



Vol 3 | Iss 4



Lit + Art

805 (ISSN 2379-4593) is a literary and art journal published quarterly by the Manatee County Public Library System. Online issues are free to read. An annual teen issue is published online and an annual print anthology of selected works is available to purchase.

The editorial board is composed of librarians, writers, and a professor. The editors seek short fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and art that is unexpected, striking, and moving. Unsolicited and simultaneous submissions accepted. Submissions are free.

Find us online at:

www.805lit.org
facebook.com/805lit
twitter.com/805lit

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF	EDITOR
Stephanie Katz	Courtney DeSear

POETRY EDITOR	EDITOR
Jennifer Aleshire	Jyna Johnson

EDITOR	FACULTY EDITOR
Julieanna Blackwell	Matthew Masucci

EDITOR	EDITORIAL ADVISOR
Kaitlin Crockett	Kevin Beach

STUDENT EDITOR
Helen Liang



Lit + Art

Volume 3, Issue 4
October 2017

From the Editor

October is a month of transformation. Stagnant summer days transform into crisp, howling autumn nights. The morbid and the merry battle it out as stores shift into sprawling landscapes of holiday decorations. Green trees turn into skeleton bones and then into dangling lights. Children morph into little monsters ready to gobble up candy and toys and the magic wafting through the air.

We transform, too. We shed our summer wings and cocoon ourselves in sweaters and scarves. We confront the stress and the joy of the season, turning into the worst or best versions of ourselves. Will we fight with those we love, as the characters do in “Homecoming,” by Jamie Grove and “Displays of Affection, Mercy, and Other Things” by Catherine West? Or will we fight our demons as the characters do in “Defying Linear” by and Bailey Heille and “This Kind of Man” by Sean Murphy? When the cool air warms again and we unravel our cocoons, will our faces be shadowed or shining?

The choice is ours.

Stephanie Katz
Editor-In-Chief

Contents

Fiction

Jamie Grove, <i>Homecoming</i>	6
Kasia Merrill, <i>Nightmares</i>	27
Sean Murphy, <i>This Kind of Man</i>	17
Monica Zarazua, <i>The Son</i>	3
Megan Turner, <i>Of Blood and Feathers</i>	10

Nonfiction

Bailey E. Heille, <i>Defying Linear</i>	13
Catherine West, <i>Displays of Affection, Mercy, and Other Things</i>	21

Poetry

Clyde Kessler, <i>Dancers in a Parallel Universe</i>	12
Kassandra Larsen, <i>After She Says She Wants Cremation</i>	5
Julia Ponder, <i>Dinner on a Tuesday</i>	2
John L. Stanizzi, <i>Gift</i>	16
Sara True, <i>an intention</i>	25
Kirby Wright, <i>September City</i>	20

Art

Cover: Manit Chaotragoongit, *Life of Mine: Past*

Laura Baran, <i>Reeds and Rushes</i>	9
Manit Chaotragoongit, <i>Life of Mine: Icon of Belief</i>	19
William C. Crawford, <i>Family Portrait</i>	26
Kelly Joy Ladd, <i>Hypnotic</i>	15
Kate Salvi, <i>Floral Plethora: Closed Sunflower</i>	4
<i>Floral Plethora: Coming Through</i>	24
Sarah Vorsheck, <i>Civilization: Girl</i>	11

Bios



Life of Mine: Past

Manit Chaotragoongit

Dinner on a Tuesday

Julia Ponder

The second layer of skin, which I have
peeled clean off with my gap teeth,
is still the orange dirt of turmeric.

On Tuesdays these swollen
knuckled hands poke and prod
in spices, then, with a rough conviction,
try not to sprinkle any meanness into supper.

Yet sometimes they are ginger
with their longing. Other times, heavy handed
with the enthusiasm that grips burnt paprika.

In the end the meal should always sing;
it should call out to the brass of a Hughes's
moon and bury its rounded sides within

itself. There its lunar bliss tenderly pushes through
and lights up the darkness of your mouth.

The Son

Monica Zarazua

Hippos and water recede towards the center of the lake as the sun rises. Weaver birds nest-build once more as though they'd never been subdued and the rains had never been forceful. Daylight erases all of our memories from the night. We bear some evidence of what happened as we slept: mosquito stings on our skin, creases in our flesh, dead insects in the drains. We laugh at these small incidences, because what's before us is the day being written as we live it. The bright sky is larger than our night time fears.

When my son returns to us with his hair in some wild fashion (I never would have imagined you could do such things with a man's hair) and his stories and his listening, then the days become that much larger and sonorous. Every time he comes with his surprising hair, I remember how he shaved all of it off before he traveled away and said, "I'm starting from the beginning again."

