



THE LAMP POST

SPRING 2025

RESILIENCE

Cover Art

"Resilience" by Saraya Goodman

Special thanks to the Montreat Design Club for crafting *The Lamp Post* masthead and brand materials.

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DR. ZACHARY RHONE



Dr. Rhone specializes in fantasy, science fiction, and the work of authors JRR Tolkien, CS Lewis, GK Chesterton, and George MacDonald. Recently, he has been actively teaching and researching worldbuilding and interactive narratives, including video games. He writes poetry, short stories, children's stories, and novels. His most recent creative publication is *Firenze: The First Adventure of a Kitty and Her Family*, illustrated by his wife, Maria Rhone. Dr. Rhone is a sub-creator who especially enjoys building worlds, designing and playing tabletop games, cooking and preparing all kinds of foods and beverages, growing things, singing, and songwriting.

ZOË DOUDT



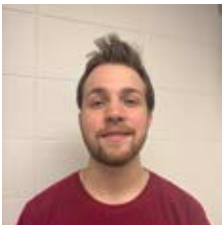
Zoë Doudt is a sophomore pursuing a degree in English with a concentration in Creative Writing. She loves reading and writing in her (now quite limited) spare time, and has greatly enjoyed her time working on *The Lamp Post* this semester, especially reading the poems of other writers.

SARAYA GOODMAN



Saraya is a senior English major at Montreat College. She has concentrations in Creative Writing and Literary Studies as well as a minor in Environmental Education. In her third year on the editorial staff, Saraya has enjoyed the challenge of taking on the role of general editor yet again. Her favorite aspect of the role is the ability to facilitate artistic collaboration on the team. She is excited to watch Montreat's creative community continue to flourish after her graduation in May 2025.

NOAH LEWKOWICZ



Noah is a junior English major at Montreat College. He has a concentration in Creative Writing and a minor in Education. He enjoys writing, traveling, and living life to the fullest. Noah has enjoyed working on *The Lamp Post* this semester and especially enjoyed the short stories!

GEORGE YODER



George is a Junior English major with a concentration in Creative Writing. He enjoys studying the works of various poets from the Romantic period onward, as well as exploring the various philosophical influences on the art of a given period. Apart from his studies, George spends time outdoors, reading, and writing.

TRIED



(Abramov, Nick. "Silent Rebellion")

HELENE

by Daniel Bussey

Bodies buried beneath the mud
Hearts breaking above the flood
Whispered promises and screaming sighs
Civilian helicopters, Carolina cries

Day by day the sirens call
Telling the stories of us all
We sleep in darkness, wake in silence
Victims of a natural violence

How can the waters take so much?
Our nerves can only take so much
Our souls buckling like uprooted trees
Rivers and lakes filled with disease

No soundness, only whimpering fury
No solidness, only teetering inquiry
No washing, only dirty dryness
No wholeness, only weeping kindness

Hands pulling from broken windows
Feet trudging through muddied meadows
Heroes decked in flannel and jeans
Chainsaws humming through fallen trees

Laughter as tears in rivulets run down
Fighting so that we may not drown

Healing our hearts with humor's medicine
Tying together shattered spirits again

Little graces, like soft bathing rains,
Come to us and wash us of our stains
And night skies are cleared of man's light
So that God's may shine on our darkest night

Supplies, hot meals, closed interstates
Curfews, exoduses, and paper plates
Crumbling roads, beached houses, choked air,
So much pain, but life strangely made more fair

Sweeter tastes the air to lungs possibly lost
And better spies the eye cleansed by tearful cost

STONES

by Kegan Hampton

Click! Clack!
"Pull the slack"
Never let it fall.

DING! DONG!
"Ring the bell"
At the chance doors call.

Quick! Quick!
"Pick up stones"
Stack them one by one.

"And for goodness' sake
Don't let them fall!"
Or else you'll be undone.

THE RIVER MAID

by Anna Bittner

Warm darkness soaks the twilit pool deep under
A womb of earth long undisturbed in slumber
When a maid of auburn hair bright as the clay
Steps near to wake the deep to break of day

The river it was oh easy breathing
Swaying and drifting in rhythm of sleeping
Her auburn hair a-flowing

In silence she wades deep into the creek
Green tadpoles fish and newts and serpents
sleek
As water soaks her skirts of green and gold
The silence all things in the pool enfolds

Her laughter breaks the silence dreary
With bubbles of mirth wet light and airy
Her auburn hair a-flowing

In laughter she wades deep into the stream
The mountain creek of rocks and pools and
teems
With wild things of the water bright and cool
Her laughter wakens all things in the pool

The stream it was a silent dreaming
Now shouts and leaps in sunshine gleaming
Her auburn hair a-flowing

Her laughter died as thunder shook the mere
And blackened the air, a veil before a bier
Her merry light faltered, was nearly drowned
As gloom descended swiftly midst a shroud

Faster and faster the creek was whirling
A frightful dance of crashing and swirling
Her auburn hair a-blowing

The dancing brook confused and crazed it runs

In mad escape it hears the boulder drums
Down the mountain tumbled earth and stone
And crushed the creatures fin and foot and bone

The stream it was with wild things teeming
Now choked with mud the earth a-bleeding
Her auburn hair a-dripping

And when the river's terrible dance was done
And inky black had blotted out the sun
The maid of the river sat and wept alone
For her newts and fish were buried 'neath the
stone

ORDINARY SHORTCOMINGS

by Noah Lewkowicz

And there I was, sitting in my dorm room with my headphones in, trying to write an essay for English class. Tapping my fingers on the corner of my desk, I turned around in my chair to look at my roommate. Sure enough, he was fully locked into a random YouTuber. The lights were out, and the room was dimly lit by the overcast sky outside. Checking my phone, I was disappointed to find no notifications. I knew my paper was due soon, but I needed to get out of the dorm; a break was vital. Shutting my laptop, I walked over to my closet, opened the doors and picked out a random gray sweatshirt. Wrestling with it for a moment, I finally got it on and reached for my keys. Waving to my roommate, I opened the dorm door and left the room.

Waiting for the rickety, slow elevator began to take too long, so I headed for the narrow stairway and headed down to the first floor. It wasn't a bad walk since I was on the second floor. My dorm was forty-two years old at the time, which doesn't seem too old except it was the oldest dorm on campus; not exactly a college freshman's paradise. Reaching the lobby, I pushed through the heavy doors and braced for the chilly air outside. Even with a sweatshirt on, I was welcomed with a cold breeze as I stepped out into the world. It was October, and with it came cooler weather, colorful leaves and a reason to stay indoors more often.

Teeth chattering, I began the walk down the hill that my dorm sat atop of and towards my old dorm. Yes, I had stayed in another dorm for a

month and a half prior to my dorm at the time of this event, but a terrible roommate situation had been enough to get me to remove myself. I had been called crazy; why leave the newest, nicest dorm for the oldest, most unappealing dorm? But they didn't understand the situation I had been in nor the person I had dealt with. It was a much-needed move.

Nevertheless, I headed towards New River Hall, which was only about a quarter mile away from my dorm. There weren't too many people out, and those who were seemed to be bundled up rather excessively. Occasionally there would be a local crazy person who'd walk around in a tank top, but then again, they were likely headed back from a gym workout, so the cold air was a relief to embrace. As for me, I'd been stationary for hours, so the air tingled like thousands of tiny needles pricking my skin. I made sure to look at my surroundings as I walked, taking in all the beautiful trees and the mixtures of green, red, orange, yellow and maroon. The fire colors.

I walked past the small cafeteria on campus, Trivett Hall. Nine times out of ten, when I was hungry enough to go eat somewhere, I would go to Trivett. Sure, they didn't have the expanded options that Central had, and sure the food was repetitive. But I was never one to be too picky about what I ate and when I ate it, if I filled my belly I was contented. I approached the road leading up to the stadium and looked both ways for incoming traffic. A Toyota drove up towards

the stadium, but once it passed, I was cleared to walk across. Right in front of me was New River, and it wasn't exactly a place of fond memories. Even so, I knew why I was going there, and I knew it would be worthwhile.

Being daytime, the doors to the hall were open, and I filed in behind some residents as they walked into the lobby. There was another set of doors that needed a card for access to the elevators and stairs, but the people ahead of me took care of that and I walked down the short hallway towards the elevators. One had just opened with students filing out, and I barely made it in the elevator before the doors closed.

"What floor?" a big dude asked me, standing by the buttons.

"Uh, four, please," I muttered, caught off guard.

Elevator rides were always quiet and awkward, with people either looking at their phones, staring at the ground, or looking at the glowing red number that showed the floor the elevator was approaching. Occasionally, someone would be on a phone call or have a friend with them and there would be chatter to break the silence. Other than those rare occasions, nothing.

The elevator stopped on the second floor and then stopped on the fourth floor. Two people remained in the elevator as I stepped out.

"Y'all have a good one," I wished the people in the elevator, with them giving a casual "you too" in exchange. I sighed, looking to my left. The

space only ran a brief ten feet before hitting a wall, but hallways to the left and right branched out that revealed dorm rooms. Were I to go left, I would eventually end up at the door of my old dorm room. Chills flashed up my arms, and I shook my head. Never again. Turning to my right, I proceeded down a long hallway with dorm rooms of their own and eventually reached a wall that



(Axce, Nathanael. "A Glimpse of History")

revealed another set of left and right hallways. Picking right once more, I headed down a final stretch of dorm rooms, walking earnestly but not quickly.

Finally, I reached the end of the hallway and stopped in front of a door belonging to the last dorm room in the hallway. I extended my hand to knock, hesitated for a moment, but followed through with five knocks. There I stood, glancing at my clammy hands and tapping my feet. It was much warmer in the dorms compared to outside and I could feel a line of sweat trickle down from my armpit and towards my hip. Not exactly the most satisfying sensation. The door opened, and there she was, surprised to see me.

"Hey!" the girl exhaled, giving me a nervous smile.

"Hey!" I repeated, nervous as well.

She waited for a minute to see if I would say anything else and I mentally whacked myself on the forehead, recollecting my thoughts.

"I wanted to stop by and say hey, y'know, see how you were doing and all," I admitted.

She looked back into her room and then looked at me and whispered, "Jacob's here."

My smile dropped to a grimace and my heart began to beat very quickly. No, no, no. Why here and why now. It was a bad idea to begin with, I should've checked, I should've made sure.

"Shoot, okay, well I wanted to make sure you were doing alright. Imma split but I'll see you later," I replied, earnestly ready to get out of the situation I was approaching.

I waved and turned to walk away but a hand widened the door and behind the girl stood a guy much taller than her but not taller than me. A thin mustache grew under his nose, eyes half open, ball cap facing forward, shoes off, and holding a skinny frame quite like my own. I was not prepared for the situation at all, and I quickly tried to recall

every defensive and offensive move Rocky used against Apollo and Drago.

"Yo, what's up man, you need something?" the boy asked in a rather tired voice, giving me a head nod.

I need you to get the hell away from my girl.

"Nah man, just a little bored so I figured I'd stop by and say hi to Lea. Uh, I'm Noah, by the way and I guess that makes you Jacob?" I introduced myself.

Jacob's eyes sharpened and a sinister gleam flashed in them.

"I know who you are."

My hardest attempt to be kind fell through, and I pursed my lips and nodded, holding up a thumbs up.

"Well, I'm gonna split, so I'll see y'all later," I finished, giving Lea a wave and turning to walk back from where I came from.

"Yeah, that's probably a good idea," Jacob called after me.

I stopped in my tracks and clenched my fists. Turn around, do it. You won't. Say something, tell him the truth, put him in his place. Do it. You won't. I wanted to. But I didn't have the heart for it, and certainly didn't want to embarrass the girl. I rolled my shoulders back, inhaled and exhaled slowly, and proceeded to walk onwards towards the elevators.



(Abramov, Nick. "Beauty from Decay")

DYE ON CANVAS

by Christopher Fraser

I found an invitation
to leave you all behind
Oh sweet release, temptation
“No, everything is fine”

I found an invitation
“It’s all in your head”
There’s a monster in the closet,
There’s a noose behind the bed

A Broken invitation
Blood pours out like wine
“Tell your gods above I’m taken
by the one inside my mind:

A Broken invitation
“Your Hands as cold as ice”
A love note to the goddess
whose own hands hold the scythe

Oh sweet one you best not let
these thoughts cross your mind,
I tried running to you, fast,
but was forced back into line

Oh broken wings and shattered teeth
I swore I’d save you from
You were hiding in the heavens,
scared of what you would Become

And blossoms rotting slowly In my dreams when
I would sleep
But the nightmares all were worth it just to see
you next me
So I’d go to bed and stare at the pictures,
all of you
Praying to a god I don’t believe would
ever come through

But if on that off chance all my vision
would turn pink
I’d savor every moment when We
didn’t have to think
About something to hold on to
through Fire, Blood, and Steel
If only, if only this world I found was real.

What more could one wish for?
A beautiful Death?
I was born an artist...
I’ll die on a canvas.

HOME

by Zoë Doudt

I walked by the lake yesterday;
rather, the empty, cold pit of ice and dirt,
past the stagnant excavator, glaring yellow,
past the creek that has doubled in size,
where powerlines still hang low,
where the wooden railing and flowers once were
(I recall once, seeing dandelions).

