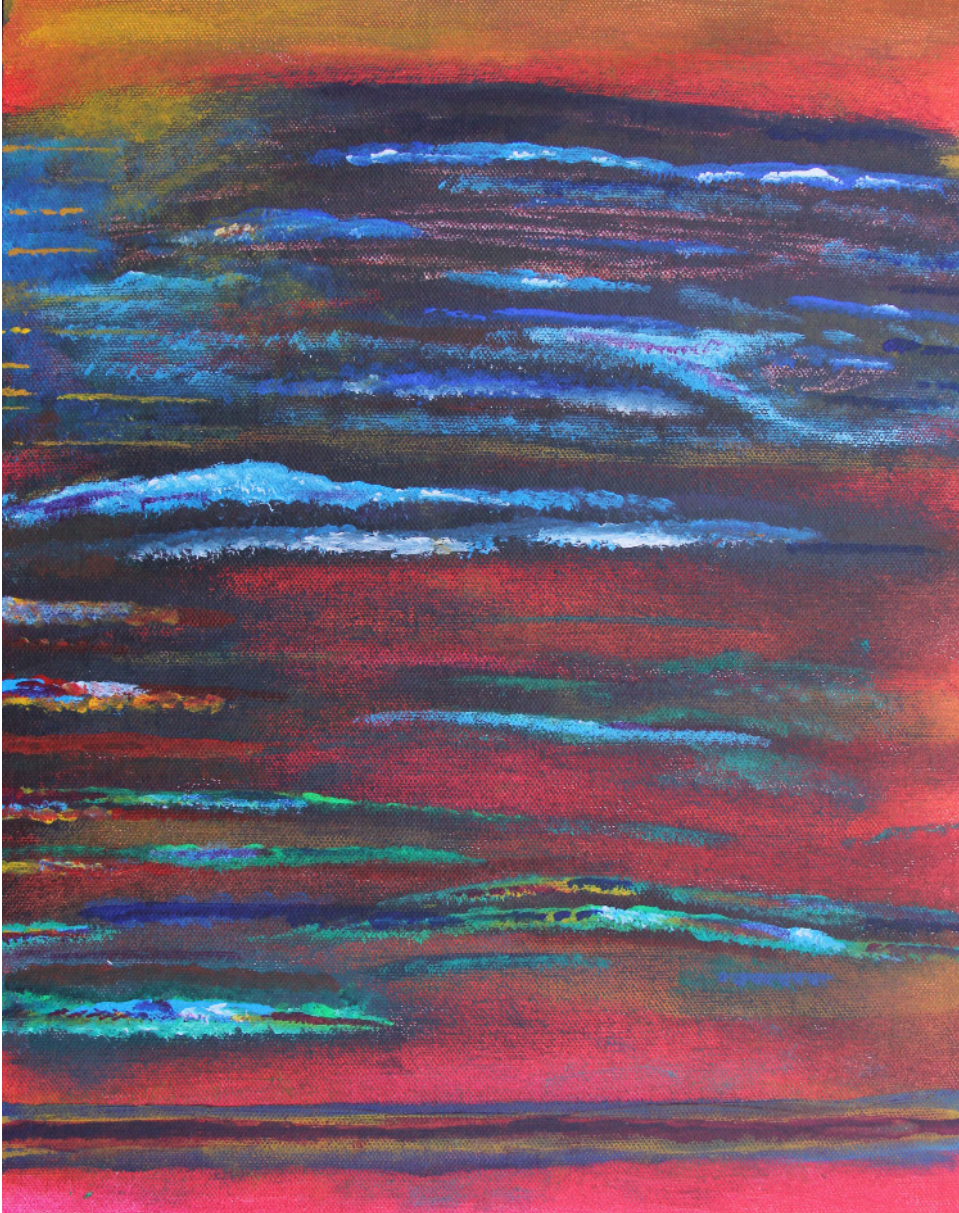
With less regulation,
we'll be men.

Faded streamers
flapping helplessly

above car dealerships:
pole dance!

On our post-choice
glide-path,

'cringe'
is now a meme.



The Sound of Sun on Water, Acrylic with Brush on Canvas
Craig Wright

Rae Armantrout
LATE CAREERS

Your career
as an Amazon re-seller.

Your friend, the birthday clown,
who makes ends meet
by getting AI
to write clowning guides
which he self-publishes.

The guys who bet
on the exact day
a disaster will strike
or a war begin.

My career showing kids
how to string thought-bracelets

is almost at an end.

Rae Armantrout
TWIST

Everything looks sick,
flushed with autumn,
lurid,

someone must have said.

*

There's a twist, a topknot
of earthworms
on our roof,

you said,

left there by crows
for their own purposes.

Parker Boom
Romance of a Snowblind Spine

Canopy that is really obliquity.

A mere curl cinched to a kite,
A mere flush agent
of your grammar.

The communistic wax women splendid.
The brutal installation smeared

in ceramic.

I evidence the Body
in pinkish yield, beaded law, error.

Your intricate serfs against mine.

The Czar in his unruly loveseat
rends the salt, the riot, the alphabets withheld in debt,

a sudden blare.

No further day
than these tender minutes.

I buckle;

the People tremor joy,
obliquity that is really gravity that is really

the City turning on its pangs.

Parker Boom
Solitude, or, Autobiography in October

The sky went crazy with length.
Occasions shouldered in, skyish.
The removed bandages snowed the mind.
I slept in fits.

*

I couldn't recall anything I read.
During falter, parched night music.
It was a ballet with prominent gunpowders.
It was the Index of the Republic of the Ill.
It was my proximity.

*

Lazarus sank into my dream with a tray of sweetmeats.
What appeared whole were several greypink clusters.
His cry stumbled with a kind of finesse.
He spoke of cardinals; the length of my scarf;
a war film without vowels.

*

I had to access a narrow and black-lamped room.
Dissolving découpage
and shoreline maps of boats, boats.
These were sentinel methods.
A stark girl held three clubs by their necks.

*

They were not foreign to me.
I admired them, skull-capped, their sexless joy arm in arm.
Others were sailors,
despite qualifications of agony.

Carbon heaped on afternoon rags.
It was stepped over.

*

Chromatic aberrations signaled the next phrase.
Lazarus, sunbleached,
pocketed his dying.
The earth was sugared in random pyres.
I tilted back in my seat to watch.

*

Which way to the public grace?
I asked
like a mystic riddled
with certainties.

*

I was in low orders, in hip pains, in aggravations of lung and sound,
in the just ripe basilica with which I was not affiliated,
in the frenzies, in the hushes.
There was no real greeting.

Arthur Croft
Everybody Loves a Wedding

there will be circus time tonight
the role of mother will be played by
understudy

no concession
stand
even though understudy is here
we did not come to see understudy

wire mother walking wire kissing
my neck is drying up

enough of this, and
together time with peanuts miss you

miss you maman

there will be circus time tomorrow
and the next day
the role of father will be played by
father

Arthur Croft
Laundry Piles

I sell my limbs to the innkeeper
She looks at me like rabbit-mother
and my arms creak
My teeth creak too
made of splinter
How many texts until I gain a mother
The man who won't shut up asks if I got a live one
I tell him no man
They want you too man
I will never lose the smell
Vinegar
Borax
Restaurant potatoes
Adult diapers
Ketchup
Mildew
Perfume
But it's all for the cause
Easter Sunday, he says I must be pretty mad
He says we killed him, that white guy DaVinci dated.
He is rizzen babygirl
I'll do it again
You'll never catch me
I'll hide behind the innkeeper's skirt
Oh my god, we got him!

Arthur Croft
ReRoundification

The orbs of confusion.

Nabokov,

but you're twenty-four and sixty-eight.

What's your last name now?

Would you care if it's mine?

Would you like to take it,

take hold of it? A sticky

note tally marking seventeen.

Desk job fun.

An unraveling time unspooling you secretly.

I am the only category you look up anymore,

and I served him with all my heart.

Offered me gummy bear and claimed you were
being bad.

Offered me one green,

one red and do you

remember,

remembering the Matrix?

He wasn't very pleasant when you got to know him.

I can feel the heat of the eyefuck

when you tell me I have such a beautiful smile.

Asking me, please oh please will I just

s mile? Smil e? Smile one time? Smile? Smile for you? Smil e? Smiling now
today? Smile against my Bear ne ck?