Sometimes he listens very closely to us like a man with heightened hearing who studies the songs of a rare frog. Other times he doesn't listen at all because our words have been spoken and exchanged many times before. He's so attuned to them that he doesn't need to listen. When he first arrives, he's always hesitant, picking his way about carefully like he might hurt himself on something in the environment. But as he sits at the fire and the little ones bring him a cup of drink and a bowl of rice so fresh it can be eaten with nothing at all, I sense the something inside him that's been tightly coiled begins to uncoil. That thing stretches its wings and allows all of its feathers to open wide and feel the wind. He's of a new generation, powerful, and yet some part of him is only free when he's with us.

He stays long enough to see a few cycles of the lake changing colors, then he departs. After his departure I always go into the forest. My husband explains it as mourning. My eyes do get wet, but the feeling I have is mixed with celebration: that a person who travels so far beyond the lake still carries it within him. That such a person came from us, from a place where he once ran barefoot and happy.

When he got sick, we found out by accident. A girl from the village who'd also moved to the capital sent us a message. Everyone gathered what they had and sent us off to him. We stayed at the hospital every day for as long as they would let us. Mostly he slept with his brow creased, skin sweating. Every now and then he'd open his eyes. It took him a few minutes to adjust to the light, to figure out

where he was, to do an inventory of his body, to see which parts hurt, which felt the same, and which didn't hurt at all. At last he would see us.

"How's my sister?" he'd ask meaning our youngest out of seven children.

"She's fine," my husband said.

"What about you?" I pushed in. "How are you feeling?" but he wouldn't let us deter him.

"How's my sister?" he'd ask again wanting a real answer. My husband would become angry, though he'd try to contain it.

"She's with her husband. She's fine."

Our youngest wasn't with her husband and we didn't know if she was fine. Her husband's relatives came to tell us that she'd run away from him when he tried to discipline her. They reprimanded us for raising a bad daughter. We told them that if she came home, we'd send her back. I hoped she wouldn't come home because I didn't want to have to tell her that she had to leave, that she couldn't stay with us, that she belonged to her husband now.

"Drink some water," I'd say, lifting the cup, frightened by how flat he looked in the bed, how his gaze pointed straight up through the ceiling.

"Don't let him throw anymore bowls," he'd say before falling asleep again. I wondered what he believed we could do.

By the end he wasn't asking or saying anything. He'd wake up, his eyes large in his head, the centers luminous as lights from other lands filled them, as spirits spoke to him alerting him to his upcoming journey. He'd reach for our hands and hold them, not tightly but gently in a familiar way, knowing he was again bound for another place. We knew he'd be gone soon.

Hippos rise from the water then sink. When the world was senseless, my first born gave it meaning. I go to the forest to mourn and to celebrate that a person who traveled so far beyond the lake still carries it within him, that such a person came from us, and returned. I go to forest to look for an answer, to do as he asked, which is to protect his sister, my last born. They reprimanded us for raising a bad daughter. We told them that if she came home, we'd send her back but now I know that's not true. I sense the something inside her that's tightly coiled, asking to be allowed to uncoil. That thing that wants to stretch its wings and allow all of its feathers to open wide and feel the wind. Some part of her is only free when she's with us and some part of her is free whether we permit it or not. She's of a new generation, powerful, but she will always be of us. We will always provide the place where, like her brother, she can write the day as she lives it.





Floral Plethora: Closed Sunflower

Kate Salvi

After She Says She Wants Cremation

Kasandra Larsen

My mother floats. It is spring. We fly over pastures
covered in dropped robes, shepherds
disrobing like lovers for the season. Sleeves

touch each other everywhere; she kicks her shoes
off, leaves me in a sort of hover, smiling
helicopter, no arms parting the air to push a gull

aside. Below, wood shifts and creaks, hulls of boats
kissing, then pushing each other away. Up the coast
white stuccoed homes behind thick walls, turquoise

tiled roofs daubed with sun, and I can no longer see her
when she says *Sink in. Sink down. Be calm. You'll pass
through the wall.* And I do before I can analyze. I wake,

realize how much she aches to get out
of her body, lopsided traitor, skin that doesn't fit. When
they hand over her ashes in cardboard, I will hear her

in my head: *It will be all right, it will all
work out. You'll see.* I won't believe her
like I don't believe her now. But she'll be free.

Homecoming

Jamie Grove

She called my husband. Not me. Not her daughter—the logical choice for a sorry phone call in the small morning hours. Max mumbled something near incoherent as he rolled over and groped for his phone on the nightstand. I pulled the sheets over my head, slipping happily in and out of half-dreams, glad it wasn't my phone ringing.