It’s nice to think of home as untarnished,
untouchable; a haven to always return to,
that will always stay the same.
I cried when I realized this place
felt almost like home—
not entirely, but almost.

I’ve had an almost-home
for seventeen months now;
what a gift.

I knew it was home when it hurt so much to
leave it,
when I sat in my room last May
surrounded by the disarray of reluctant packing
and I cried, silently, weighed down
with the approaching summer, it
digging into my stomach,
and I felt how intertwined place and people are,
and how home is not complete
without those you love.

And my friend reached out
and told me to expect it to hurt,
that it hurts to leave home—

but at least it is home,
and home is always still there, in a way, in our
hearts.

*

And despite the
handfuls of sad and desperate
moments I’ve had here,
it still felt pristine, like the glassy lake,
and then a storm came ripping through,
and now everything feels decayed,

and I realize that I will never have
a perfect home.

I am sad, because
this felt like an escape of sorts, coming here,
a redo, a place where I could
slowly untether myself from
all the places my heart has been
wound up over all these years;
a place to try again, where
everyone else was trying again too.

But last semester broke and tarnished
this place that was to me perfect;
last semester was a time where
I cried more than I laughed again,
where I felt hollow and frantic and scared;
last semester shattered the glass of the lake—

yet there is still home here,
though I am reminded that nearly everything
will fail me in some regard,
and that there will always be loss.

But there will also always be good.

There was good in the way the creek looked the
same
the other day when I walked up the old road,
and my hopes were nearly grazing the ground,
expecting it all to be different and washed away.

I walked up the broken road that is
still holding the memories of rain and wind
and I thought the old bench and the old bank
would have been swept away, but they are
standing

and while I know memories stay
in the heart and the soul, even if
their birthplace is long gone

it is still nice; it is a gift
to come back to something continuous
something that brings back moments,
makes them green again.

IT'S ALMOST LIKE SHE'S STILL HERE

by Kegan Hampton

It's almost like she's still here.

When I visit these mountains,
I can hear her voice ringing,
As if she'd just finished laughing,
And was looking with eyes gleaming,
And that smile in her mouth.

When I come here, I live in that place.

I close my eyes, and sit under our tree,
And for moments between moments,
I can almost feel her standing beside me,
Watching me like she used to do
When I was weary.

Her hair used to shine in the sun.

It would dance when she threw it.
Spots of light breaking through
The forest eaves would quicken it,
Making it look alive.

I remember the starry look she got in her eyes.

When the sky was too cloudy for us
To gaze on Orion and Aquarius
I would go stargazing in her face,
While she spoke of that great dream of ours,
And giggled at me when she found
That I was lost in her.

Often as I sat there, under the tree,
Something would excite me.
I would jump from my spot
Jerking my eyes wide in a flash,
Reaching my hands out to take her
As if reunited after a long journey,
Swinging her around in a glorious circle.

But then I would stand by the tree,
Looking at the spot where she had just stood,
And the cold wind that was
Reddening her cheeks-just moments before,
Blew the tears from my face
As my hands hung empty in the air.

LAMENT OF THE SAILOR'S WIFE

by Abby Buckner

I hear your voice in the abysmal sea,
Blanketed by its foam and calling out to me.
Your body asleep,
Never again to wake.
I stare at the horizon and weep for your fate.
The brooding unseen takes a toll on my soul.
My heart sinking beneath with you,
Now concealed by the shoals.
The wind cracks my face as I bury the pain.
I will search for you, my love,
And it will not be in vain.
Did the sirens caress your brain?
And did you never think of me?
As you were consumed by the unforgiving sea?
The deep is not your lover,
Nor is it your friend.
I have come to the edge,
But not to the bitter end.
Maybe I will walk forward too,
Drawn in by the sea's song and waves,
'Til I am waist deep in your watery grave.
And perhaps I will fall through and drown just
the same,
But not before saying farewell to my old self,
For she is to blame.
Tell me, my love, do you like where you are?
Oblivion seems peaceful and not awfully far.
I still comb the swells and feel for you in the salt.
Perhaps your demise was never really my fault.
And maybe I will never join you in the great
blue beyond,
At least not until my funeral shroud is donned.
Tell me, O great sea,
Where is your lock?
I have the key,
Despite your lapping mocks.
My love will be mine again,
Forever at last,
You, dark sea, will be my forever past.

POPSICLES FOR A POLAR LYNX

by Anna Baugh

Silence. The ice, white beauty of silence.
Snow was falling in gentle drafts so softly it
didn't make a sound. In the absolute quiet, you



(Axce, Nathanael. "Elegance")

almost felt deaf. The effect was calming, if a little eerie.

Cinch stopped his trudge through the snow and allowed himself 10 seconds to indulge in lowering his pack. He stared at the landscape beyond him. Mountains in the distance stood shining in the midday sun. Blinding light reflected off the ice stretch of frozen water between himself and those white peaks. He blinked. He'd never in his life seen anything so...so—

"Done enjoying the scenery?" a voice crackled loudly over the comm.

Cinch turned toward Jax who was standing approximately 30 meters in front of him shifting his armored knees in the thick snow. His fellow soldier looked out over the frozen lake too. Cinch smiled even though all Jax could see was a white armored helmet.

"You thinking what I'm thinking?"

"Yeah," he grunted, "Perfect day for a swim."

"Perfect day for ice skating."

Jax turned around with a sneer, "It'd end up being the same thing."

"You think that ice'd break in this weather?"

"With the amount of stuff we're hauling maybe." Jax looked back. Behind the white t-visor, Cinch imagined him raising that left eyebrow.

Cinch looked down at his pack. Okay, maybe they didn't need the extra batteries, hydrosplanners, and 3mx3m flimsi-plast ultra-durable tarp. Maybe 58.9 kilograms was a lot. Maybe he was a paranoid whatever-the-prefix-was-for-being-an-unprepared-phobe.

But in his mind the caution was warranted. They were only a two-man team. The Commander would have made it three, but she'd been delayed on arrival from the Capitol. With low numbers in this weather, the importance of supplies couldn't be overstated. Plus, overkill made him feel better. He rolled his shoulders and grimaced. Better mentally anyway.

"Maybe next time," Cinch grunted.

"I'll be sure to show the General our list of requested recreational activities if we get back."

When we get back.

Cinch checked his GPS and crouched down in the snow, fishing through his pack. Jax made a blowing noise into his gloved hands and commented, "I wonder if that's what the seps would do to us if we got captured."

Cinch paused and let out a grunt of confusion.

"You know, break the ice, throw us in, and watch us drown in hypothermic conditions," Jax looked at him.

"You have a knack for boosting morale."

"Why, thank you."

Cinch looked back at the data pad panel which was glitching. He flicked it in frustration. Why didn't these things have internal heater cores?

"Did they teach you special ops boys in slow motion?"

"We are about to enter a minefield," Cinch responded with more of an edge than he intended and rustled through his pack again. "I'm setting up the GPR while it's still relatively calm out here."

"We should be making headway while it's still relatively calm out here. Your HUD picks up landmines."

"It won't be as accurate in this snow. This'll only need 3 minutes to charge," he said, "It'll be better."

He'd never actually used one of them outside of training and not in half a meter of snow. But he wasn't about to let Jax in on that.

Ignoring Jax's pithy expressions of annoyance, he began setting up the device's solar panel. His gloved hands fumbled with the wires. The snow was falling again. These things were not made for snowstorms and neither was he. His hands were too numb to even feel the cable. He rubbed his hands together and stuck them in his armpits. The pressurized suit was supposed to protect him from frostbite.

"Won't get the recce back to base if we turn into popsicles for a polar lynx out here," Jax said under his breath and Cinch eyed him. He both loved and hated their internal comm channel.

He finished the setup and stood wanting to state that stepping on an explosive wouldn't help them get the recce to base either, but he did not.

Cinch was wearing pressurized ARC trooper armor. Specialized for extreme conditions with internal temp-unit tech which adjusted in response to environmental factors. Therefore, he was uncomfortable but not freezing. Jax had the reg armor and was probably cold. Very cold.

He heard Jax swallow over comm.

They both needed water, but the wind had picked up again. Taking off the helmet was the last thing he wanted to do. He could wait a little more. Back at base they could have a full cup of water and maybe some hot grub. At least some dry rats. His stomach growled. He looked at Jax. A tacit understanding passed between them.

No complaints. That would make this trip a lot longer than it needed to be.

They were approximately 3 clicks out from base, a third of which would be the minefield. He breathed deeply, swallowed his spit and dusted the snowflakes from his armored wrist gauntlet. When he connected the MRLD to the capacitor, it glowed in a transparent teal beam before them that would identify any explosives in red. He began to scan the ground with Jax following close behind him. They had walked less than a 100 meters when it picked up the first mine. His HUD hadn't picked that one up, but he refrained from informing his comrades that he had been right.

They walked slowly and silently around the boobytraps. Instinct forced him to step gently even if the device said the path was clear. If he tripped the snow might brace his fall before he could set off surrounding pressure mines. But he wasn't taking any chances. He turned up his auditory input. Sarge's voice echoed in his brain: "Tech is about as reliable as 'news' from a middle-

aged woman. You can trust 'em only so far."

Cinch knew from experience about technology. What Sarge had meant regarding women remained a bit more enigmatic. He'd never met a middle-aged, human woman. One that wasn't a Jedi anyway. He held back a grunt of annoyance. The Commander's force powers sure would have come in handy right about now—

Crunch.

Cinch froze. Jax had stopped too.

"What?"

Turning around facing Jax, Cinch scanned their surroundings with his DC-17 raised. The noise had come from behind them. He narrowed his eyes. The scope was empty.

"You hear that?"

"No."

"I heard someone behind us—"

Suddenly, Jax pressed a finger to the front of his helmet.

"Don't move," he breathed barely audible.

"What is it."

"I don't know, but I'm picking it up behind you on IR," he said softly, "I can barely see it... looks like some sort of animal."

Cinch blinked at his HUD for the infrared rear camera and saw what Jax was looking at. A

few more blinks he accessed his helmet database that scanned the creature's DNA signature. Cinch swallowed his anger. Near-extinct species native to the planet that specialized in winter camouflage. Of course, it was a polar lynx.

"Are you sure your name isn't Jinx?" he hissed.

"Don't. Move," Jax retorted and raised his blaster.

"I can handle it."

"No. If you move it'll go crazy and pounce then we're all gonna be a lot warmer," Jax snapped.

"It probably thinks I'm just a droid," Cinch said as he flipped his camera again.

On IR it looked like drool was freezing into icicles on its enormous fangs.

Or maybe not.

He inhaled trying to keep from panic. What he would've given to have the Commander with them right about now. She could have—

"It's no good wishing for things in combat," Sarge's disembodied voice interrupted, "Focus on what you know and what you have."

Okay. We are being hunted by an invisible animal...in a minefield...inside enemy territory—

The wind-driven snow picked up again.

In a blizzard.

He almost laughed.

"Hold still."

Jax had leveled his rifle. Cinch grunted in understanding and to silence his terror. The creature didn't seem to see Jax. He had a clear shot. Well. A clear shot that was lined up about 10 centimeters above Cinch's left shoulder and 3 from his neck. Cinch swallowed.

Jax is a good shot.

All the same, he wondered if Katarn armor would hold up at this range. Of course, if the shot went wide in the other direction the end wouldn't be good for either of them.

He watched as the creature glided silently on top of the final layer of snow and began to become more visible. Cinch assumed so that it could use more energy for the kill.

Great.

In normal conditions, he would have found this more fascinating. Maybe he would have sketched it. Stunned it for a closer look. Normal didn't seem to be in the cards for him since joining up with the 627th. Criff, what did he even mean



(Hauser, Lila. "Growth from Breathless Lungs")

by normal?

Sarge's voice jolted him back into reality.
Stay focused, son.

He could see Jax's finger shaking. It was all Cinch could do to keep a whimper of panic from slipping out of his mouth through the comm. He squeezed his eyes shut.

And an unearthly wail pierced the twirling air for a split second. He thought it was himself. He opened his eyes. Jax stood there, gun smoking.

Cinch whirled around—and the cat lay dead in the snow with wisps of smoke curling up from a hole through its right eye.

They both exhaled. Cinch realized they'd both been holding their breaths. He touched his neck. It was warm from where the laser bolt had passed.

They stared at each other for a long 10 seconds hearing the sound of the other breathing. The snow was still stinging their hands and their teeth were still chattering.

They were alive.

Cinch's body shook with the exhilaration of it. He waited for Jax to lighten the mood with a quip about his shooting abilities, but Jax just stood there. Cinch tried.

"Shame that's an endangered species," he said, "Hope that wasn't the last one."

Jax barely moved his head to stare at him and spoke.

"Yeah," he shivered and seemed to melt out of a trance, "Sorry about your paudron." Cinch looked down and saw on his shoulder where the snow had melted in a streak and below that the armor was singed.

"I like the distressed look. You alright?"

"My hand slipped," he swallowed, "I almost killed you."

"But you didn't."

Jax inhaled audibly and sniffed as they looked at it.

"Not bad shooting for a reg," Cinch grinned, "I owe you one."

He was relieved to hear Jax chuckle.

They looked down at the cat again. Then they looked at each other. Cinch smiled.

"You think Boss would approve of polar lynx steak for dinner?"