Man's arms are shaped to hold small people from The Beyond,

and now my entire plans have of course changed for the day

because I am beyond

your comprehension,

you can't understand that In Human Terms.

A reintroduction of one requires a party invitation for two.

No! Not like that!

My longtime charge has been

finding a figure wise enough to hold my feelings,

with hands lecherous enough to keep me seated

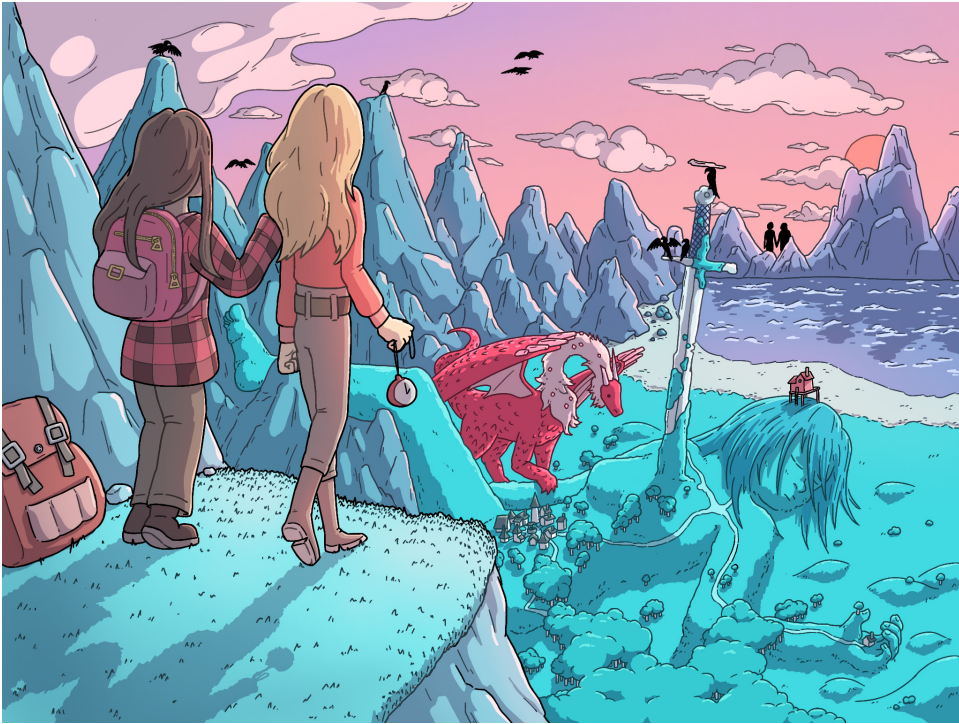
while I tell them.

You will not still love me in twenty years,

perhaps not even in five,

when the baby finally leaves my cheeks.

When you walked by my elementary school, was it preordering?



The Fallen Giantess, Digital Art
Jade Harper

CS Crowe
Fairest of Them All

When Nero danced to the burning of Rome
Did he know that this—a lifetime of madness
Was how we would remember him?
Two-thousand years later, we are still dancing
We impaled a pig's head on our swords
And declared it the Father of the Gods
We dressed ourselves silks and red-hot shoes
And crushed the lilies of the field under our feet
We dared God to dress their corpses in our place
Our collapsing bridges, our sinking roads
Rome is still burning; we are still dancing

Timothy Dodd
Gas Pedals (Refusing a Dog-humped Leg)

This Winterfresh lost its flavor.
Walking eighteen hours since
mourning past frankfurter stands,
empty, four denominations
of Protestant churches, a hissing
possum trapped in Glenda's garbage
can, coffee frothing professionals.

Keep chewing.

I climb the old bridge to straddle train tracks.

Hang
 my
 head
 over the ledge.

Wait three times.

Coal
 chutes
 down
 my windpipe.

Swallow the car keys and concrete
knives melt at night; lesser gods rise:
Bricks with red bulbous fruit.
Hills of green hair. Onions.
Peel the flaky skin and taste.
Peel and cry.

Tombstones are fitted hats for walking men.

Magnolia Foster
Bug Dream

This is my favorite dream-
And you are all in it.
We have artichoke hearts-
In our big, bug bodies.
And red, spiny backs.
Our day is to roll pebbles.
There are no abstractions.
It feels corrupt in a way-
Almost neurotic-
To fall on your back-
And only roll over because-
Pebbles pushed.
There is no conclusion.



Ramé, Mixed Media
Tamizh Ponni VP

Azalea Geist Street French

All I have said must be true for
this to make sense. There was a graveyard
outside my hotel window. Here's your meal,

garçon. I saw Notre Dame, as it was being
rebuilt, across the river, and I was too
busy starving. The streets are cobbled,

and some have shoah names embedded
in them. The word for bread is loaned
from French. If you don't have homemade

beef stock, the recipe suggests homemade
or store-bought chicken stock substitutions
are better than most store-bought beef stock.

No, that's the German way to hold cigarettes.



Potluck, Watercolor
Tamizh Ponni VP

Justin Hollis
“Untitled”

I must have been walking in my sleep because I wake up in the doorway of my building. Passersby avoid my eyes and flick coins at my feet. A woman comes up to me and says, “Sorry, I spent my last nickel at the arcades”. Then she reaches up her skirt and pulls out a live chicken. “She’ll make a darling bride, you’ll see,” she says, handing me the chicken. But now we’re floating up above the skyscrapers. The chicken’s ten-stories tall and pecking at the cars as if they were kernels of corn. “Well, she’s your responsibility now,” she says, drifting off into a cloud bank. She’s perfect, I think. Just like my Aunt Sally in her brown dress and frilly apron.

Sierra Jameson

**alive people don't give away scrapbooks to
antique emporiums**

glass skulls crack like how wearing socks with lace floods
whimsy into the heart. do i want to grow
my hair out? i think if we redo the living
room it will open us up
to more opportunities.

the death card showed herself to me
in the wrong deck. i miss/ed her. i have
to reintroduce my self to poetry:
hello—
good morning—
howlonzitin?

sparkles rain down from the pipes
in the rafters. it's not like the cold isn't kind.
give me the counter space, baby! given our
state of things (existence, government, RAM, cumin,
4oz plastic n' vinyl, therapy, CVS, rent, et cetera), please
come over for chunky soup and bread. our table seats six,
comfortably.

hmms and mm-hmms and mm-mms in
the leaves of the sill-plant, like a baby critic.
“do you need a grandpa?” well sir, i may
take you up on that!

i'm tilted forward, sort of like at the top of a rollercoaster,
sort of like i'm throwing up, hunched over a toilet,
a wastebin, my car teetering over the edge,
sort of like being hauled over my husband's shoulder,
or sort of like hanging off the bed checking
for the cat.

no, i put the book back.

Sierra Jameson

Billy Joel's Vienna

consider the inspiration from laundromats
consider how it dies an hour later
consider folding laundry next to the new girl,
the stacks that build
consider the trial and error of fitted sheets
consider the folding board from the campus bookstore
consider the first genuine welcome
consider the smell of endless paper, ink, and toner
consider the gratitude for the praise holding hands with
the fear of messing up
consider the power of hands
consider circles, prayer, ring-around-the-rosie, and
chains
consider humans, how they wave from jetboats
consider waving back
consider Billy Joel's *Vienna* playing at the laundromat
consider the laundromat



Eclipse, Paint on Canvas
Tamizh Ponni VP

Rowan Johnsue
The Literal Sense

Snake eyes roll back joints fragile ball and socket sent shockwaves of death
to star morning dew and taxes my heart keeps breaking plates in the china
cabinet tariffs on genome built to keep monsters gardening ghosts but what
attendants to all gold statues open mouth flipped upside-down stacked to
make the sun two door gods with teeth exit and somewhere to stand the
backs of necks pinned between kiss sword shoulder sits a map with lines
made opaque.



Hülya, Mixed Media
 Tamizh Ponni VP

Rowan Johnsue Tableaux

The eighteenth century flowers animate white and dominant. Across a landscape of cultural memory, China is a voyage over water.

Different kinds of beds for Gertrude Stein as a representation of sublime islands. With neither of them pink or blue, I aimed for space away from namelessness.

The sun is a sensual and brutish shorthand for domesticity. All Americans are social events, a photograph of prairie signs and sorting.

Shakespeare likes the surprise of foreigners, the presence and scenes. In maybe ten minutes my ashes shrink.