COLD LOVE

by Lila Hauser

To feel warm in cold love
It's cold and sharp and it cuts through your
burning heart
It brings with it, searing pain yet numbness
A cut so deep left never to depart
Why does it make us feel at peace
Even when we have been broken by its teeth?

Your love felt like fire, but just because it was
winter
For with your love, no storm arrived, no thunder
roar,
no lightning blaze just quiet snow upon the
ground
a love that burned, a flame that died without a
sound

Oh, the lengths we go in hopes to
Cross love's narrow road
It's a constant riddle to decode and yet one that
we already know
one that is wild, untamed, uncharted and
unknown

Love can cut right to your core
But somehow it can still feel warm
Yet is it the love or just a bind?
For it is no doubt that at times the warmth of
touch is hard to find
It can slowly slip through your fingertips
Yet still the heart feels intertwined

The frosty breath of love can freeze
And leave you feeling ill at ease
Think of it like how
The warmth of the fire feels better
When one's body is cold

THE EYES OF MY HEART

by Zoë Doult

I'll have to open up my heart again soon.

Not to say I'm calloused;
when I was falling into
the graves of stoicism,
He took me,
set me down on solid rock.

But then I built a wall against my past,
making my dwelling a dungeon
thinking it best
to never look back,
but restless in my cave of insincerity,
insincerity toward who I was and
who I used to be—
uncomfortable, unsettled—

At some point, angry, I punched
through plaster,
and I reached out for you and cried,
selfish and wanting sympathy,
but you were long gone.

I realized, after ages and eons,
that I needed to walk away.

So I walked and walked
then built my garden, on some sunny, sad day;
I sat in the sunshine,
and sometimes the rain.

Some days I've walked back to that grave, to my
slaughtered walls of lies and goodbyes—
not alone—
just to see.

Just to see if it didn't hurt anymore.

And it didn't.

There were only some
sweet pangs, and the
aftertaste of the blue skies that I miss,
sometimes.

*

I sat in my garden for a long time,
growing gardenias,
tending my heartstrings.

The garden grew green and bright,
living, breathing,
eventually loving again.

And now I walk back again, to where I was
nearly buried,
and see the dirt that used to be dead;
I see the carcasses that have
been swept away
by the same rain

that mended me.

I see traces of pink,
yellow,
shy, timid,
peeking past pebbles,
pushing away weeds.

And I sit;
I pray.

I look through my wall,
and He says,
be still.

So I'm still, while He's not.

While the plaster crumbles,
soon showing me
my past.

I cower, shut my eyes,
not ready for the blood
and the battered me I used to be.

But He opens the eyes of my heart,
gently.

Guides me,
gently.

Tells me to look
into the cavern,
gently.

And now there are flowers,
growing along the walls,
weaving through the dirt, the pain.

He whispers,

go ahead.
It will hurt,
but you are not alone—

And so I begin my trek downward,
holding His helping hands,
as it gets darker and darker
to the eyes of the world,
but lighter and brighter
to the eyes of my heart.

GENESIS

by Dr. Scott Foran

it is not a distant point
marked with lines
between
to a point where paths converge
but a fixed tightness of the heart
a crossing of eternity with time
haunted always
with the question
“where are you?”

no answer given

ἀπολωλὼς θυγάτηρ

by Lydia Basham

‘Where is the Prodigal Daughter?’
I think as I listen to my pastor preach
A sermon I have heard many times before,
Blinking to escape the tiredness of his speech.

‘Did the good father have a little girl?
Did the boys have a sister?
Did she watch as the younger one left
And wonder if he’d miss her?’

‘Or was she already gone by that point in the
story?
Had she packed up her things and gone to wed?
Or had she squandered her own precious
blessings
And crept into many a wayward bed?’

‘Did she ruin herself whilst trying to win
In a game rigged only to lose?
Did she discover the filthy truth of her sin
After another cold, empty-hearted, lonely ruse?’

‘I wish there had been a Prodigal Daughter’,
I tap my red-inked pen on my knee.
‘I wish she had fallen as far as her brother;
I wish she had fallen as far as m-

Well.

Red. Red like Jesus’ sinless blood.
The ink in my end-capped ballpoint pen.
Would it have leaked for that lost little girl?

For her would He run into the Devil’s den?

If she too had squandered life and love
To ensure her own sick joy,
Or released herself to greed and gluttony
Like that other little lost Prodigal boy?

If she had run far from Father’s house
And become a disgusting, pig-reeking cur,
Would His love extend to her sorry state?
Would the cross-bearer still have chosen her?

Did she stray? Did she fall?
Did she crumble to sin and temptation?
Did she crawl on belly to Father’s house
And beg for a place far above her station?

Did she plead for entrance into a home
One such as she could never deserve?
Did she weep for forgiveness too good to be true,
And grace that could never, ever be earned-

Oh.

My brother reaches for my hand;
His brows are pinched in concern.
I am shaking, I realize.
The edges of my eyes start to burn.

Oh Lord, forgive this blinded fool.
In the middle of the sermon, I begin to cry.
Where is the Prodigal Daughter?

Ah Lord, tis I.

THE GOLDEN APPLE

by Jeremiah Swader and illus. by Lydia Basham

Once a wanderer of the wild wilderness of this
world
Passed through a field where grazed many a fold.
Wide was the field and weary and sky and grass
were grey.
He was drawn into a life of wandering by a voice
heard far away.

Though the summer was nearly come, oft fell a
frigid sleet
upon the hoary plain lay sprawled before his
feet.

The wanderer sought a sunny summer solace
Which the clear high voice had surely promised.

Like church bells on a merry wedding-day
Rang the faerie song he had heard far away,
So he followed ever over horizon broad,
Under enchantment severe to some delight
beyond.

Now after walking and watching many days,
Following after the voice, he came to the trees
Of a great wood which is said by those who
know of it
That there various and strange beasts inhabit.

Rumors persist also of this wood that its breadth
Is near incomprehensible and a mystery deep as
death
Lies upon it and many a traveler has entered
The forest deep and not returned but lie
interred.

Stopping not a bit at the forest bounds
For the longing in his heart which resounds
like thunder, in steps the wanderer.
He catches a glimpse then of the singer.

White as the moon the face of the maiden shone.
Her hair flew behind, by the summer breeze
blown.
In and out among the trees, now a glimpse in
flight
Before she is gone, disappeared utterly from
sight.

Setting Sun-light was falling between the leaves
Like golden sand in an hourglass falls through
the sieve
And in the heart of the wanderer, an acheful
hope
Entangles each thought of his like a rope.

And love sprung in his heart like the red rose
In spring which upon the garden wall throws
Its thorny vines over and holds the wall fast
Until it falls away by wind and rose
harassed.

Not far into the woods had the
wanderer sprung
When he came to a crystal river
which had run
For many a year. There had been
built there
A stone bridge which flew arching
into the air.

Up this sylvan stair the wight
quickly ran,
And shortly down he was come
again
And found that he had crossed the
great river.
The pearl-white moon shone but a
sliver.

The ringing voice which but a
moment ago
Had been guiding the wanderer so,
Had faded now even as the dying
light
And left behind the simple silence
of the night.



(Basham, Lydia. "The Wanderer")

Bewildered, the man looked around the
growing dark,
But all around was only the fading
blackness stark.
All through the trees was heard no noise
But the rustle of silence upon silence the
night deploys.

For near a despairing hour the wanderer
waited,
But while he could tarry no further his
longing was not sated.
He sat him down upon a stone and wept
awhile,
Before a curious sight he saw which would
his eyes beguile.

Out of the darkness then appeared a
flicker,
As of a firefly out in thicket and briar,
Growing larger, growing bright, as if it
drew nearer.
Enraptured, the wanderer rubbed his eyes
to see it the clearer.

The wanderer held his breath, blinking
twice
When suddenly a man appeared, larger by
thrice
Than the weary lovesick wanderer quaking.
He held a tall candlestick though its flame was
not shaking,

Despite the breeze which blew through the trees.
All in green he was clad from shoulders to knees
And his beard was rusty red, gleaming with fire
light
From his candle and his eyes' merry glimmer
bright.

This faery, forest sprite approached the fellow
With smile gentile and glance full-mellow.
He had, it seemed, a summer face, good-natured
and glad
And promptly in the candle-light hello he bad:

"Well-met my fellow that you should wander
here,
But why shouldst thou be sauntering here
So late at night and far from hearth and home
Unless some evil bade you come so far to roam?"



(Basham, Lydia. "Bridge of Stone")

"Before you came, I sat here weeping sir,
Because in these woods I saw a precious maiden
stir.
But now have lost her, I know not where,
And would see her again, my aching soul to
repair."

"Do not weep my friend for there is some hope
for you.
Even now the maid of whom you speak is
passing through
To the subtle realm of the faerie land.
She stands upon the staircase ready to descend.

I can allow you only a glimpse of the one you
seek
For of fairy marriage to mortals none do speak
That you should talk of taking her is in
ignorance
But if you come with me I may afford you but a
glance."

And like a wind o'er the fields picking up dead
leaves,
The giant snatched the fellow up by his shirt
sleeves,

And whisked him away into the deep of the
night,
And at the speed of their racing, I daresay, he
had a fright.

They came at once to a cliff standing tall into the
sky,
That seemed of its own accord to brightly shine,
A pale green hue, not as a reflection from
another source,
But from its nature as fig from fig and gorse from
gorse.

Like glass the stone appeared to be,
And through it straight all could see,
Beyond the wall was a long grey hall there,
And beyond this a silver stair.

Yet no door was there within the stony shelf,
For the way was barred for all creatures else he
be elf.
And that faerie race would simply cross the wall
of glass
As one might through a misty fall of water pass.

And through that afar off the wanderer saw
The maiden which had captured his thought
Beginning to descend the silver spiraling stair
Out of sight of mortal eyes. That ended the
affair.

Then the wanderer fell to the ground in the
forest air
Sick that the maid was gone from sight. He
despaired.
The memory lingered on her shining golden
hair
And of her beatific fragrance which she left
there.

“Woe is me!” Quoth the wanderer, “I am a
wretched man
I fall and I fear that I may not stand again
For I have seen one of beauty unsurpassed
And she has flown twice now from my grasp”

The green-clad giant was standing by
And seemed to seek a solace to supply
But truly sought – by some mortal – mischief to
make
As so seeding some hope for him he spake:

“It is full-true what I said before,
That to mortals fairy-land opens no door.
But there is one way you may win your love,
And all the immortal blessings thereof.

For across the sea there is a clear blue bay,
And up past those white shores some say,
Can be found a garden of beauty divine,
Within which there is a grafted tree you must
find.

Golden apples sweet this tree doth bear,
And if you pluck the fruit hanging there
Eternal life you gain and no fear of death will
scare
You, nor keep you from your faerie dear.

To elfin kingdom you will gain admittance,
And in marriage live a blissful existence.
Only return with golden apple in hand,
And you may yet give a wedding band.

You must sail west upon the sea
Until you the white sands and harbor see,
And hear the crying of the cormorant
Which marks the border of the Hesperian land.

Pick the immortal fruit from the vine,
But meet back here in a twelvemonth time.”
And, with that, the faerie sprite passed
Through the rock quick as a flash.

And so the wanderer wasted no time
Preparing a boat in which to ride.
He came to the coast of the dismal world
And prepared to sail like the mariners of old.

Full-silver in the sunlight did the bow of the
boat appear,
And the sails blowing in wind any heart could
cheer,
Like a swan on the water as the craft sailed,
Sturdy and swift, its mission it would not fail.

For many a month, the wanderer went,
Until cold and wind and rain had his spirits
spent.
He had no friends or company but the washing
waters
And the seabirds above; the white wind-talkers.

At length, the waters grew warmer and the sun
Shone brightly on the face of our pilgrim one.

The wanderer saw afar off the hint of the shore
And took hope 'gainst the weight that his heart
had born.

With a lurch at last came his craft to the sand,
And he leaped out with a shout onto land.
Aching limbs anew with joy were installed,
And off in the distance a cormorant called.

The wanderer looked up from the shore and
beheld
A great green hill which from the earth seemed
to swell,
Which at its crest with a garden was crowned,
With sturdy stone walls wrapped all around.

He trekked up the hill and straight to the gate,
Where with flaming sword the guardsman did
wait,
Armored all in light the man did appear
And if not for his hopes the wanderer would
fear.

Many before had tried to take the garden by
force,
And the guard prepared his command to
enforce:
"Why seek ye to enter herein, do tell,
where no man since the fall of Adam
dwells?"

"For love of maiden fair I may even dare
to enter here,
Though blocked be the way by sword
ablaze with fire clear
The fabled golden apple for to bring
with me at last to faery land
And immortal becoming, perchance may
I even win her hand"

"Very well" quoth the guard "that your
quest is noble you may come,
Into paradise for a while. But I warn you
not to seek beyond your station, for
some—
Not least our father Adam—found the
love of woman treacherous,
And you may find god-ly gifts to mortals
may turn venturous."

At this, the broad iron gate swung wide,
And the simple wanderer stepped inside
The garden of delight. All manner of flowers
Bloomed. birds sung in the trees like maidens in
their bowers.

The grass underfoot was soft and green;
A more wholesome delight the wight had never
seen.
Now he sought to find the tree of his desire,
And within a fruitful glade he found it, for it was
higher

By far than all the other trees in the grove;
It was planted the day Eve with the serpent
strove,
And bore since then fruits to make one wise,
And none who tasted them would ever die.

Surrounded on every side as far as eye can see,
Grew the orchard like woodland nymphs turned
to trees
Trunks and boughs like woman's arms and legs
And leaves flowing in the breeze like womanly
locks.



(Basham, Lydia. "The Candle Bearer")

The wanderer at length climbed the one,
Crawling upwards toward the sun,
And reached out his hands to take the fruit;
Of all apples precious beyond dispute.

But to the branch the apple clung,
And from its place it would not be wrung.
With all his might the wanderer pulled the vine,
And in the tree remained clinging five hours
time.

When the wight had spent his strength,
And was near to giving up there appeared at
length,
Speaking upon the branch, a snake of emerald
hue,
Far brighter than any earthly jewel.

"If from the branch, the fruit you wish to wrest,
You will find no luck, God be blessed
Unless by serpent's tongue and fang it be loosed.
If I may, my services to you may be some use."

Naught sharper than serpent fang cuts on the
green earth;
Sharply severed the snake the apple from its
stem. Great mirth
Then had the wanderer and he scrambled from
the tree,
repeatedly on his tongue the words "thankee,
thankee."

The serpent bade the noble man good luck,
And silent as only snake can be into the leaves
snuck.
Our wanderer then set his heart on his prize far
away,
And sought to sail the sea ere end of day.

On the sand he left his heavy footprints
As he left the paradise of the cormorants
And never looked back to Hesperion
Once he had his golden apple won.

Many months and many miles lay before the
wanderer,
The sea stretched cold and grey, nights of
lonesome pondering.
But the golden apple born in hand cheered his
spirit
And the ensuing sea-weariness would inhibit.

For when the wanderer looked upon the apple
bright
He recalled the promised marriage of delight

Which awaited him in faerie land upon his
arrival
When all the elves heard the story of his trials.

At last the wanderer landed upon the shore,
And made haste at once to where he was before,
Beneath the glassy cliff in the faerie forest deep,
On midsummer night he arrived, his promise to
keep.

All was dark as dismal death as it were a year
Before. All was still and there was no sound to
hear,
And the wanderer's hope flickered for a moment,
And recalling the giant's promise questioned the
arrangement.

Then suddenly within the stone came the
candles
As ones burning on a Christmas mantle,
Glimmering like fire on the water
And up the stairs the fairies sauntered.

One by one they all passed through,
Some in green and some in yellow,
And filled the forest with their lights.
They seemed to proclaim the death of night.

"What brings you here so far from hearth and
home?
Why shouldst thou to the gate of faerie land
roam?
These words spake the fairy king to the shivering
wight,
"Why shouldst we take you in this night?"

Quick to reply, the wanderer spake:
"Twelvemonth ago I made a bargain for the sake
Of a maiden whose hand it once was said by one
of your own
I might win if I should on a seaward voyage go,

"And retrieve this relic from the tree
And thereby gain me immortality
With which I might be as you all are
And wed the fairy maid I saw from afar."

At this the wood erupted with booming laughter
And the wanderer shrunk back in fear and anger
"We have no such custom here" sang the fairy
king
As the various voices made the woodland ring.

"Twelvemonth ago you fell in the company
Of our old puckish sprite— by name, Alfie.

But if you wish to we may bring the maid out
And we shall see if she respect your clout."

Straightaway they brought the beautiful
maid
And our wanderer was to the ground laid,
In wonder to see her face so close and clear,
And made a marriage-petition for her to
hear.

"From the first I saw you in the woods
I have sought no earthly goods,
For you by far surpass the greatest riches,
And if you marry me you shall have all your
wishes."

The fairy princess was repelled away
By loathsome mortal man and began to say:
"I desire nothing you have to give
For in blissful fairy land I live

You may not enter our fairy abode
No matter the relics or apples of gold
You bring. For you would have sold
Your soul for to obtain your lustful goal.

You believe amiss if you would take my
hand,
Who so recently would take by storm my land.
"I should rather be another Daphne.
Pardee, though you weep and die, I would be a
tree!"

At this the wanderer diminished in shame,
For he had sold all he had and nothing to his
name
Remained in all the world. He was destitute for
love
Of woman when he knew he should have sought
above.

"Alas, that I had wist sooner than this
The trickery of the faerie race
Yet by my own lust and greed
I have raced into a net as a steed

Which rushes after a mare.
Alas for my heart which would dare
To seek for a mist-like elfin love!
Alas I die!"



(Basham, Lydia. "The Western Land")

END

by George Yoder

Everyone will leave you soon enough.
Passing time will snatch the one you love.
With lightning hands its fingers fork across
The midnight sky, and streak to strike all hope
With burning blasts, and render all to ash.
What is left beyond the raging blaze?
Shadows of some long-forgotten days.

Grief besets, and where is God amidst
The ravings of a hopeless, fractured mind?
The earnest prayers you send to heaven do
Appear to land no farther than the stars
Swallowed by a void of pure indifference.
When God is far away, does hope remain?
Within this storm of grief, what stands to gain?

Faith will only stand upon commitment.
Anchors only hold on sturdy ground.
Stolen, broken love cannot uproot
The couplings which a faithful man has set
Beneath his fields of existential pain.
When human love has failed where will you
stand?
Atop the stalwart rocks, or sinking sand?

STILL



(Abramov, Nick. "Fight for Life")

THE GARDEN

by Lydia Basham

I am looking for the secret path hidden behind Haddon Hall. Overgrown, I suspect, and probably covered in a wide variety of vines, briars, and thorny weeds waiting to entrap me. I'm wearing athletic shorts and a sports jacket — not particularly the armor of knights awaiting their battle against malicious flora, but alas — and it has already rained on me twice. English rain — Bakewell being in England, after all — and cold, though it's June.

We're exploring the castle later today, but there's meant to be a small path behind it for the adventurous traveler or, in my case, the idiot who decided to keep up her running habit despite being on vacation. This idiot also has a proclivity for finding trouble despite clearly being capable of avoiding it.

The castle is a little more than a mile from our hotel — several hundred years old, so hotel seems the wrong word — and the morning has been warm until the rain. It's a strangely enjoyable experience, being out in the English countryside where myths and tales seem possible. The fog still lies across the dewy fields like a tawny blanket, disguising sheep herds as masses

of cloud and trees as giants waiting to be slain. The wall I'm walking next to — and every nook or cranny could be the entrance into the path, so I must look quite ridiculous as I bend over, drenched, half frozen, but I've never claimed to be a girl of appearance — is nearly a thousand years old. The roads, asphalt now, but were once all dirt and connected Bakewell to Matlock, and they are fairly empty so early in the morning.

AHA!

There is a small dip in the wall, a perfect step up and over and onto the path.

It is well kept, if a bit muddy, and my running shoes were definitely not made for such a journey, but I hardly ever get to experience Haddon Hall in the wet morning air, breath puffing out in front of me like a lazy dragon, little feeling left in my legs due to the chill — and by hardly, I of course mean never.

The path runs along an old fence on both sides. Hoofprints have made their indents in the mud. Still used, then, which is comforting. If I am to be jumped by the errant ogre whilst on my quest, at least the sheep will find my body.

I soon realize that the path is not, at all, well kept.

The briars begin lancing across my shins and thighs. Red welts crawl up my legs and arms,

an especially nasty one circling around my wrist. There is a moment where I stand there, waist-deep in deceptively painful flowers, and must decide.

Go back? I could, I should, I suppose. The pavement beside the road is safer, cleaner, and straight.

Or I could go forward. I don't know if the path ever clears again. There could be some horrible creature waiting in the growing mud to eat me or turn me into a coat. I could get lost — lost in the misty countryside of England and become some wayward legend to scare stupid American tourists.

The choice, of course, is an easy one.

Forward it is.

It becomes impossible to run anymore, and my ego-inspired exercise has ceased altogether within the next ten minutes. I slip and fall twice, landing deep in the mud that awaits me. The rain begins again, and three more falls occur before the path — and it isn't so much a path anymore as the tiniest of breaks between tall grass and other tall grass — opens enough that I can see my feet and the massive swathes of sludge they

must traverse.

The briars, weeds, and thickets are still so close, impeding my speed and comfort. It is a mercy that my legs have gone mostly numb, because I'm beginning to look more and more like a red-spotted Dalmatian. Someone has taken to medieval medicinal practices and attached leeches to me, leaving trails of dripping blood on my cold-pink skin. I'm beginning to think I should have turned back when I had the chance, when I fall.

Again.

My entire front is covered in mud, my hands and knees submerged in the muck so deep I cannot see them, and I snort, my own clumsiness and God's sense of humor — tempering my pride as He so often does — inspiring my chagrin.

With little grace — I only have the God-given kind, after all — I manage to stand.

Milky sunshine breaks through the canopy of grand, old trees, and God says, "Let there be light."

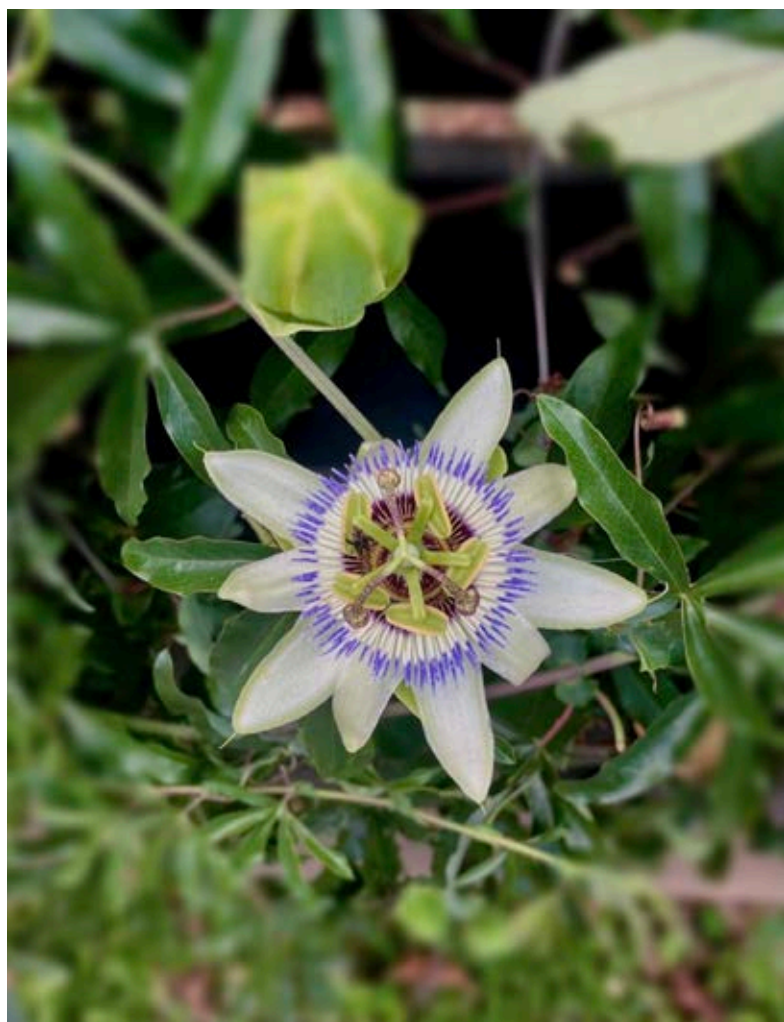
It cascades across the meadow I have stumbled into, turning all the yellow flowers white. The grass and thicket leaves are a shining green, like out of some Studio Ghibli movie, and the old fences look so fantastical that I urge to jump them and run to whatever adventures lie beyond their borders. The sprawling fields and pastures around me take on a completely different atmosphere, and the air around me chills with an Otherworldly feeling. Even the mud covering my once pristinely white running shoes glistens at its heavenly brilliance.

The light crawls up faster than my eyes can follow it, up, up, up the hill to my right and as I turn, I see a tower.

Hidden behind silver mist, stands the shadowed castle of Haddon Hall. The centuries-old keep stands, looming in the distance despite the stretch between him and I. Old stone walls and high towers bespeak legend and stories only the woodland creatures now know.

A harsh wind rustles through the undergrowth, and a chill strikes up my spine like lightning in a thunderstorm over the ocean, and I am breathless at the sight my Lord has prepared for me.

It is like the Shire from Bilbo's front door, Narnia during the first spring after



(Hauser, Lila. "Passion Flower")

a century of winter, and I am struck with the sudden urge to sing a song worthy of driving away any goblin that has escaped fearsome Curdie's valiant voice.

I do not sing — the chill has stolen my throat — but the smile that breaks across my reddened cheeks might be worthy of song.

Then, to my utter shock and only slight embarrassment — there are only birds and the occasional woodland sprite to see me now — I begin to cry.

It's not one of those disgusting cries where my nose scrunches up and I can't breathe very well, but one of those cinematic cries. I'm not sure I've had one before, but it is a simple misting of the eyes, a small intake of breath, and the tears slide down my cheeks, clearing away dirt and sweat.

I look, I'm sure, quite mad.

I'm soaked from head to toe, my legs and arms are bleeding, and now, my face is covered in tears. I appear, for all intents and purposes, like I have been beset by an evil swamp witch and have only just escaped with my life. Then, as if my appearance isn't insane enough, that particular thought inspires — God forbid — laughter.