Desiree Remick

**After What First I Forgive, Watering No Angels, if Good
Blueberries Do Such Drifting on the Little Owl Loneliness**

Hello. Why you? Why not Rumi? He is too slippery. Pretend you are enjoying television. I feel in spring with summer. It's a painting, I said, of loneliness. Little tree frog, the world is everything green. The wasp I'm living with is a wonderful poem. I let the vulture's patience out by meditation, I think. Have they crept up on the boat I like to be? The lotus angels do gather in instruments, there to see the people. As before, I'm a river that went two stones deep and one black. The matter has randomness in love, as in oak, as in everything I know. Lord, I want this (but can I?), I want, I want, I want no king. Into the warm a wren, into the grass an angel, into the might the eventual are. What the mockingbird loves (the first I've heard of) is not, I should say, a spring book. Would this I was, have been, every step so known I don't walk; there they do and are. If I, has that, are the, do I ever—no, don't be what was when Shiva woke the wings.

Author's note: this poem was created using the first five words of every poem in Mary Oliver's Blue Horses. Title uses the first word of nineteen titles from that book.

Desiree Remick

C/over II

Portland, October 2025

up past midnight talking like teenagers
with degrees, until I admit I'm stalling,
don't know how to sleep alone, *we'll be
nearby*, you say & I think of locking the
bedroom door because who knows what
will dredge itself down from the horror
movie hallway in the attic while I'm

vulnerable but I don't lock it, I sleep
with the light on & wake at four thinking
if I haven't been murdered yet, I'll live
& I want to make something beautiful
but the mechanism is broken, all I do
is remember those paralyzed nights,
how terrified I was to open my eyes



Deer, Paint on Canvas
Tim Turner

Desiree Remick
On the Mating Habits of Spooky Deer

After K. Silem Mohammad

We're really curious about deer sex.
We also wonder what deer don't like
to walk on, what ghost deer are, what
looks like a deer but is not a deer.
Searches for "deer kills woman"
are on the rise.

Deer make a spooky sound when
they're horny. A scraping sound.
Also they stink.

Did you know clapping can scare a deer
erection away?

We are worried we don't know
how to pronounce "deer." Is it deer
or deer? My deer.

We google
photos of deer mating &
deer mating successfully &
how long do deer mate with their offspring?

What does the Bible say about deer?
What is a deer's purpose in life?
Will human urine keep deer away?
What is deer gender?

Is a moose a deer?
No, a deer is a deer.
That's stupid.

Ben Sloan
Marie-Thérèse, January 21, 1793

At least Louis XVI's carriage, unlike,
later on, Marie Antoinette's bare bones
tumbrel, offers him a shred of dignity,
his and her destination kept a secret
from, in Temple Tower, their daughter
who, bored to tears, dreams of smoking
a cigar, maybe two, while skating
on the royal lake, a concerned Page
back on shore trying to wave her in,
unaware of the intense thrill of slipping,
falling flat out and gazing sideways
to admire the bumpy, scarred surface
of the ice mirroring not only her caged
airless life, but the acne on her face.

Chase D. Spruiell
**King Ferdinand
& Prince John Paul**

i am what my
cats aim to be

a vulture to
the dead air

a punctuation mark
at the end of a
sentence that

somehow
keeps going

a substitute
for life

a squish-able
face with a
lost stare

an eater of food
a sleeper of naps

one single name with
every failure etched
behind it

pieces of string and
cardboard suffocate
my kingdom

*feed me love me
love me feed me*

you will regret it

Nylah Winchester
ambien, mania, psychosis, or none of the above?

put the grippy socks on your hands
or else the tree people will hear
my sentient rat jazz band “the skats”
the saxophonist creates music notes
for shark skaters who vibe with brown
sugar and cinnamon pop-tarts

i miss them

my husband told me to write
a three-page letter in italian
we do not speak that language
but we like the way fluid sounds

bee ba do dee bum

skats are back

pinkman slept great bitch!
sleep is for blue doughnuts
on heisenberg’s meth yo

bum bum da dum

jaws is nearby too

cheetah print stilettos
should come sunday
the sugar daddy
at saks fifth avenue
said my kneecaps
are made for the boots

so i left a note for michael jackson:
day-old chinese food in the freezer
wash it down with pink whitney

to avoid the tree people again, then
order me a keepsake urn necklace
we’d never marry a man
hebe



Giraffe with sunglasses, Photography
Kate Hodges

Nylah Winchester
California Lovers

Starfire, your hot pink hair
glimmered as you pulled me
by the red garnet strapped
around my neck—our last kiss
was love letters on Halloween
the thrift store on Main Street
shower with me

Oh, my darling McKinley
I cannot wear the jewel
you promised! You don't
roll on blue kisses, read books
dance at Target, smile at festivals
or joke about the valley
(even though you're
from Modesto)

Is your mother well, Daniel?
Are you in real estate?
Did you finish your degree?
Will you ever try painting again?
If you do, could you paint
our day in Mariposa?
Have you mastered more recipes?
Did you love me?
You still stocking at Costco?
Can we talk for seven hours,
like when we first met
at Barnes and Noble, Daniel...

Lauryn Hill released "Ex-Factor"
in 1998, but it's about us, Corinthian
I never asked for beach trips
to Monterey, fancy dinners
Italian restaurants, movie and

state fair dates, you resented me
for your financial woes, but made love
to me as if I were made of gold

Gabriella, the honey-eyed
Cancer, I'm sorry I left
for that Aquarius bitch
I wish I loved you more

To Amanpreet, my acorn lover
our bookstore in Clovis still smells
of freshly brewed tea and stale pages
that we'll never read to each other
again... *I miss you*
Shall we meet again, if the universe is kind?
do your parents know now?

Nylah Winchester
**Will the Swap Meet for Black Women and Their Tears Ever
Close?**

Dear Mr. Kearney,
You once said,
“my older cousins, black women, their tears are:
(a) fresh batteries in broken clocks
(b) ruined coin souvenirs
(c) wheatbread heels jim crowed in fridges
(d) what pitted the yellow linoleum thus”

Today I feel like (a), but most days, I am (c).

This black woman's tears are a manifestation of rage. At an Ancient Egypt exhibit at the Albany Institute of History and Art, I walk in, exchange some pleasantries with the lady at the counter, and that's when it starts. “Your hair is so beautiful,” she begins, that flicker of fascination white people get was evident in her eyes. “It looks Egyptian! Are you Egyptian? Maybe you could look for some similarities in the exhibit,” she says while pulling her hair up and twirling it around to mimic mine.

This black woman's tears are a manifestation of rage. I visit the farmers market in Ashland, Oregon. All I want is a chocolate basque cheesecake, and I get my dessert with a side of white woman's tears (we'll call her One). One is ordering when I arrive, smooth-talking the woman (another white lady, whom we'll call Two) behind the counter. Two gives One a bag of: four assorted pastries, three snickerdoodle cookies, two chocolate croissants, and one jalapeno quiche. One turns around to leave, but then sees me and reaches out her hand. “Your hair is so cute,” One bellows while wrapping her pale, bony fingers around my twists. “Do not touch my hair.” I try to make my voice velvety and sweet like the basque I came here for. I want to make One comfortable... instead One shrieks, “Oh! I'm sorry,” she has: alligator tears flowing down her cheeks, Two runs to One's side, but not to critique, what One did to me.

Our People's Hell, white women, their tears are:

- (a) Emmett Till
- (b) a Black man's final breath
- (c) "Charlie Kirk: Rest in Peace Patriot"
- (d) what rules the world

Sincerely,
An enraged Black woman

Author's note: this poem borrows language directly from Douglas Kearney's poem "The Black Woman's Tears Swap Meet is Open Every Day."

Evan Chapin Eyelid Kisser

My life was mediocre plumbing & getting asked if I played sports. Or regretted my time at war. I know it's sad, but my haters all died or moved on. (Mostly both.) Nothing interesting happened in my eighty-eight years aside from marriage. Life swindles what you don't have, covers her tracks so well there's nothing, nothing even to complain about. What a bitch!

I have a dog now. I've had dogs for forty-seven years. When one dog's close to the end, I get a backup & briefly have two dogs. Dogs have unique & charming ways of loving but whore it out freely.

My dog right now is a poodle puppy. His name is Kenny.

Can't even pine for my ex wife. Takes too much energy.