I am struck with my utter nothingness in the face of such beauty. In my Goodwill clothes and my makeup-less face, I stand ugly in comparison to the creation around me. There are hints and hues of God's magical hand in everything my eyes can see, my ears can hear, my nose can smell, my shaking fingers can touch. No story or tale will ever compare to the one I find myself in — the one where a valiant knight walked humbly to a punishment I justly deserved, took the sword and death meant for me. Dragons and woodland sprites and swamp witches, the ogres and giants hidden behind that old gate for me, inspire no more fear here.

How kind is my God that my mortal eyes are permitted to perceive his handiwork.

I am longing for a beauty that I have never known, like Psyche, I am searching for the place where all beauty comes from, and I am witnessing its reflection in this hallowed place.

There is a piece of Eden in this garden.

I am sure that thickets were not always painful, that roses did not always bear thorns, and even the mud ruining my perfect running shoes might once have been not so miserable, and though sin has now tainted the almost-Eden I have found myself in, how merciful is my Creator that He would allow that some droplets of that glory remain.

I stand there for ten, twelve, fifteen, almost twenty minutes. My trembling legs tell me it is time to go, move on from this glen of glory and grand fantasy.

I turn back once more. Haddon Hall stands cloaked in the distance. The flowers move gently in the morning breeze. Laughter and tears tumble out of me like the misty rain that falls from the cotton candy clouds.

Golden light dips its fingers onto each branch and raindrop. It paints its shining color across the misty meadows and turns all the world to brilliant sunshine.

CONSIDER THE SQUIRREL

by Julianna Doyle

Dahlia paused her walk as she noticed the squirrel at his work for the seventh day in a row. She watched, fascinated, as he swiftly navigated fallen logs with stuffed cheeks and tiny hands



(Hauser, Lila. "Spring Fiddlehead")

ready for action. Dahlia spent a lot of time watching. The squirrel glanced up at her for just a moment longer than usual, and she smiled at him before he scurried up an oak tree to his next task. Funny little creature, she thought, frenetically burying whatever future trees he sees fit to hide away. Why must he be in such a rush?

The squirrel scurried again under one log and over another in search of his gathering place. Seven sleeps in a row he had kept at his work, with another cache of nuts to set away for later. He spent a lot of time setting things away for later. His ears perked up at the sound of a larger rustle: the tall creature was back again. She looked back at him with inquisitive brown eyes, the corners of her mouth lifting a little this time. Funny creature, he thought, standing there with her color-changing coat. Doesn't she have somewhere to be?

THE ONLY THING I'VE EVER LOVED

by Chris Fraser

One day you'll be,
again,
The only thing I've ever loved

When the wood that holds the body
Itself rots away,
and the dark of death holds no candle
To the shadows of that place

When the grape vines bear the weight of dry,
brown leaves alone
And birdsong stuck inside my head turns to a
shallow,
mournful drone

After all the suns and stars are starving,
their eyes whitewashed with grey,
And the trembles of a new world
have scarce begin to shake

Then you will be,
again,
The only thing I've ever loved

And I will love you all the same.



(Abramov, Nick. "Walking Through the Gray")

BURY THE DEAD

by Scott Foran

I saw Marshall Keene standing on the peak of his roof again. It was the third night in a row. He must have had a ladder set against the side of the house, for I never saw him actually ascend, only the shadow of his frame against the sky. He wore a long raincoat which moved erratically in the wind. He was tall, appeared even taller with his legs astride the roofline, a jagged tear of black against the dusk.

Autumn had finally settled in, the air cold with a hint of rain. I stood near the back door to my house, smoking and wondering what had gotten into Marshall. I didn't think his wife knew what he was doing. She would have certainly put a stop to it. I had seen her poke her head out the back a time or two, as if looking for him, but then the head withdrew quietly, the door clicking shut, and I saw her moving about inside the house.

I ran into Marshall the next night at the grocery. I had popped over to pick up some shrimp for a dinner party, and there he was in the checkout aisle, a loaf of bread and a carton of milk clutched tightly to his chest. He stared vacantly at the back of the next customer.

"Hullo, Marshall." I shifted the shrimp tray from one hand to the other.

He half-turned his head but made no other move to acknowledge me.

"How're things?" Before he could answer, the line moved, and he was next. He dropped the bread and milk into the hands of the surprised girl at the register. Then he thrust a five-dollar bill at her, took the change and shoved it into his coat pocket without even glancing at it, snatched up his plastic bag of groceries and lurched for the door.

When I got home, several of the guests had already arrived. I met my wife in the kitchen and handed her the shrimp.

"What took you so long? Everybody's nearly here." She started transferring the shrimp to a glass platter.

"You know, I ran into Marshall at the store."

She arranged the shrimp in tiny, neat circles around a dish of cocktail sauce.

She didn't say anything, focusing her attention on the shrimp.

"He seemed preoccupied."

"What?" She reached across me to grab the serving forks. "Really, Richard, you're in the way. Could you go out there and be a good host? I'm almost ready."

I stepped into the front room and began handing out drinks. Walter Steinman was our guest of honor. He had several songs appearing in a new show at the theater. We drank a quick toast, then my wife appeared with the shrimp.

Later, when Walt had been convinced to sit at the piano and play something, I slipped out back, already tired of the party. I could hear Walt playing, everybody laughing and singing along.

I didn't even have to look to know that Marshall was at his post, staring out at a horizon lost in the cool darkness. He had become one of the nighttime features, and it almost felt comfortable to have him there perched on the roof in his coat. The Keene's had lived next door for ten or twelve years. Marshall worked down at one of the city offices—Assessor's, I think. They had one daughter who had gone off to do benevolence work with the Peace Corps a year or two back. It was only Marshall and his wife now.

Later that night, after the last of the guests had finally been shooed out, I slipped out the back one last time for a smoke before bed. It must have been nearly two in the morning. As I

lit up, I glanced habitually up at the Keene's roof. I hardly expected Marshall to be there this late, but there he was, standing exactly as I had seen him so many times before.

As I watched, I wondered what exactly he looked at while up on the roof. You can't really see much of the city lights from this neighborhood—maybe the treetops, the gathering clouds, or just the darkness. I glanced up and was surprised to find Marshall looking down at me, the surface of his face lighter than his coat. I looked away, a little ashamed to be caught invading my neighbor's private moments. I forced my eyes to wander over the shrubs and shapes of my own yard to show that I hadn't really been watching him, then I nonchalantly glanced back at the roof. Marshall was gone.

"I'm sorry about earlier," the voice, near to my elbow and out of the darkness, startled me. It was Marshall.

I flicked the ash from my cigarette, trying to hide the fact that I was shaken. "Oh, that's all right," I offered.

"I haven't been myself lately." His tall shape was muffled in the coat. I could just see the light from my house reflecting in his eyes.

"Smoke?" I offered him a cigarette, then a light. He took a few puffs and just stood there, silent.

I nodded toward the door. "We had some people over tonight," I said.

"I heard music and singing." He stood quietly for a moment or two.

The silence became noticeably awkward. Then, before I could say anything else, a dog began barking.

"Thanks for the smoke," he said and was gone.

Several weeks passed before I thought of Marshall again, and it was only because we were having another dinner party. I had made the usual trip to the grocery for shrimp but had not seen Marshall. In fact, I had not seen him at all for a number of days, not even at his post on the rooftop.

"I invited the Keene's," said my wife. She set the shrimp carefully in their circles, like fallen dominoes. "I thought they might want to get out."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"With their daughter gone and all."

"Oh," I said, setting the serving forks on the

edge of the platter. “She’s in the Peace Corps or something, right?”

“Don’t you ever pay attention, Richard?”

“Oh, sorry.” I moved the forks back to the counter.

“Not the forks.” My wife continued placing shrimp on the platter. “The Keene girl—” as my wife continued, Walt suddenly started at the piano, and I only caught a few words, “—accident—flood—Southeast Asia—too bad—.” She gathered up the platter and swung it around into the front room.

The crisp air met me as I stepped out the back door. The night was dark, clouds hanging low while nearly touching the peaks of the roofs. I suddenly felt like climbing up on the roof of the Keene’s house, to stand and put an arm around Marshall, but as I looked up, I saw that he was not there.

Mrs. SADNESS

by Lila Hauser

People tend to look at sadness as if she is English
ivy,
invasive and constantly at war with the trees.

Sadness is not invasive, but beautifully
persuasive.

Sadness does not kidnap her victims, but
befriends them.

She does not forcefully grab you to put up a
fight, but rather invites,
she will gently hold you tight despite the cause
of her in the first place.

She provides space to feel safe in exchange for
your euphoria.

There are no chains binding me to sadness but I
go willingly.

She does not drown, but simply coats her
victims with her gentle waters.

She is not out to slaughter, but to fill your
numbness with her
cold yet comforting waters.

It may seem that her rain will stay constantly
eternal.

But time will move on, and the weather will
change.

Do not exchange yourself to her.

She will change.

She reminds us of our humanity.

And I thank her for being part of the unity.



(Doudt, Zoë. "Lull")

NOVEMBER

by Chris Fraser

Oh my calamity
I'm touched that you know
My new formed apostasies:
The sound of the notes

Oh my infallible
Your tongue whips the skin
Your beauty's incredible
your touch-not genuine

Oh my sweet last resort
With taste for the flame
If ever you've had a soul
Tell me your name

tell Me your name

tell me Your name

tell me your Name

HE'S STILL HOLDING US UP

by Ali Zakariasen

When you see it all disappear
When life just don't make sense
When you say that you've got
nothing left
When you can barely get a breath

When you lift your eyes up to the sky
"Oh God why oh why?"
When hope seems gone and you're scared to
death
Don't forget what he says

I will never let go
I will always be here
I will stay by your side
I will dry all your tears
When that flood's rising up
And you think that I'm gone
I've never left – I'm still holding you up

When your soul starts to grow cold
Remember there's purpose in the pain



(Whitby, Eden. "Philbert")

And you'll know what really matters
When it all slips away
And when you're doubting there's a God above
Don't you run from his love
Cause he says

I will never let go
I will always be here
I will stay by your side
I will dry all your tears
When that flood's rising up
And you think that I'm gone
I've never left – I'm still holding you up

And don't forget, that just because it's hard
doesn't mean I don't love you
And don't forget, there's a reason for the rain
And don't forget, I'm holding your heart in my
hands
And I will make everything beautiful again.

PSALM 23

by Zoë Doudt

The trees bend, elegant, bowing
before their Maker;
I bend, ugly and deformed, not nearly enough.

I forget You within the walls of the city,
the walls of my mind, the walls of
circumstance, obligation, feelings,

till the wind evokes the dancing of the palms,
the shimmering water; till the rain
comes down in torrents, brightening
the pink bougainvillea, the orange hibiscus;
till we're nearly stranded in the black water,
or our minds tell us so, and
I speak of not wanting, of still waters,
of You restoring our souls.

Lord, restore my soul.



(Doudt, Zoë. "Ruins")

PARADISE RECESSED

by George Yoder

Eden died a slow, decaying sort of death.
Edens never last too long regardless.
Upon which hour does the dusk descend to
night?
And how much darker can the dusk become
Before its duskiness is gone?
But no one asks these questions anymore.
No one knows when Eden ceases to be Eden –
They're all too busy dancing in the garden.

THE ORACLE OF HISTORY

by Kegan Hampton

The Oracle of History sings the myth of truth.
Out o'er the dark and stormy sea,
Of ignorance uncouth.
Sometimes, I want to stop my ears,

When the siren begins to sing,
But fast, they tie me to the mast,
As through time's sea I wing.