The first time I kissed was a boy. Those white-knuckle days of yesterday began when I was eleven, when Big Ben Moreno was moving, paying a hundred dollars a kid to load his tapeworm timber. We all went. Big Ben glowered from his truck, his daughter & sons & all the other kids looting the old place. I went to pee besides one of his tarps (all full of tapeworms) & there was Mathias Moreno, by far the dumbest brother, fourteen or whatever, hacking up some oak with his chainsaw. I waved like a tourist. Mathias waved back, I waved again. That went on three times before he figured out I was fucking with him, & flipped me off. The saw slipped out of his hand & knicked his knee.

After he stormed off, his cool older brother took me aside all alone, with a pitcher of lemonade—which he was drinking directly from—and a big Hershey's (which he was chowing down). Big Ben was a scary guy & all his sons got scary after turning fifteen.

"I didn't do it," I said.

"I know you didn't."

"I was just waving."

"I know you were."

"He didn't have to wave back."

"If it were up to me they'd make him ride the short bus."

Somehow I started squalling. What was going to happen to me & such. Then he put the Hershey's down & pointed at his lips.

I almost told Big Ben, who died fifty-three years ago. All the sons died too. The daughter's still hunkering in that house we lugged his rotten firewood to.

Five short years later I lost the fear of foreigners, working the cotton candy stand at the county's butter museum. So I joined the Army. Which at that point was 90% foreigners. 10% unbalanced incels. There was a war. The war mostly was sweating. Driving a crane with AC or forklift in a garage full of fans, & still sweating. Constantly simulating danger so nobody got fat. Getting yelled at. Learning some Spanish through Colombian TikTok, some Portuguese through Brazilian fetish porn. Not learning any Sango from the locals, not even thank you & toilet. What a joke. Bad but predictable once you got it & anyone could get it. Still, most found a way not to. Some are alive today, finding ways not to.

There's one thing. Let's not call it a war story, please Jesus Christ. Please for the love of God. Don't call it a war story. There was a Catholic chaplain there. (When did everyone become Catholic? When did they all lapse?) We called him Jarty. Jarty was a terrible priest. He was Catholic because of reactionary grievance politics rather than whatever should make you Catholic. He wasn't pleased, his flock being entirely brown men in their peak sinning age.

We'd torment him by abusing the seal of confession. You go in & kneel. Jarty tells you to confess. Oh father, you go. I killed a family of five. I sodomized their corpses, father. Oh father, they were white people. They looked like your mother, Jennifer Beelsey Wallace, whose Facebook account I lurk. Who lives at 1884 Grover Street & currently wears her hair in a bun.

One night Jarty had enough. He went off base, blonde bangs hanging over his forehead. Oh, the drama.

Hours later three of us went off base too.

We were joyriding, & there in the tightest alleyway in Subsaharan Africa was old Jarty, getting it hard from two locals.

"Hey," I said three alleys later. "That was Jarty."

Guy driving (who is still alive) laughed. "Wow, I didn't notice."

Couple more alleys passed.

"We should go back for him."

Nobody said anything to that.

Maybe ten more alleys before driver listened & turned around. The muggers scattered. We found Jarty in a pretty bad way, no broken bones or even a broken nose but bad all the same. He'd later claim this was anti-Christian anti-Catholic violence, but it's likelier he looked at a crazy guy the wrong way.

Two months later I went back to the butter museum.

Three years after the butter museum gave me management.

That's where I was for thirty-eight more years.

Fine. If I talked about war I can talk about love.

Kyra who was a real bowling pin of a woman. I say that because she worked at a bowling alley when I met her, which was the wet time in April. I was thirty-one. She was twenty-five. They call the period of human history neatly corresponding with my eighty-eight year life stagnation, not even the stagnation or capital s-stagnation. Only stagnation, when all things stopped getting better and most things got worse. The spirit of the day: walking around, awed by how mediocre & below average it all was, & feeling like, in a movie, things wouldn't be this monstrously dumb & ugly. I had a gift card from the butter museum, my Christmas bonus, & hated the way it leered at me from its spot in the console. In the alley I knocked over four pins & was feeling real sorry for myself. She was in the arcade in her little uniform with a clorox wipe. These teenage girls were giving her a hard time.

I looked at her longingly, & wanted my movie ending, wanted to buy her dinner or drinks or something.

We dated for two years & were married for nine, no kids. We shared four apartments, saw three foreign countries, & only one of them was Canada. We had, in our sixty-mile radius, our handful of haunts, our friends as a couple. There were spoken & unspoken rules around hand-holding. Enough to fill a lifetime, we cleaned, fucked, cooked, cuddled, kissed in every creche of those four apartments. They were filled with us by the time we were gone.

There are two memories that are important. The first is Kyra kissing me on her couch. Getting her to loosen up was hard, getting me to loosen up was harder. We'd been dating for a month & a quarter & this was a big one. I was really worked up. My eyes were closed & I was kissing back the way the dormant part of a salmon's brain tells it to throw itself up waterfalls & breed upstream. We were sitting side-by-side, like in a kid's drawing or G-rated characters in a ghoulish Valentine's Day promotional postcard. I loved every second of her.

"Why don't you ever get into it," she whispered.

I almost left, but didn't, & never told her how much she hurt my feelings.

The second memory is her mother, who was, to Kyra, a living wound. I wasn't allowed to know about her mother. We were gone & married by the time I'd learned the most elementary facts. Six or seven times a year they had lunch, & these were sacred. One time leading up to one our work

lives fucked us. There was a system meltdown at her office. Our vendor was shut down by the state police, & I found myself driving to Arkansas every night to work things out with an unpleasant English businessman. We were exhausted when the big morning snuck up, which was my first day home in forever.

I begged her to call it off while she freshened up.

“Parents shouldn’t be entitled to anything,” I said. “It should be earned.”

“It’s not about that,” she said, scrunching her hair. (I was a big fan of this look. Wearing it to Denny’s with her mom seemed perverted.) “You can’t honestly pretend a day apart is worse than a week apart, a thousand miles apart.”

“It’s the principle,” I say.

She was halfway out the door. “Thanks for admitting you’re being a big baby, on the hardest day of the year.”

“I know how to make it easier.”

“She needs me,” she said.

“I need you too,” I said.

I sat around all day feeling sorry for myself & ignoring calls from the museum’s board.

In three weeks Kyra’s mother is one hundred & four. I don’t know if they’re still in touch.

After we divorced (amicably) I bought a house in the exurbs & got really into adopting poodles. I dated around but never remarried. Remarrying at forty something was the hated custom of my parents. I was close with her family. I talked her nephews out of making their bad decisions. Every other month they bring me a bottle of something-something. I stopped drinking eleven years ago but they don’t know that.

In my fifties I tried killing myself. This was almost two years after Kyra remarried so it didn’t have anything to do with her. Another thing dormant in the back of my skull, activated by a retail employee saying a code word, or me looking at a traffic light wrong. I decided on pills plus dessert. I scanned five different social media platforms for all the war guys whose names I could remember, to get in the spirit of ending life. Jarty the Catholic Priest at this point was dead. It was crazy how many of those guys were dead. Nobody told me how fast everyone dies. I was a sarcophagus. I was a tomb. One of the ones nobody discovered, not even rotten white archaeologists. Sealed forever, all my sad unwisdoms inside.

Then both poodles (I had two; the old girl wasn’t walking so hot) click-clacked on the screen door. I’d drizzled bacon grease & eggs all over different sectors of the yard, which used to be a tomato garden, a sort of scavenger hunt thing. They’d gotten bored all the same. That was thirty plus years ago. I own the house but both dogs are long dead.

Viviane Fae-Moss
Popcorn-Hearted

The best environment for Pac-Man is a console in an auto repair shop. The complimentary popcorn is salty enough to chafe my gums. I hammer on the joystick like I'm competing featherweight again. I tried to show Sandy the moves when he was 14, but he was always too artsy for it.

"Adrian? 2016 Prius?" calls the lady with blonde hair I'm sure is a wig.

I glance over at her. She's young. Pretty. Looks kind of like if Sandy was a girl. "That's me. So, car ready yet?"

"Looks like it'll be another hour or so, the boys just found a little dent near the windshield frame. They'll have to fix it before they can put the glass back in. Won't cost you nothing more, but it'll take a second to do." She blows a huge pink bubble at me and scribbles something on her clipboard.

"Right. Another hour. Got it," I say. I turn back to the console. Game Over. I check my phone; I have no calls from the hospital. I slam my hand on the 'insert coin' button.

The girl taps her pen on her clipboard and blows another deafening bubble. She walks away, and the click of plastic on concrete is satisfying. Reminds me of my college days, beer-pong on the warehouse floor, celebrating the birthday of some frat boy I'd never met. Pac-Man responds to me. He's a good kid.

Frank catches us. Pac-Man swirls and blinks out of existence. I start again. Blinky catches us. Pac-Man screams at me. Sandy and I play catch in the back of my mind, his dad smiling at us from the front patio, working the grill. Sixteen hundred points, another life, more dots to eat, more ghosts to run from. I tap the joystick left, my heart in my throat and Pinky on our ass. The last dot vanishes down Pac-Man's gullet. The level climbs ever higher, and I start to feel like I can do it. I can win.

"Just like being a kid again, isn't it?" A man with whiskey breath speaks behind me.

"Like the cabinets at the arcade, right?" I turn to him.

He's holding a faux-gold fidget spinner, twirling it back and forth, staring at my screen like it's scripture. "Name's Greg. What're you in for?" "Hit a deer. Windshield got put out."

"Damn. You're lucky not to be hurt."

I slam my fists on the console. It beeps a warning at me. I've turned my back

to Greg. Sandy never understood the joy of Pac-Man. I should've brought him here. Game over again. "I ain't fuckin' lucky."

"No need to shout at me. A windshield out's brutal, but a cheap enough fix, at least." His spinner whirs in his fingers. I should punch his lights out.

My phone buzzes. Looks like the car is ready. I shove Greg out of the way, hard, and he falls on his ass, blinking stupidly up at the fluorescent lights.

"Jesus Christ, what the fuck was that for?" Greg pushes himself up. "I wasn't gonna touch you, you crazy bitch."

I don't answer. It's not an answer kind of night. The pac-man machine has turned itself off. I walk away from him. People are staring at us, Greg watching me from behind, letting me go. For a moment I think he's gonna grab my wrist. Make me apologize, take something from me. Maybe I wouldn't mind that kind of hurt tonight, my body and soul breaking the same way as my windshield.

He lets me go. It's almost worse. Sandy stretched out in the car next to me, a scream gone from his mouth, the deer limping on three legs away from the car.

The same girl sits at the front desk. My car sits outside, the windshield now intact. I sign the paperwork and pay \$386 and leave and sit down behind the wheel. I think about calling Mary. I turn off my phone instead. She's not gonna miss me.

The moon catches on the new windshield as I weave through traffic. Rain is coming down in sheets. It's Pac-Man. It's just like Pac-Man. The cops are following me, and I go faster. They won't catch me like this. I'm so free, in the night, in the rain, with one call from the hospital and no son no more.



Eunoia, Mixed Media
 Tamizh Ponni VP

Jonathan Fletcher
The Buddhas of Bamiyan

Afghanistan, March 2, 2001

The day they blew up my sister and me, I had already been defaced, and my robed legs and arms were already damaged by bearded men I'd never met but would've befriended if I could've. Why me? Why now? As Buddhists learn, everything is impermanent. Since my construction in the seventh century, I had been familiar with this teaching. And yet, I still struggled. What awaited me after dynamite? Would my stone sister and I be forgotten? Why did they hate us so? What had we ever done to them? Of course, I knew that such attachments were unhealthy, not to mention counter to our tradition. But I couldn't help but ask the questions. I couldn't help but pray that the men I felt around my bare feet and near my head would change their mind. As I felt them drill into me, however, I knew they wouldn't. And so it was that I began to despair. That is, until I met you.

Though I never actually saw you, I felt your little feet around what were once my immovable toes. I heard your youthful voice, and though I couldn't understand the language you spoke, your voice, unlike that of the men, was high-pitched. It was energetic. So, too, your footsteps, which went from light taps to heavy stomps and then back again, all in a few moments. I came to look forward to our encounters, and though I couldn't respond back to you, I smiled in my mind. I hoped you might feel my warmth through the cold stone. I hoped you might turn out different from your father, who I assumed was the leader, given his consistently curt orders to the others. That you might turn out different from the men from your village, now encamped with you not far from my presence, which they considered idolatrous. Different from the oppressive leadership that now controlled this semi-arid valley scarred by war and conquest and did so in the name of religion. As I remembered Genghis Khan's soaring fire lances and ceramic projectiles, each of which marred an otherwise peaceful sky, I felt resentment build up in my 180-foot body. If I could've clenched into a fist what was no longer there, I would've. But my right hand—palm outward and fingers up, in the gesture of abhayamudra until fanaticists' artillery eventually took it out—was no more. Neither, for that matter, was my left. Each detached, now mere rub-

ble. As my resentment quickly turned to anger, I rebuked myself: No, Salsal, that's attachment. In my mind, I counted and focused on breaths I did not physically take but still imagined myself taking. *Remember how Siddhartha became the Buddha. Remember that desire leads to suffering. Remember the Noble Eightfold Path.*

As I reminded myself of right views and thoughts, I heard your gentle pats against the remains of my feet. I heard your little giggles and then your light hops atop the rock around me. I wanted to laugh with you. I wanted to pick you up and carry you like a horse, a rider. I wanted to show you the view that I had. I wanted you to flee from this place and never return. Internally, I sighed, though. I knew that probably wouldn't happen. I knew that you would probably end up following the strict interpretation of your father's faith. I could only hope otherwise. I could only pray as much. However, even prayer, though effectual mostly in the sense of purpose it usually gave me, wasn't helping today. Or, more accurately, tonight. The warmth of that ochre orb that regularly rises and lowers beneath a horizon of sandstone had long ago faded, and a notably elevated chill had gripped the evening air. Though I couldn't see you, I started to worry. Where was your family? Did they know you were out? I could still feel the dynamite in my head and legs and was suddenly gripped by the terror that it might accidentally detonate while you were near me. *Please go*, I said in my mind, hoping that my words, however silent, might somehow reach you. *Before it's too late, please leave.* You didn't, though. Instead, you skipped around, giggling and chattering.

As I imagined my head shaking in resignation, I, for the first time since we met, speculated on your age. Seven, eight at most, maybe? From the voice, I assumed you were a girl, in which case you would've probably started wearing the hijab. One day, you would put on the burka and, except for non-public places, would be expected to wear it until the day the one whom you call The Most Merciful welcomes you home. Who was I to judge, though? The Buddha abstained from sex and intoxicants, instead choosing an ascetic existence. And, when still Siddhartha Gautama, he abandoned his wife and child, as well as the comforts of a palatial life, in search of spiritual enlightenment. Still, I couldn't help but wonder if the particular incarnation of the faith that ruled this valley was actually a distortion of the Prophet's Revelation. In this way, Buddhism was no different. After Siddhartha Gautama died, there was a struggle for direction and power, and from this arose various sects, each claiming to follow the Buddha's teachings, some more so than others, some not at all. Were you and I so different from one another?

Your father's village obviously thought so, but I didn't think you did. At least not yet, anyway.

So engrossed in my own thoughts was I that I almost didn't realize that you were speaking. Or, rather, whistling. And, a few moments later, singing and clapping. Though I initially worried for you, given the current government's prohibition on women singing in public, your melodic sound quickly dispelled my fears. Though I couldn't place the tune, I welcomed it. I welcomed your voice. I welcomed the unapologetic way with which you sang to me, to the dry air around us, to the constellated sky above. I welcomed the vibrations of your feet as you started to move your body. And I began to wonder if my sister could hear you. She was far away, though, as inclined to the silence that characterized her meditations as I usually was. Tonight was different, however. Before I knew it, I was mentally chanting. You were still singing. We were harmonizing. I hadn't felt so spiritually awake in ages. I pictured large groups of dancers, each dressed in a long wool cloak, each capped by a felt sikke, each spinning like a top, each communing with the Beloved. And in my mind, I began dancing with you and the dervishes. Imagine that: a swaying Buddhist, a whirling brotherhood, and you, a dancing Afghan girl. All of our differences set aside, if only for an evening. It felt like we could go on and on. It felt like the music to which we moved would never end. That's when I heard the stern voice of your father. I heard you squeal and start to explain to him in your language. He wouldn't hear it, though. I heard a loud slap, undoubtedly your father's, followed by your consequent wailing. He must've picked you up roughly, as I could make out the harsh sound of his footsteps, which gradually began to fade, as well as your shrill cries, which, though initially loud and piercing, also grew faint.