THIS

by Dr. Scott Foran

a door is set
deep in darkness
two-faced janus
standing near
hand upon the entry
opened one way
to bright light
of new beginning
it swings then
upon great hinges
to hardened shadows
of a world of endings

ONE DAY

by Chris Fraser

I hope one day I will create
something, as beautiful as
the fog your breath leaves
On the window, As you
sigh my name



(Abramov, Nick. "Moment of Darkness [Solar Eclipse]")

AMALIE

by Saraya Goodman

I

Late in the night, nestled at the breast
of wind-whipped water, slept the light eyed
Amalie
Moon-skin, nymph mind she lay. Her gentle
head at rest
Curled like a dainty spotted doe at the foot of a
tree

Ghostly was she, my piebald Amalie
Silent in the fragrant spring night
Her soft breath far too lovely
Her white skirts shifted with an opalescent light
I knew her once, in a different time
Back when I was a child
Back when the church bells would chime
Back when every flower was wild

In the summer, nymphs danced barefoot in the
square
Their feet bound to an ancient rhythm
Wild roses falling from their midnight hair
Even the smallest children toddling along with
them

II

It was in this way that I first saw the fleetfooted
Amalie
All the young blood froze inside of my heart

When she turned her laughing eyes on me
I knew we could never ever part

She took my hand for a dance
And all me fingers glowed white
I jumped at the chance
I danced with all my might
Day by day I grew to fall for little Amalie
The curve of her neck and the squint of her eye
Though she never talked, her laughter spoke to
me

That jovial sound would make any man cry

But when the harvest ended, I saw her less and
less
And slowly her bright feathres began to shift
I danced my heart out, I did my best
but fall brings death to the liveliest nymph

III

The last day I saw her was the first day of frost
Aimless she wandered through the town square
Like a mad mind she was lost
No flowers, only tangles in her dark hair

I tracked her out of town
Down to the frothing green sea
I followed and traced like a hound
But I was nowhere near as fast as she

Teetering in the cliffside of the angry sea
I saw her standing all alone

I cried "sweet Amalie! Please wait for me!"
But away in the wind my words were blown

I know not if she fell from there
My teary eyes were set afire
By a brilliant solar flare
As I searched, it only grew brighter

IV

For ages I wandered lonely
Crying to the violent grey sky
"Where's my love? Where's my light? Where's
Amalie?"
My dead eyes never dried

My suffering did not end when the gray sky
turned pink
Nonetheless the night is black
My capsized heart began to sink
When the dancing nymphs came back

She wasn't among their numbers
I heard not the tone of her laugh
Their joy only made me feel number
That numbness heated to wrath

Tonight they danced under the full moon
Raspberry lips singing sweet songs
I could not bear the golden tune
They got all the words wrong

V

So moon as my lamp, I fled
Through the misty fields and meadow deeps
Watering with the tears I shed
The white night watched me weep

"I'll never love again!" I made a whispered
pledge
A miserable cold set into my skin
As I reached the forest's edge
I felt a soft lacender light pulsing from within

Candlelight wisps wafted towards me
As I pushed through the curling undergrowth
Gray tree swayed musically
Was this a blessing or a curse or both

I walked forever and not at all
Under the siren-song sycamores
The seraphic stillness made my skin crawl
I refelt all the grief I'd been living for

VI

I longed for my fallen Amaline
As I passed over a bubbling blue brook
Oh! At the waters edge! Did my eyes deceive me?
Gasping for air I took a second look

Late in the night, nestled at the breast
of wind-whipped water, slept the light eyes
Amalie
Moon-skin, nymph mind she lay. Her gentle
head at rest
Curled like a dainty spotted doe at the foot of a
tree

Oh ecstasy! My blooming Amalie!
The aching roundness of her rosy cheek
Even in sleep she smiled up at me
Whatever strength I claim, she makes weak

Her hair glistened with crystal salt
I should wake her, but I didn't have it in me
In her perfect slumber I could find no fault
Sleep ever so softly Amalie, I will wait for thee



(Hauser, Lila. "Mushrooms on a Log")

THE SKY, ME, AND GOD

by Ali Zakariasen

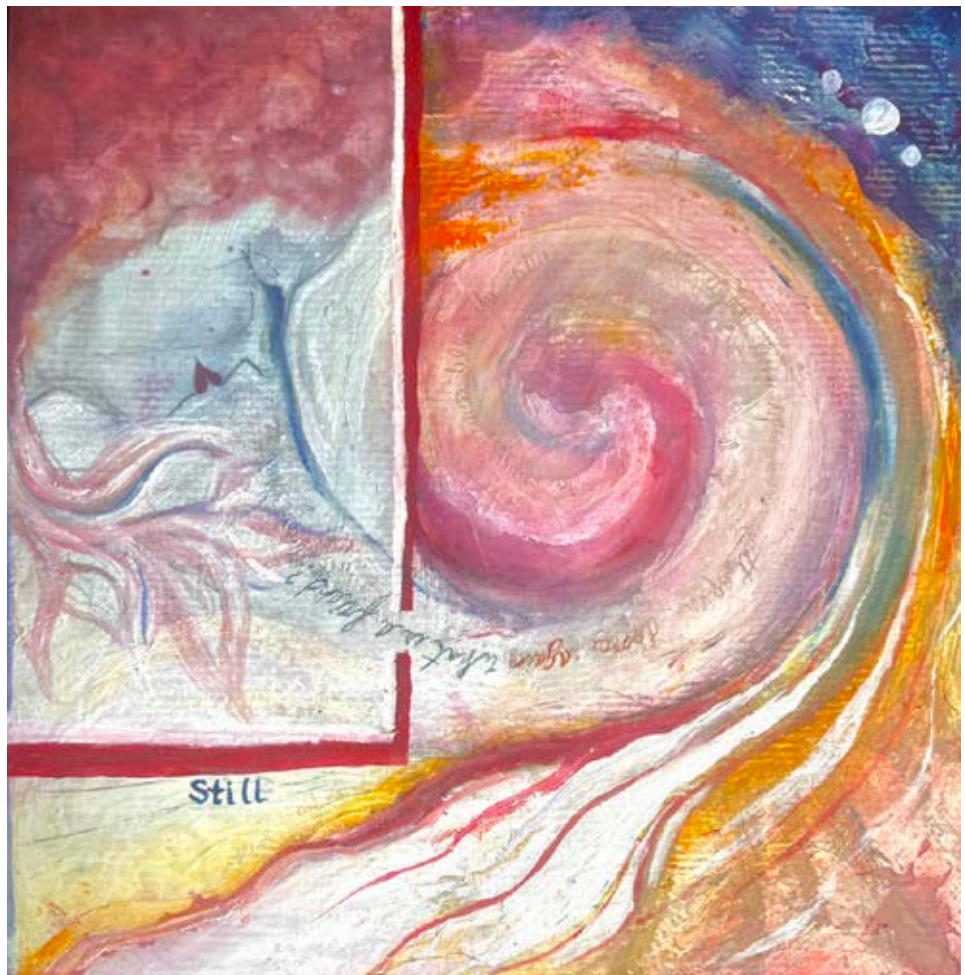
That stream is my background music
The stars – my study light
It's real bright out tonight
My breath fogs up the mountain air
Time to soak in that sky alight
Neck stiff from bowing over books – the grass
 meets my hair
Finally, I can hear my thoughts alright
The grass, trees, and breeze – it's always constant
 and real
I don't have to smile if I don't want to
I don't have to laugh when it ain't funny
I don't have to act like I know what's going on
It's just the sky, me, and God

Cause you don't care about the perception of me
You created my inmost being – who am I to
 boast?
Here and now is what I'm supposed to see
Enjoying the moment instead of thinking about
 a post
Actually looking at the scene instead of
 snapping on that screen
Why do I forget to simply be?
Always flying on illusions
 of joy and falling into
 hopeless depths.

I am dust – only dust –
 finding joy within myself,
 a delusion.
You are life, love, goodness,
 peace, and you call me
 your own!
Why do I drift from the One
 who holds the solution,
When I'm invited to boldly
 go before your throne?
Why do I daily return to the
 courtroom?
Your favor, I strive to win
Hoping you won't leave me in
 my gloom.
I forget that the victory,
 you've already won
It is a gift to live in you

because of what you've done
I am already made right in your eyes
Not because of anything I become
But because you erased all my sin, down to the
 last smudge.
When you stretched your arms across that cross
You didn't consider your death a loss.

I want to be so caught up in your glory
And filled with only you
Not puffed up with my own story
Remembering daily that all I am is nothing
 without you
Here, is when I remember it most,
When you feel so close
It's just the sky, me, and God.



(Goodman, Saraya. "Still")



(Whitby, Eden. "Golden Sunset")



(Basham, Lydia. "A Good Pipe")

WHILE I'M STILL BEAUTIFUL

by Chris Fraser

Love me
while we have time

Not because you need to
not because I asked

Love me like you want to
Like you couldn't stand it if you didn't

Love me
As if it were all I was made for

All I could ever be
Love me while I'm still beautiful in your eyes

REVIVED



(Rhone, Z.A. "Vital Resolve")

USELESS EYES (A LOVE LETTER TO NOTHING)

by Chris Fraser

I sleep with windows open
and hope that you will fly to me
while lungs, ragged, pull air in,
burning like old kerosene

My pillow is always folded as to
to hold my head up just enough
that you could bend and kiss me,
without having to stretch too much

But I know those pretty wings of yours
aren't healed from their last flight
that god, in jealous anger, Broke
them with a hateful, deafening cry

Bringing light into a world that never
asked for darkness to be tamed,
A world whose worship wasn't wasted
Flattering a single name

So fly to me, my darling, and outwit
Apollo's hooves and wheels
Envelope my whole being- enlighten me
To how true darkness feels

Where there's no hate or anger,
Or light polluting endless skies
Leave my ears to hear your words:
But you can take these broken, useless eyes

SCARRING

by Eden Whitby

Would a tender and innocent heart,
Shattered and flung to the forest floor,
(Where it used to find refuge among
The decaying leaves, pine needles, acorns,
Ants, rollie pollies, oak sprouts,
And holly saplings)
Left to its foreign solitude among
The dead, fallen trees and stones,
Would it learn to grow moss
In between its new rigid crevices?
Would that hopeful, splintered heart
Allow itself to be healed and sealed
And rise with an intricately designed scar,
Yearning and daring to feel again
All because of the Hope of Glory?

RESILIENCE

by Sophia Jordan

Rising high above the crashing waves
Encountering the thick, heavy haze
Sighing at the ends and beginnings of new days
Ignorant of where the wind sways
Learning not to fall apart at the frays
Instead, embracing the shuddering breeze
Enduring the rain as the trees
Not quitting when we scrape our knees
Continuing to climb despite the lack of ease
Engaging the world knowing we have the keys

THE LAST WORD

by Daniel Bussey

"I'm going to die," she said,
Fixing her purse and hair,
"If I have to talk to them again."

"I'm going to die," he said
Before lecturing on its meaning
And drinking down the state's poison.

"I'm going to die" I said,
My world spinning and veins throbbing
As anxiety tells lies to my mind and soul.

"I'm going to die?" the kid said,
The parents' eyes stained red and
Hearts shattering into innumerable pieces.

"I'm going to die," God said
And climbed upon wooden beams
So that the last word might be life.

DEAR WORLD

by Jacey Dale

Drain the life in my soul
With artificial light
Yet I'll still watch the glow of the
morning

Fill my ears full
With colors of chemicals
Yet the silent trees are what they'll
hear

Dry out my eyes
With cold machines
Yet they'll spring back with the
movement of a breeze

Tell the reflection in the creek
That it is unfit
Yet my love will still stare at it with
starry eyes

Convince my heart
That it wraps around itself
Yet my lips will widen at the laughter
of a stranger

Spend my money
On vacations and grand gestures
Yet I'll still marvel at the sight of my
breath in the winter



(Doudt, Zoë. "Ginkgo")

AUTUMN TO APRIL

by Saraya Goodman

Call
the wind
to fall still
Nothing rushes
like autumn to leaves
the old world grieves itself
Bare. "Never again" my cross
Bear never again that cross
brittle branches put on one last show
spiraling down in uniform chaos
the final act of love is letting go

Hear
the rain
like satin
pour overhead
sliding rhythmically
In a symphony of
green gospel melody
green gospel melody
Seeps into the blackened soil
Resilience calls out jealousy
There's forgiveness in never going back

NOT DEAD, BUT ASLEEP

by Eden Whitby

Numbness crackles to aching life
And static flickering to feeling
While out of control
Spasms and cramps
Turn muscles and nerves
Inside out and
No effort of the mind has effect

Was it so bad
When you could not feel?
Why move and test
The ability and resilience
Of rejuvenation?

All that is possible now
Is to freeze and wait
To hold like a statue
Now that you have been
Forcefully confronted by
What you have done and
What has been done to you



(Rhone, Z.A. "Generations")

Grit your teeth
Squint your eyelids
Furrow your eyebrows
Grudgingly allow a strained sigh
To creep up your throat
And blow jagged out your nostrils
Swallow your spit and notice
It tastes like iron

And against all sense
Hope that maybe again
The splintering pain
Of feeling
Once so fair and desired
Will slowly dissipate and
Leave in its melancholy
And muddled wake
The possibility
Of feeling
Both familiar and untouched
What you will do and
What will be done to you

Even now as you
Begin to forget the torture
Of moments ago
Doubt and shame suggest that
You are simply overdramatic
And replays memory and past
Through the distorted lens of suspicion

Even now allow Love to
Grasp your trembling hand
And help you to your feet
Acknowledge His strength
Flickering through your weak flesh
And into your soul

Feel His breath hearten an exhausted
Yet persistent flame
As you determine to attempt to
Feel and care once more
And once more
And once more
And once more after that
Not as to mimic insanity
But to live in faith and pursuit of the One
Who extends an unfathomable gift of
Love-inspired second chances

OMNIA
by Saraya Goodman

God,
Unspoken,
settles in between
mind and heart, filling the gap

—unprompted, unknown, and unviolent—
His presence captures the painfully free
How gently His words, like shackles, lace up the
boundless
in a clandestine embrace, comforting even the
worthless
ambitions of a hell-bound man married to his
pride.
How tender his pursuit of a hateful bride,
so seduced by her own destruction
that she cannot hold him back

No burnt sacrifice
only God's
burning
heart



(Abramov, Nick. "Saying Hello")

THE DEATH OF PRIDE

by Emily Tracy

Strength does not come from within
This body corrupted by sin.
Strength does not come from pain we survive,
But from a death to this condemning pride.
A death that says "I have no strength on my own,
"I cannot save my flesh and bone."
A death that says "to dust I shall return
"So I will let my small efforts burn."
A death that says "more of Him and less of me,
"Lost without Him I would forever be."
A death that leads to a life
Where pride no longer brings such strife.
Strength comes from my Savior's grace.
Forever in His arms' embrace,
I lay down my pride
To become His bride.

AN ELEGY OF THOSE SEEKING THE LIGHT

by Jeramiah Swader

"The man who finds his homeland sweet is still a tender beginner; he to whom every soil is as his native one is already strong; but he is perfect to whom the entire world is as a foreign land. The tender soul has fixed his love on one spot of the world; the strong man has extended his love to all places; the perfect man has extinguished his." —*Hugh of Saint Victor, Didascalion*

We were almost less than human when we were
Drawn forth from the heat of those sulfurous
vents
Under the frigid depths of our cold blue sphere.

The weight of many waters pressing down lent
Fury to our agony in dark regions
When those steamy abyssal pipes outward sent

Us from there as those rejected by reason
Aimless and wasting we spent our lightless days
Creatures devoid of intellect; the legions

Of pure chaos, we wandered on godless ways.
We swam along the paths of the pale white
whale,
And the darkest depths could not conceal our
shame.

For every intemperate sin was our jail,
And in every iniquity and folly
Did we pass our days, all light behind a veil.

Until one time, against the countless volley
Of our sins there shone a bright light on our
eyes.

A figure magnificent appeared fully

Unlooked for. Curiosity and surprise
Filled our minds. How could we know he like
the sons
Of God appeared in garb which could be devised

Of wisdom, reason, and light alone? Such ones
Are messengers of the divine light, God sent
By his holy grace to make alive who once

Were lost in darkness. Our minds at his advent
Were brightened. Not for love of the light were
we
Drawn to the surface but wonder at him sent.

We rose after the messenger towards the sea's
Rolling surface, possessed at last of a path.
We were born aimless and thus will ever be

If none will save us from the pitiless wrath
And weight of the darkness and disordered sin.
Many a monster in leviathan's bath

Would fain have hindered the ascent of our kin,
For they were wardens of great iniquity
Desirous to halt the light, lest we begin

Our trek to those lands where in ubiquity,
It seems, are found reason, love, and
righteousness.
The fraudulent lanternfish whose smile when
seen

Led many from the light; the great titaness,
The squid, the violent old woman of the deep;
The glutton sharks; dolphins in lasciviousness.

All sought to wrench our untrained eyes and so
keep
The children of darkness from the golden sand,
Where, by grace, we were destined to wake from
sleep.

Few at last were we who arrived safe on land
—oh, blessed land! The intellect reformed,
To view the light aright! Guided by the hand

Of one like the Son of Man, we stood, reborn,
Upright for the first. “True religion:” said he,
“Keep yourselves unstained from the dark world
deformed.”

If this terrestrial world be dark, thought we,
What light divine must dwell above whence he
came
Who saved us, by whose light this world now we
see?

“Turn your minds above”, said he, “lest what is
lame
In you be not put out of joint but be healed.
Work your hands have, a world to tend and to
tame.

Work in the light while it remains. You are
sealed
Above whence all beauty and goodness proceed.
Work, that, home at last, your glory be revealed.”

With this that morning star divine with all speed
Ascended beyond mortal view. Our work then
Begun, we sought to build a craft which might
lead

To the light source, consisting of virtues ten:
The steady keel, of faithful world-despise;
The hull, the foundation, holy zeal; again.

Peace of soul for those whom made heavy battle
To come to land. Planks of silver and golden
Humility and Content, rigged the bark’s tackle

With ropes and gear of patience and
emboldened
Good works. Railings were made of moderation,
Lest any fall; temperance as in olden

Doctrine’s commands, a mast of our salvation,
From which hung a sail to push and redirect
Away from all lust which is our damnation.

Thus was our craft completed and bedecked,
Lacking nothing useful for our perfection.
Not this craft alone our hands sought to erect.

We dwelt in earthly tents for our protection,
For despite earthly beauty, sorrows abound.
We dwelt amid the storm in low abjection,

For our treasure not in Egypt will be found.
Sorrows and sufferings attend our living
In purgation cries of joys and sorrows sound.

Then came an envy not like the first, giving
A solemn and glad warning of things to come.
Black-shrouded, he bade us fill what was missing

In our sanctification. We left undone
Our earthly home for those who would come
behind
To labor in— of those whose hair had begun

To grey and bones to ache, what which would
remind
Those who rose after to seek the light above?
We together boarded the craft we designed

To take us unbroken to that hearth of love
In the bosom of that light which illumines
All earthly beauty. The divine treasure trove

Hummed in our minds with the promise of
human
Glorification. The earth below gave way
And grew strangely dim as the grey rain curtain

Gave way to silver glass, all concern allayed
By the quiet peace of space. We knew now that
Far below the light of our craft is relayed
As starlight for those who in the darkness sat
The image of our holiness fully claimed
As from grace above, not as our own but that

Comes from above. Our borrowed glory rained
Down in splendor for the hope of that saintly
Throng risen from the murky depths to be
named

With the name of Christ. A time of dark briefly
Clouded our sight o things ahead, and we feared
But a moment as the marble earth promptly

Vanished. All behind in great light disappeared.
As if behind a great black veil of sky, lay
A splendor inexpressible. All was clear

Ahead as crystal and a light shone its rays
Like shards diamond through the sphere. All
 around
Appeared other stars - boats as we - in the race

To the great light. Nightly candlelight abounds
In comfort to the pilgrim seeing its light
In the window from the street walking around.

So, too, were our spirits overjoyed and bright
To see the jubilant saints combine towards Joy
Himself. We wept tears of longing at the sight.

We knew now nothing more could our souls
 destroy
The threshold had been passed beyond which
 all
Unfinished in the world below now enjoys

its perfection - full and complete - where the call
of angels. like birdsong, silences weeping,
and all earthly labor and art in recalled,

and the reward of the saints' final reaping
Is given in full measure. We sailed unto



(Basham, Lydia. "A Swift Sunrise")

Endless and increasing bliss in His keeping.

Let the reader understand these words' meaning
And seek that great hearth - that high heavenly
 home
While on earth he works, the fruits of grace
 gleaning
unto light eternal 'yond this earthly zone.

FOR KATE

by Daniel Bussey

[A found elegiac poem. Taken from the last private message conversation I had with Kate Barnett (which was 73 weeks and 3 days before she died). The one line "vivid in all ways," comes from her obituary.]

Stop...think...it doesn't last forever.
Some people live
For the here and now,
No thought for the future.

"What matters?" he asked,
"Don't we?
Is it all meaningless?"
We don't even stop to think.

All things will pass away.
Now doesn't last forever.
Will love abide?
Will all that is wonderful have a future?

"Yes," said she,
"We have the answer.
We too do not last, but
we will live forever,"
and that matters.

Everybody,
everything will pass away
She will pass away,
"vivid in all ways"
in 73 weeks and 3 days.

Here and now:
No future, no thought,
no wonder, no talk.
All question, no answer.
Meaninglessness? Meaninglessness?
"What matters?" he asked at the end.

"We have the answer," said she,
"But not everybody does."
All things will pass away,
but those who love God will abide forever.

HE FINISHED IT

by Lila Hauser

Up in the clouds one of crowds
He holds her in his arms
Telling her to be unafraid of all the world's
harms.
"It is time" he speaks as he softly kisses her
cheek and whispers "you will always be
unique, do not forget that." Next she knows
she is in what will be her new home.
It's dark and wet but warm and she is now only
but a little life form.
She tosses and turns in this new place and
yearns to return, yet soon she will learn
that this is the beginning of a new story yet
untold. One that has the privilege of getting
old.
Years later she forgets this.
She forgot that she is not just a human being,
but an unfinished masterpiece.
She could not see the rest of the story. And
thought only of the absence of glory.
The glory of God is not in a hurry.
Don't ever think that you know what glory is. Do
not end your story before it is finished.
Because it is he who gets to finish it.
not you.
He was the one who spoke on that cross "it is
finished."

DISTANCE

by Zoë Doudt

The pretty moon
is a bronze cup
half-filled, yet overflowing.

It is not perfect yet still has life to give,

its embers soaking up the angry gray dust
bunnies,
telling me that I can still give,

even when I do not know it all,
when I have not reached some great pinnacle,
when I'm not growing epiphany gardens,
when I don't wake up and see joy on my ceiling,
falling into my lap.

*

I sat up on the roof tonight and remembered.

Sometimes I feel like nothing but I
look back and You've brought me so far.

I sat up here three years ago and
yelled that I needed answers,
because I could not walk farther on my own.

And in the deep rumblings
of the scalding sun stirring from slumber,
You would speak to me;
You would find me.

GOD REST YE MERRY (NEPHILIM)

by Joshua Holbrook

[Words by Joshua Holbrook – Final verse in the
public domain

To the tune of "God Rest ye Merry, Gentlemen"]

I'll tell ye of the Nephilim
A tale of loss and death
When giants roamed and fought for thrones
Nay, not the sons of Seth
The ilk of Satan, come to earth
Angelic sons made flesh
Before the deluge had passed
Before the deluge had passed

From Heavenly realms came down that day
Upon Mt. Hermon's heights;
Olympians, gods of old
saw maidens in the night
Shemiyaza, Azazel
sons of God by name,
And transgressed the holy law
And transgressed the holy law

They went among the people,
Found maidens fine and fair
Seductive arts, deceived their hearts

HAMFÆRELD

by Lydia Basham

Taught conjuring and war
Went into them, and they bore sons
The Mighty Men of Old
Giants of the ancient world,
Giants of the ancient world

I'll tell ye now of Nephilim,
The Giants of renown
They built great burls, Atlanteans
And moved big rocks with sound
But Yahweh, then, would not contend
As violence filled the earth
He brought down the great flood
And brought down the great flood

The world was broken afterward,
still giants roamed the land,
Goliath, Og, the Rephaim,
Those with six-fingered hands
Eternal chains of gloomy darkness waited them
someday
But still all things were not well,
But still all things were not well

It looked as if they had prevailed,
Yet all was not then lost
In the dark before the Earth
He planned for a great cost
The Great Reversal was at hand,
What had The Lord in Mind?
His councils no one could know,
His councils no one could know

The Spirit went to Galilee,
A maiden, just and pure
Ordained to bring the blessing
On Naz'reth's hills, unsure
Yet trusting in the glorious one
Who spake that night to her
She would bear the true son of God
She would bear the true son of God

God rest ye merry gentlemen
Let nothing you dismay
Remember Christ our Savior
Was born on Christmas Day
To save us all from Satan's pow'r
When we were gone astray
Oh tidings of comfort and joy
Comfort and joy
Oh tidings of comfort and joy

His footsteps echoed on the stone floor,
filling the small chapel with resounding thuds as
he slowly approached the altar. The church was
empty, though that was no surprise. The moon
hung low in the sky, and the sun had yet to rise
from its eastern bed. With any luck, he would get
back before breakfast.

He knelt carefully before the wooden table.
The cloth draped across its surface fluttered
slightly from the cracked doorway at his back; the
once crimson interlocking and had faded since
his childhood, but they still held the memory of
jarring red against snow white. His father had
always talked about faith that way, comparing
blood and baptism, death and life, gloom and
glory.

Hell and Heaven.

He shuddered, pushing away the brief
glimpses of the bloody battlefield, and took the
round shield from his back. His helmet followed,
laid gently on the second stair which led to the
small dais. His arms shook as he raised them to
twine his gloved fingers together; his mail coat
was heavy, and his hands ached from the cold,
but only the chill of death would keep this man
from clasping his hands in prayer.

His father's voice appeared in his ear, and
he stumbled over the long-ago-learned Pater
Noster in clumsy Latin. His brother had always
been better at the language than he, but Da had
assured him that God did not mind his mixed up
nostra's and nostris's if he was praying from his
heart. He hoped the Almighty afforded the same
grace to the adult as he had to the child.

The man kneeling before the rickety altar
needed it far more than the boy had.

He knelt there for several moments, feeling
the cold stone beneath his knees. Months of war
flittered across his closed eyelids, and he confessed
his sins at the altar in a manner he had not been
afforded on the front. Loyalty and service to his
country came at a high price. Though the conflict
was over, at least for a little while, three years of
on and off battle weighed heavily on his spirit.
How many of those men had sons, as he did? How
many were barely men, if that, and would never
return to their ever-searching mothers? How
many would lie on those gutted fields, forgotten
as the grass covered their corpses?

He wept for a moment, for all the boys who had no one to do so.

"It has been nearly seven months since you last knelt there," a fond voice murmured in the stillness.

The knight did not move, but a smile twitched at the corners of his mouth. He wiped the tears from his cheeks and replied, voice wavering only just, "And I feel several decades older."

The priest laughed, and a warm hand found purchase on his shoulder. "They made you walk through the snow in that mail shirt? No wonder the soldiers are dying; the king freezes them to death before they see a single enemy."

The minister crouched beside the knight and took his face in his steady hands. "Hello, Wilfrydd."

"Hello, Father Daelborn," the knight replied softly. "I missed your name-day."

"Your wife made up for your absence," the priest chuckled. "I don't know where she got the flour to make that sweet bread from, but I'm fairly certain I thanked God in a more genuine manner after eating it."

Wilfrydd's face broke into a weary smile. "Well, Elswyth does have a gift for baking. If we lived nearer the capital, I'm sure she would have set up a shop."

"Alas," Daelborn's eyes twinkled. "She is doomed to share only with us country folk, farmers and shepherds."

"And the occasional priest."

"Well, we all must glorify God in some manner."

The knight and the minister laughed together. Patting the gloved hands of his parishioner, the priest helped the warrior to his feet. He assembled his armor, though his helmet remained away from his head and strapped to his belt.