The next day, your father is back, along with a noisy crew, but you're not around. Not in the sound of your small feet on the sandstone, not in the giggles and laughter that filled the valley the evening before. I miss you. I wonder if you feel likewise. Though I sense the yellow warmth that has greeted me and left me every day for over 1,500 years, such an illuminating presence provides little consolation to me now. I hear and feel more drilling inside my head and feet. Though it doesn't hurt, it's uncomfortable. In a way, I want this all to be over. In another way, though, I want to continue to exist. Such attachment is only natural. Even after hundreds of years, numerous and various battles and empires, all of which I outlasted, I can say that with some

authority. If not a statue, I might've moved elsewhere. If not a Buddhist, I might've chosen nothing as my religion. Standing as I am, however, it's impossible to picture another life. It's impossible to do anything except wait calmly as the men string wires around my body. If they weren't about to end me, I might pity them. I might pity your father. At least a little, I pity you. Then something happens that I wasn't expecting and that I won't forget, at least not until I'm nothing: your father hugs me. Not intentionally, of course, but he's trying to string wires around me. Pressing himself against my foot, I feel his body around me. His beard, his loose tunic, his baggy trousers. Then he pulls away and gently pats me.

Though I'm sure it's not a gesture of intimacy, rather a check of the wires, I pretend that it's the former. I pretend that he's acknowledging his role in this aniconist destruction. And that he only took part because of coercive men from his village. I pretend that he's washing his residued fingers, trying to clean them of traces of nitroglycerine. I pretend that he's asking the divine for forgiveness. And that he's raising you differently as penance. Then I imagine you as an adult, maybe in a burka, maybe not, maybe an adherent of your father's faith, maybe not, but able to do what you want and where, able to pray to whom you want or not, able to be the person you want. I'm thinking so. I'm praying so. Even as I hear your father yell to another man and him obediently respond. Even as the crew descends the sandstone cliff out of which I was made. Even after the men depart my unquivering self. Even after they blow up my sister. And up until I hear and feel a rumble—initially low, then louder, then deafening—inside me.

Max Pearson national anthem

it's a lana del rey type of summer and i'm the next great american poet. i'm not sure what you've got going on, but i'm sure it's not as interesting. we hate parties and we hate people and i probably hate you but you're the only person i've got left so i'm letting you sit in my popped-open trunk while we have a tailgate for two in the presbyterian church's parking lot. i don't know what we're celebrating. independence. our futures. the fact that after this we never have to see each other again.

i'll still think about you, though. i'll always wonder.

i reach into the cooler to grab another soda and find that the ice inside has melted into slush. so i toss it onto the pavement and watch the sand flies swarm, desperate for whatever moisture they can suck into their tiny, drought-ridden bodies. i want to play god and pick one to kill but it wouldn't be fair. i'm not omnipotent. i'm biased. i'll pick whichever one i think likes you best. you know, i used to think you were pretty. i think i'm going to crush that one on the left. it keeps making eyes at you.

sorry.

i wish protestants did confession because i could use a priest right now. guess what? i never learned how to keep my mouth shut. i never learned how to put on my own skin. i never learned how to make grass whistle between my fingers but it does fine on its own, still rooted, knocked together by the wind. hail mary, and all that. don't take my hand. i won't move away.



*Untitled, Watercolor and
Colored Pencil on Canvas*
Eve Stone

Samantha Backlund-Clapp **Lamb on a Leash**

The first time I received pastoral care in over five years I cried so hard my nose bled. Afterwards, of course. Burrowed into my childhood bed, wind roaring past the windows. Earlier this afternoon. I will probably lose a lot of money in the coming months because I didn't plan ahead very well. What does one do when they have no roof? I don't have to make up answers anymore when people ask what I want to do, where I want to go. Because the idea of making the great return gives me hives. It's a good thing I left all of my things there, in that shoebox, in the city of saltshakers and smog, or else I'd probably never go back. Well, what do I want instead? Maybe Brazil, maybe Hawaii. I've found the truth in every highway, that I'm not made for urban wastelands. My brain is not wired for city hellscapes. What I really want is to just sit on the stool in the kitchen while my mother makes her coffee. Really, that's all I want.

It's my parents' pastor's last Sunday before switching churches. He says to my mother, I'm going to miss Jason. It's been so great, getting to know all of you. He turns to me. Well, I never really got to know Sheyenne. I laugh. It's true, I said, I'm really only here twice a year. He asks where I am, what I'm doing. He reads the silent plea on my face. I make a joke about the great brick wall of reality hitting us all at full force. He laughs, a big hearty jolly thing. Yes, I'm familiar with the brick wall, he says. Some people, they don't realize it's a brick wall, they keep running at it, thinking one day all of their atoms will align and they'll get through. There has to be a hole somewhere. But the best thing you can do is realize it's a brick wall, and move. My mother agrees. Yes, she says, like the hermit crab. Crawling into a new shell, ah, yes, a new shell. She shrugs. Soon, the shell is too small. What does the hermit crab do? It finds a new shell. In the car ride home my eyes are brimming. Maybe half of winning the fight is setting down the sword.

I've been increasingly troubled with the mortality of everyone around me. Never myself, but my parents, my baby brother, who jokes rather savagely that statistically men die earlier. Statistically, I will be the last in my nuclear home left alive. He rips my heart out and leaves it under the Christmas tree. They're not even that old, my parents. Life is long, I assure myself. We have much time. But the way you allocate time matters. Sure, I have a whole life. But a whole life spent away from them is just that. Maybe I will never live in Iowa again, maybe I will. Maybe I will be three hours away. But, in my

dream life, my mother makes her coffee, and I sit on the stool and ask her questions. In my dream life I don't apologize for where I'm from.

There's something very sentimental in a name, in the poetic fact that the only people who call me my real name are the ones where my roots are. My real name, my father told me long ago, means *stranger in a strange land*. They've joked about this, paired with my propensity for running far away. They've yet to realize the layers. This story is old enough to be in the Bible. You feel out of place your whole life so you leave, trying to find where you fit into the big jagged world, only to find that the only place you can let out a whole breath is on route 6 with the sun setting in the rear view mirror. The older I get the harder it is to leave this place, the harder it is to ignore my fate, family lines, the blood, blue through the skin of my arms, bearing flecks of gold and pesticides and dust from the open road. I gave my mother my eighty page manuscript to print, where half the names I took from our own relatives, the story so old it's written on the Earth. I didn't ask her to read it or not to. I know she did.

I see God nurturing through my mother. The other day as I worked myself to a frenzy on the lined page she interrupted me with miso noodle soup. Not even just setting it down to yank me to the present moment, but sitting down with me to eat miso noodle soup, requiring me to put down the pen. When I picked it back up fifteen minutes later after a quiet conversation, the contents of which I cannot hope to remember, I felt better, drowsy. Something about it felt much bigger than me, much bigger than I can hope to describe.

You get to a point where you realize, this is my only life. I feel as though I'm receiving signs, like I'm being pushed and forced out of the city as I lazily slug through my days full of dead ends. As I do not try to stay nor make any attempt to leave. God says, it's your choice. I squint up at the sky. Our definitions of 'my choice' are different, it seems. Or maybe he knows something I don't. Perhaps he means, my choice whether or not we do this the hard way. He says, *girl, you belong in the Western middle. I'm going to get you home one way or another. But you have to work with me.* God says that if I keep going on ignoring things that I know to be true it's going to bite me later. God says things like *trust, surrender,* etc. I groan in exasperation at the foot of the cross. God, you made me a soldier, gave me a sword. Now you are asking me to sing you a song. I don't understand.

I have never understood.

It's Christmas evening and we do not all fit in the living room, let

alone on the couch. My mother holds my head in her lap. And I remember, oh, I remember.



Fawn, Ink on Paper
Eve Stone



Shuck, Acrylic with Pre and Post-Tamale Corn Husks on Canvas
Craig Wright

Samantha Backlund-Clapp
Then fall, Caesar

I envy Eve Babitz and her ability to slip a ‘he’ in, all over the place and in between chapters, in reader’s notes and dedications—with her plethora of lovers, both steady and fleeting. When I do it it sounds too brash, like getting poked with a blunt knife. When I do it it’s like the ‘he’ in the Bible, the capitalized He. There’s a process of deification obvious to everyone but me.