"She'll be thrilled to see you," Father Daelborn smiled gently. "The boys were fighting



(Riggs, Zoe. "Untitled")

with sticks after service on Sunday. They want to be just like their father."

Wilfrydd swallowed. "I am fighting this war so that does not happen. Farmers and shepherds, they'll be."

"Or clergymen."

"How dare you."

Daelborn laughed again, a free sound, and it made him look and seem younger than his seventy-seven years. He had that way about him, Daelborn. Never in his life and in all his travels had Wilfrydd encountered a man so dedicated to God and so joyful, so free, and so wonderfully youthful. He hoped to possess half his spirit when he reached that age, if he was so lucky to live that long.

"Farmers and shepherds should still know how to wield a sword, my boy," the priest patted his arm. "That which one loves must be defended. We need not love war to be warriors, Wil. A man of God must also know how to protect his flock."

"Dusting off that old longsword, Father?"

The elder smirked. "As if these old arms could lift that mass of steel. I'd fall over and impale myself, wouldn't I?"

Wilfrydd grinned boyishly. He had seen Daelborn wield the sword once, when he was a lad of six, against a wolf that decided his hunger was more important than the Gospel of Luke.

"Take that grin to your wife, lad," the minister shook his head as they walked towards the door. "The physician was down to see her a few weeks ago. The babe seems to be in full health."

Wilfrydd released a long breath. Tension that had made its home across his shoulders since he last left home lightened. "That is good. I have been worried. I'd hate for her to give birth without me here. I missed Deorwine's birth by a month, and I will never forgive myself for it."

"The war costs us many things," Daelborn leaned against the threshold. "I'll see you on Sunday, Wil."

"Aye," Wilfrydd bowed his head. "Good day."

"Our Heavenly Father made it, so it must be so," Father Daelborn nodded. "Now run along."

It was the command a boy deserved, not a man of thirty-two, but there was a special tenderness in the words. Wilfrydd nodded, smiling, and set off down the short steps of the small stone church, back onto the rugged dirt road and into the morning mist.

The ground beneath his feet was dusted with snow. His toes had long since numbed, and he could see his breath springing from his mouth, dragon's smoke in the wee hours of the morning. He was glad to have taken the wool gambeson from Sir Warrick, and it lay between his thin undershirt and his cold, mail hauberk. Protecting a knight from a slashing blade chainmail would do, but it was an ally of the cold winds of winter. Father Daelborn's words rung true; he had seen more men die from the chill than any blade.

The road ran along the hilled farms of the countryside and into the woods which grew against the mountains. Wilfrydd followed the familiar path out of the open air and into the forest, dense despite the cold weather of early March. The road was only just beginning to be

illuminated by the rising sun, but he knew it well. On his best days, he knew this path better than the pommel of his sword.

The journey from the church to the cottage was a little more than half a league, but he was fond of the walk. Every Sunday since he was a child he had taken the walk with his father and brother. He had walked back from that same church six years ago with his new bride in his arm, giggling like children; a year later, they carried their firstborn back after his christening, and again two years after that with their second son. Soon, they would take that hallowed walk again with their third child, Deorwine and Huxley in tow.

He prayed that the war would end, and he would be able to walk the path every Sunday like he had before.

A sound broke through the gentle noise of birds and rustling leaves that smote his heart: a laugh, clear and high and so familiar it was branded into his soul. The path entered a well-known grove, a well-tended garden, and there his heart stood.

His breath stopped puffing out into the morning air; in fact, his breath stopped entirely for a heartbeat as he took in the sight. Her curls fell over her shoulders in a river of crimson, catching the faint, fog-veiled dawn as it crested the slope behind him. Her green eyes sparkled with tired joy, but her smile was wide as she laughed again. Then, marvel of marvels, she turned her body enough to reveal the groggy form of their younger son on her hip, matching red curls tucked into the space beneath her chin and hand fisted in his wife's grey cloak.

Her stomach had grown so much since he had left for the front, and his chest ached; how much had he missed? How many months of growth of their new child had he lost? How much had she missed him, his boys? Did they still know his face-

"Da!"

A small form barreled into his legs, and Huxley immediately began a climbing attempt on his person.

Elswyth instantly turned, and their eyes met across the small meadow. She really did have the most stunning eyes.

Wilfrydd knelt as best as he was able and, careful of his armor and weaponry, embraced his five year old son. "Lo, Hux. I missed you."

"I missed you too, Da!" the boy grinned.

Elswyth approached quickly, and Deorwine squealed with joy, arms reaching towards his father. Wilfrydd took him gently. "Hello, my lad."

Deorwine giggled. "Da!"

"I think the feeling is mutual," his wife murmured.

Wilfrydd fell in love with her smile all over again. "Hello, darling."

She reached up and he leaned down, and their lips met in the middle. Ah, yes, he was home.

"Sir Wilfrydd of Kent," she grinned cheekily as she broke away.

"Best warrior in the king's army!" Huxley yelled, raising his wooden sword in the air.

Deorwine giggled, copying his brother and raising his stick as high as his small arms would allow. "Bes' warror in the keen's awmy!"

"I am but a man with a sword," Wilfrydd chuckled.

"Ah," Elwsyth grinned, left hand sliding over the pauldron on his shoulder. The simple silver ring gleamed on her finger. "My knight in shining armor."

"Rusty armor, more like," he matched her expression, though it lacked her vigor; not that he had ever been able to match her heavenly joy, but that was by the by. Another of the Almighty's gifts, freely given and undeserved. "It needs a good polish."

"A job for another morning," she hummed, walking her middle and pointer finger down his mail shirt to circle the place where his heart lay far beneath the cold steel. "This morning, you shall take off this metal coffin, take a warm bath, hold your morning-grumpy son, eat the meal your wife has painstakingly crafted for you, and rest."

"All that?" He teased.

"Perhaps more," she lifted one shoulder.

Her eyes gleamed with mischief, and he silently thanked God for her. Then, because she deserved to hear it, he added, "I am more blessed than I deserve."

"It would be a sorry world if we only received that which we deserved," Elswyth chuckled.

Wilfrydd stared at her for a long moment. Had God made any human being more perfect? He could not imagine so. "How is the babe?"

"Restless," Elswyth snorted, hands finding her rounded stomach. "The boys have predicted that it's a girl."

"Has to be a girl, Mama!" Huxley cried from where he was currently trying to undo the bracer from his father's arm.

Deorwine nodded quite adamantly for a three-year-old. "Has to be, Da."

Wilfrydd laughed, pressing a kiss to Deorwine's head of ginger curls, so similar to his mother's.

"Hux, leave that be," Elswyth chided softly. "Your father's had a long journey, and he needs his rest. Come along."

Huxley frowned adorably, but picked up his wooden sword all the same and slid his hand into his father's gloved one. "Come on, Da!"

His wife stood on her tip toes and kissed his cheek. "For the record, I missed you too."

"I certainly hope so," Wilfrydd answered with a devilish smirk, but that soon disappeared, falling to a gentle, smitten smile. "I missed you."

"As you should," Elswyth beamed. "What a handsome soldier without a wife must do when he's away doing daring deeds, I can't imagine."

He narrowed his eyes playfully, and she swatted his arm.

"Let's go home," she laughed, taking Deorwine back into her arms and placing him on her hip again, careful of her belly. "I have a meal waiting for you. Though I should warn you, the boys added the salt, so beware."

The knight grinned, and he felt the sun shine on his neck as he took her outstretched hand into one of his own. The other held Huxley's as he skipped beside his father.

"A meal sounds wonderful," he said.

Home sounded even better.



(Foreman, Ariel. "Plant")

HEAVEN'S KISS?

by Daniel Bussey

My dear Helene, your name, it sounds like hell.
And if you had a voice with which to speak,
What hope-forsaken terrors would you tell?
Enough I think to drain the ruddy cheek
And kill the laughter on the open tongue.
Enough to cause the strongest one to weep,
To rob the light from eyes both old and young,
And still the song that better days would keep.
Helene, a name that tells a thousand tales
Of woe and victory unknown to most,
Of those who gave their sweat and own travails
To save a suffering and dying host.

For yet there is a truth I've learned in this:
Through such a hell we taste of heaven's kiss

BROKEN

by Chris Fraser

You are not broken.
You are not the tragic creature mercifully killed by a kind master,
You are not a child of any darkness other than that of beauty:
The kind that enveloped the world before all things

You may have fallen
You may have bled
You may have died

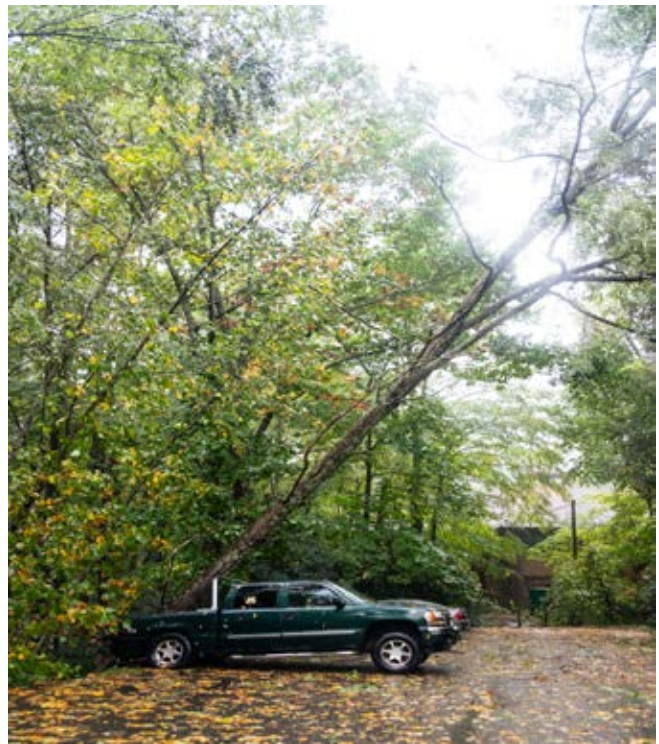
But you,
you wonderful bit of flesh and stone,
are not something to be fixed.

You are something to be held

You are something to be loved

You are something to be cherished.

You are something I will die for
Not because you are broken,
But because you are Wonderful.



(Abramov, Nick. "Resilience Under Pressure")



(Abramov, Nick. "Fading Silhouettes, Lasting Words")



(Doudt, Zoë. "Shadows")



(Abramov, Nick. "Guided by Light - Lake Susan")

EDITOR'S NOTE

"O Wind! If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?" These lines, written by the Romantic poet Percy Bysshe Shelley, conclude his magnum opus "Ode to the West Wind." In the poem, the poet holds two truths in conflict: his desire to make an impact on the world and the cold enigma of life's everchanging chaos. Shelley lived during time of great transition; a cultural turning point in history. It was an unprecedented time of political and social revival, not unlike the time we live in now.

In a long line of "unprecedented times," this academic year stands out. In the everchanging chaos of life, some things stand strong. We at *The Lamp Post* are proud to bring this edition to you, even through the chaos. The theme "Resilience" speaks not only to the strength of our school but also to the unlikely beauty that continues to be made in the destruction. We are eternally indebted to the faculty and staff who sacrificed their time and safety to take care of students during the aftermath of Hurricane Helene. Their selflessness is the backbone of Montreat.

A huge thank you to Dr. Zachary Rhone. His endless commitment makes this publication possible. Most of all, we are grateful to every artist who submitted their work for publication. We are so proud of the creative diversity that Montreat has to offer. We are honored to represent you.

Thank you for supporting us!

Saraya Goodman
General Editor

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1. *The Lamp Post* aims not to publish any AI-generated or plagiarized works. By submitting work to *The Lamp Post*, artists acknowledge that their work is original and AI has not, in any way, contributed to the submission.
2. *The Lamp Post* strives to reflect and further the mission and standards of Montreat College. Therefore, *The Lamp Post* editors intend for publications to work within Montreat College guidelines.
3. *The Lamp Post* believes that authors should be free to express themselves through their works of art. Therefore, we welcome authors who would like to submit their work anonymously.
4. Creators retain copyright and publishing rights to all submissions without restrictions.

SUBMITTING WORK TO THE LAMP POST

1. *The Lamp Post* accepts submissions via email at thelamppost@montreat.edu. Upon receipt of submission, the submission will be reviewed by members of the editorial staff and faculty advisors. *The Lamp Post* reserves the right to edit texts received; however, substantial changes are made in consultation with the original creator.
2. Please submit text documents in Microsoft Word (.docx) format, attached to your email, not as links. There is no limit to the length of submissions, but shorter (two pages or less) textual submissions are preferred.
3. Please submit visual art submissions in standard image formats (such as .png, .jpg, and .tiff). Visual art submissions should be sent as attachments to an email with the artist's contact information present.
4. *The Lamp Post* considers submissions of artistic merit in any publishable form. After review, submissions will fall into one of three categories: Acception Without Revision, Acception Pending Revision, or Decline to Accept. The Editorial Board of *The Lamp Post* reserves the right to summarily decline works that unnecessarily glorify violence, promote any variant of prejudice, contain illicit content, or do not represent the academic standards of Montreat College.

Opinions presented herein are those of the student authors and editors and do not necessarily represent or reflect the views of the Montreat College administration, faculty, or staff.

O Wind! If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?"

Percy Bysshe Shelley