There’s a picture that’s particularly haunting, one that I took of him where he’s looking at me over the camera and laughing. That night was a very long time ago, me with my long hair I kept unbrushed, sun dried tomatoes, a drafty apartment in lower Chinatown. Him with his hair I used to constantly have my hands in. I don’t know how to describe the picture, other than sometimes, once in a hundred years, someone will find in themselves the intrinsic luck and ability to capture an entire second. More than just its colors and shadows and acute angles, but the entire volume and space-time complex four dimensional experience of the moment. And I have that, that little corner of Him in my phone. The entire experience of Him shrunk into 12 MP.

I still think about Him when I go into diners here with shiny red plastic booths and thick white mugs. I think about Him when I wrap Christmas presents and think about hugging my brother. When I tell my mother secrets as she pours alcohol into our coffee. I go out back behind the laundromat, by the grain silos and the drifting snow. It’s been warmer in the last week, melting most of it, to a point where you can see the dead sickly corn stalks poking through the bed of white. I watch over the sloping hills into the trees behind, remembering when we were children how my grandfather’d take us out into the woods and find hollow trees and fungi and record the bird sounds. I remember the warmth of the winters of my childhood and compare it to the warmth of now. It’s a dull thaw, that or burning flesh. Of the shock of heat so extreme that initially it feels cold.

He used to look at me, and he did in that picture, like I knew a secret he was vying to find out. He looked at me like I was a whole lot better than the reality. I can forgive a lot of things, or look past them at least—the lying, the betrayal, the iron fist he became in a heartbeat—I know something that would have grown to bother me was how I knew explicitly that I was not the best choice for him, that he could really do much better in circles he was

much more familiar with. I hesitate to say I wasn't good enough, even though it's the truth. I can forgive a lot of things, the lying, the betrayal, the illusion we lived in for so long, but I can't forgive that he reinforced that particular belief. Whether or not he meant to.

I believe it was our natural inclination to destroy each other in those ways. I loved him like a boxer loves the ring, like a boxer loves to bleed. We share the tragic motif of the Fall of Rome, of Good Friday, of Hamlet. At least he kept his honor as much as he could and stabbed me in the front where I could see it.

Arthur Croft **To Buy, To Sell**

I really don't understand what people think is so individualistic about individualism. About buying a thirty dollar polyester backpack to prick pins into, depicting geese with platitudes fashioned from rhetoric which has lost all meaning. Does shaving one side of your head to flop the hair over make you a different person? Does anything? Or are you just looking for home, for embrace from arms, any arms, that say "yes, we will take you!" Is that what you're flagging to me, or attempting to? Polyester rayon shirt blend proclaiming "Trans Rights Are Human Rights!!" it cost forty dollars from Hot Topic. In my bestiary of white allies and the like, all people are polyester, because it is worse than plastic. It gives the illusion of softness and warmth. Polyester shirts become sheepskin. You're still going to call me a girl in your head. Nobody cares about code in TikTok comments, not anymore. They saw their favorite guy get popped like a water balloon, and you think you're gonna own them with regurgitated fantasy lines? I'm so fucking angry at the smarminess, at the Twitter-sitting and the silent protests. I encourage you, deeply encourage you, to look up the little boy in all white who sang for Mengele. Do you think he would have listened to your polyester shirt? You are not the savior of the world, but you can try. It begins with the act of ceasing to pretend. Stop pretending you are important. Stop pretending Netanyahu will pee his pants because he sees yet another nineteen year old with a watermelon pin. Do something. Anything. Give, write, speak (not online). Stop pretending your activism is for anyone other than white people with your stupid ass frog plush. Do something. Anything. Give, write, speak (not online). Stop pretending Trump will magically accept transgender people because of how visibly you support us. Do something. Anything. Give, write, speak (not online).

Contributor Information

ART

Jade Harper

Jade Harper (she/her) is an artist, writer, and occasional drag queen. She spent most of her childhood in Reno, Nevada but is currently a student in Ashland, Oregon. Her work has been previously published in past issues of Main Squeeze Literary magazine. She likes bad puns.

Kate Hodges

Kate Hodges was born and raised in Philadelphia, PA. She taught science in area schools before moving to the UK where she has had fiction and photographs published. She lives in England with her husband. She is working on a graphic novel. You can follow her on Instagram at katehodgesandagiraffe.

Eve Stone

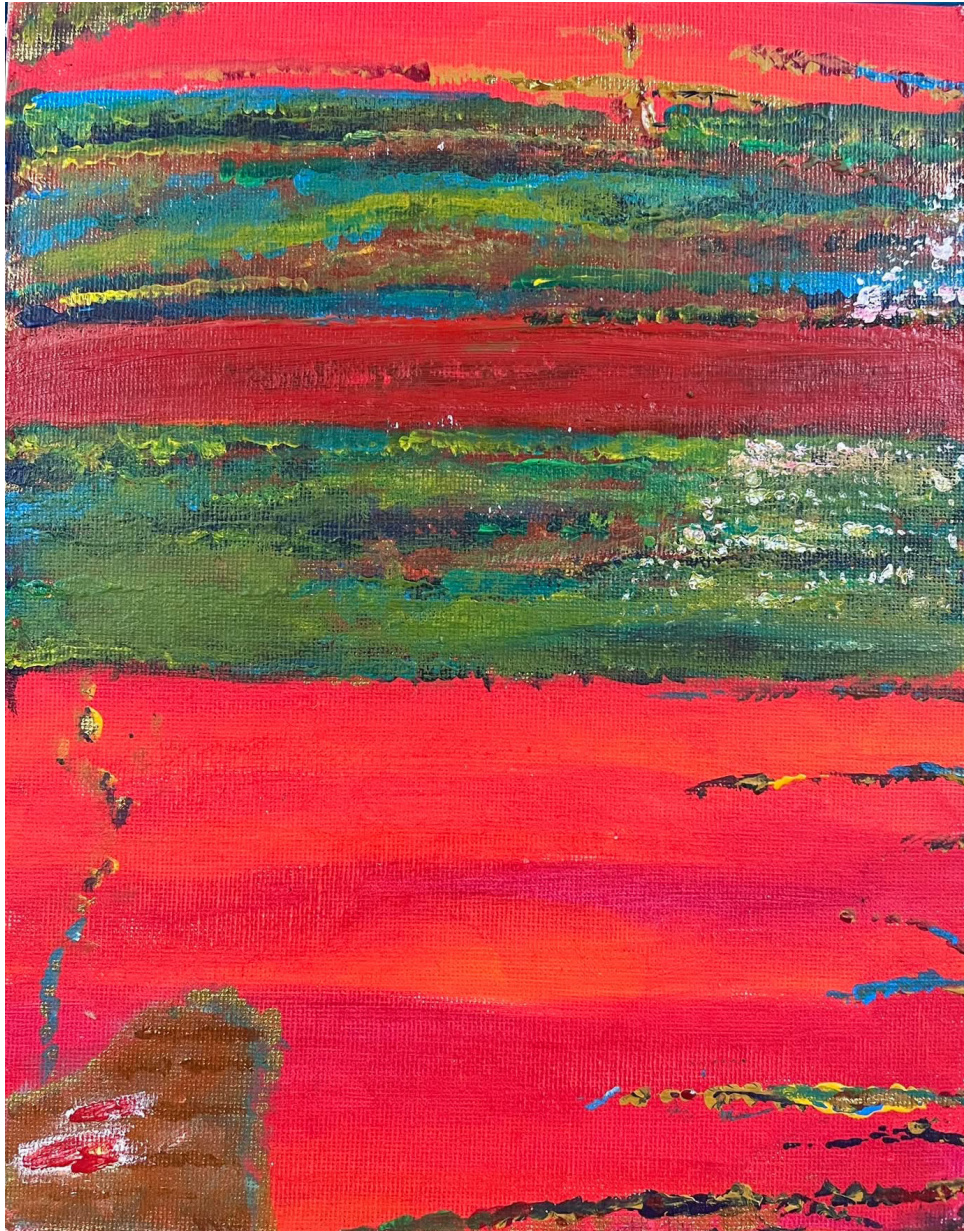
Eve Stone is studying English at Southern Oregon University. Literature and nature inspire her artwork.

Tim Turner

Tim Turner is an actor in his third season at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival and a graduate of SOU, class of 2024. He enjoys writing and painting in his free time.

Tamizh Ponni VP

Tamizh Ponni VP is an ambivert and a stoic art buff who loves to express her skills through literature, visual arts and music. She is an IB educator and sees learning as a life-long process. Her stories were featured in 2 anthology books, "Mia" and "Varna." Tamizh's articles, poems and paintings have also been published in many digital journals and educational blogs. Tamizh spends most of her free time painting, reading, writing articles, stories and poems, playing piano and watching documentaries/movies.



Little Subparalell Universes, Acrylic with Bursb on Canvas
Craig Wright

Contributor Information cont.

Craig Wright

Craig Wright is a short story and song writer, and now painter, and lives in Ashland Oregon.

POETRY — By Order of Appearance

Rae Armantrout

Rae Armantrout's recent book *Go Figure* came out from Wesleyan in August of 2024. Her next book, *Safe Rooms*, will be published by Wesleyan in 2026. Her book *Versed* won the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry in 2010. Armantrout's poems have appeared in journals and anthologies including *The Norton Anthology of Postmodern American Poetry*, *Poetry*, *The New Yorker*, *Lana Turner*, *Granta*, and *The Nation*. She is professor emerita at UC San Diego.

Parker Boom

Parker Boom is a poet originally from the Central Valley of California. She is currently an MFA student at the University of St Andrews. Her writing has been published in *The Texas Review*, *The Hyacinth Review*, *Anodyne* and others.

Rhiannon Cielos Chavez

Rhiannon Cielos Chavez is a trans-masculine whitewashed Mexican from Los Angeles, California. He received a BFA in Creative Writing from Southern Oregon University, where he read his debut chapbook, *Beer Hunter* (Armadillo Pussy Press), at the 2023 Oregon Fringe Festival. Their work has been published in the chapbook anthology *One Poem Festival: An Anthology Celebrating 20 Years of Letras Latinas 2004-2024*, as well as in *Jefferson Journal*, *Drifter Zine*, *Mobile Data Mag*, *Lilac Press*, and more. Rhiannon is the Development and Operations Assistant at Beyond Baroque Literary Arts Center.

Contributor Information cont.

Arthur Croft

Arthur Croft is a possessed jester residing in a downtown apartment who sometimes spits out something good. He studied Creative Writing at SOU and wants everyone to see Twin Peaks at least once. In his free time, he kisses frogs as part of a Prince Rehabilitation Program.

CS Crowe

CS Crowe is three crows in a trench coat that gained sentience after eating a magic bean. He spends his days writing stories on a stolen laptop and trading human teeth for peanuts. A poet and storyteller from the Southeastern United States, he believes stories and poems are about the journey, not the destination, and he loves those stories that wander in the wilderness for forty years before finding their way to the promised land.

Timothy Dodd

Timothy Dodd is from Mink Shoals, WV. He is the author of poetry collections *Orbits 52* (Broadstone Books), *Modern Ancient* (High Window Press), *Galaxy Drip* (Luchador Press), and *Vital Decay* (Cajun Mutt Press), as well as short story collections *Small Town Mastodons* (Cowboy Jamboree Press), *Fissures*, and *Other Stories* (Bottom Dog Press), and *Men in Midnight Bloom* (Cowboy Jamboree Press). Tim is also co-editor of Southernmost Books as well as a visual artist primarily exhibiting in the Philippines. His humble website is timothybdodd.wordpress.com.

Magnolia Foster

Magnolia Foster is an undergraduate student at the University of Kansas. She is in her third year and is double majoring in English and Journalism. She developed her love for poetry at a young age when she would read the poetry section of her mother's *New Yorker* magazines. Magnolia has been previously published once in *North of Oxford* and hopes to continue to share her work.

Azalea Geist

Azalea Geist is a collector of words, an appreciator of bones, and the only member of her family to her knowledge to win a spelling bee with only one contestant.

Justin Hollis

Justin Hollis has an MFA from Hofstra University and currently teaches language and literature at Palm Beach State College. His work has appeared previously in the *Querencia Press Quarterly Anthology*, *Action*, *Spectacle*, *Cholla Needles*, *The Orchards Poetry Journal*, *Eunoia Review*, *GAS: Poetry, Art and Music*, and *The Chiron Review*.

Sierra Jameson

Sierra B. Jameson (they/them) is an Oregon-based writer who delves into poetry and fiction with a particular bias towards eco-horror, surrealism, the corner-of-the-eye dwellers, and testing the line between fiction and dreams. They received their BFA in Creative Writing in 2025 and some of their work can be found in *Bending Genres*, *7th Circle Pyrite*, and *Main Squeeze*.

Rowan Johnsue

Rowan Johnsue is a writer, poet, and bug enthusiast from Southern Maidu and Nisenan lands. His work can be found in *Blue Marble Review*, and is forthcoming in *Macrame* and *Apus*.

Desiree Remick

Desiree Remick is the fiction editor of *Nude Bruce Review*. Her work has won awards, most recently *Bacopa Literary Review*'s Free Verse Poetry Award, and has appeared or is forthcoming in *AN-MLY*, *The Avenue*, *Westchester Review*, and other places. Find her on Instagram at @remick_writes.

Ben Sloan

Having grown up on a farm in southeast Missouri, living currently in Charlottesville VA, Ben Sloan has an MFA from Brooklyn College where he studied with John Ashbery. He has two poetry chapbooks, *The Road Home* (Thirty West Publishing House 2017) and *Then On Out Into a Cloudless Sky* (Seven Kitchens Press 2023).

Chase D. Spruiell

Chase D. Spruiell's previous work has appeared in *Adelaide Magazine*, *Teach. Write.*, *Evening Street Review*, *October Hill Magazine*, the *Bitchin' Kitsch*, *Ink Sweat & Tears*, *Chiron Review*, *Leaf Press*, *Nod Magazine*, *Wavelength Magazine*, the *Big Windows Review*, *Zombie Logic Review*, *Aji Magazine*, *Aberration Labyrinth*, *Oddball Magazine*, *Knot Magazine*, and *Mad Swirl*.

Nylah Winchester

Nylah Winchester is a writer based in Ashland, Oregon. She studies English at Southern Oregon University and works as a blog writer for the English Program. Her poetry explores love, identity, and mysticism.

FICTION — By Order of Appearance

Evan Chapin

Evan Chapin is a writer based in Ashland, Oregon. His work has been published in *Propagule*, *Let Me Tell You This Story*, and *The Siskiyou*. A collection of his stories, *It's Scary Being Old and Broke*, is available on request.

Viviane Fae-Moss

Viviane Fae-Moss (she/her/hers) is a young trans writer from the BFA program at Southern Oregon University. Her work has been featured in magazines like *Sonder*, *The Core Review*, *7th Circle Pyrite*, *Ballast*, and *Laurel Moon*.

Jonathan Fletcher:

Jonathan Fletcher holds a Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing from Columbia University School of the Arts. His work has been featured in numerous literary journals and magazines, and he has won or placed in various literary contests. A Pushcart Prize, Best of the Net, and Best Microfiction nominee, he won Northwestern University Press's Drinking Gourd Chapbook Poetry Prize contest in 2023, for which his debut chapbook, *This is My Body*, was

published in 2025. Currently, he serves as a Zoeglossia Fellow and lives in San Antonio, Texas.

Max Pearson

Max Pearson is a college student living in NYC. Her work can be found in *Twin Flame*, *WIREWORM*, and the 2024 *YoungArts* anthology. She enjoys embroidering flowers on her jeans, researching historical medicine, and sleeping with one eye open.

NONFICTION — By Order of Appearance

Samantha Backlund-Clapp

Samantha Backlund-Clapp is a graduate of the University of Amsterdam, writing on napkin scraps in her spare time. The lead on her chain is planted in rural middle America, where she learned the love language of desolate wastelands and dried corn husks. She has been printed in *Notch Magazine*, *Pacific Review*, and *Bending Genres Journal*, among others. She is presently, and always, in search of Las Vegas and precocious realism.

Arthur Croft

Arthur Croft is a possessed jester residing in a downtown apartment who sometimes spits out something good. He studied Creative Writing at SOU and wants everyone to see *Twin Peaks* at least once. In his free time, he kisses frogs as part of a Prince Rehabilitation Program.



FIN.