But.

"It's for you," he said, leaving the words to hang in the dark amid the cell phone glow. His arm lit on my shoulder, in a place where it never rested. "It's your mom."

I took the phone and in the same moment I was walking down the hall, knowing without knowing where to step aside for the coffee table, where to sink onto the couch. I didn't ask why she was calling his phone instead of mine. I didn't ask why she was calling at four in the morning. I already knew, in the way that mothers and daughters talk over miles. Without saying anything.

Dad was cremated with only a paragraph making it into the obituary page. Mom didn't want any visitors, and there wasn't any great reason to go rushing across an icy state. Someone had died, that's all. When we finally made the trip, I sat in the car and watched the miles go by. I watched the mountains turn to wheat, turn to river, turn back to wheat, until finally succumbing to desert.

"I hated growing up here," I said quietly. I wasn't really talking to Max, but not really talking to myself either. "I wanted to live in the forest, a real forest, not just juniper and sage. Funny. Now I'd move back in a heartbeat."

Max didn't answer, but nodded slowly, content to let me ramble aloud.

Even though we had been on the road for hours and hours, it was still early when we pulled into town, and the sun was still clear and undiluted. Max took the hard right off the highway into my parents'—my mom's—driveway. He wedged our Audi between the dusty blue station wagon and the rust-riddled pickup beside the house. I stepped out of the car before Max had even put it into park. Right away I could tell would be a hot day. It was only June.

The yard was dead, the grass yellow, barely an inch high with dirt showing through in brawny patches. Skeletal trees, sad little things that should have been fully alive by now, were limp and listless.

"Well, isn't this cheery?" Max shoved the car into park, clicking off the ignition.

"Don't start."

I stood at the front door. After all these years, I didn't know if I should knock or let myself in. But the door swung open after a moment, and there was Mom with a cheery smile. I thought her smile should have been strained, forced, a facade, but instead it was a genuine beam as she gathered us up in her arms and pulled us into the house.

"Was the drive okay? I hate that drive."

"We know. That's why you never visit us," Max said. He was smiling as he said it, but I knew better. He dwarfed her with his frame.

The air in the house was heavy with must and dander. I raised a hand to cover the scrunch of my nose—too much smoke and pet hair. I glanced at Max, but he covered it better than I did. Everything was covered in a fine layer of hair and dust. There were crumbs of things left on the coffee table. Funny, I could still remember the way Mom held the dish cloth to sweep crumbs away. I sat gingerly in the chair that used to be mine.

"He's right there, if you want any." Mom said nodding vaguely toward the bookcase holding her TV and knickknacks. It was stuffed to the brim with cookbooks, Pilates videos, books published in the '70s that hadn't been cracked since godknowswhen, pictures, little oddities and things everywhere.

"Just where?"

"In the whiskey bottle. I had it engraved right after."

There was an amber bottle front and center, with glass dark enough it wasn't exactly clear what was inside. I could just make out a scrawl of script across the front, but it was hard to tell what exactly it said from a distance.

"He drank vodka, though."

"Yeah, but all the vodka bottles are plastic." She exhaled cigarette smoke up and over. "You know, he wouldn't all fit in there. It's chunkier than I thought it would be."

Of course the bottles were plastic. He had preferred his vodka cheap—the better to buy more of it through the week. We lived frugally, but he could damn well spare the \$3.50 a day for a pint. Cheap, local swill, but it got the job done.

"Your father had his vices."

"That's an understatement. He drank vodka like it was water."

It turned to vile and hate on his tongue, but I didn't say that. He railed and thundered and cursed the nights through, waking in the morning to remember none of it. But there was always the shattered sheet rock and cut knuckles to prove it.

"Well, thank god it wasn't whores," Max put in with a small smile.

"I'd hate to see where you would have put him then."

Mom laughed, reedy, and it wasn't clear if she was laughing because she thought this was funny or because there was some truth in his statement. She set down three cans of store-brand pop on the dirty table in front of us—which were left untouched because I didn't drink pop anymore and Max didn't like store-brand anything—and a plate of spreadable cheese, crackers, and a butter knife.

"I had to cut down my hibiscus," she said, changing the subject airily. "I can't figure it out, but it was all starting to die off. So I hacked it down to almost nothing."

The hibiscus was one of a trio of shrubs we'd planted during that windy spring break when we'd moved into the house. It grew up quickly until the topmost branches very nearly reached the eaves. It was a pretty thing—all white and pink and dark, dark green.

"Seems like it's coming back now, though. I was so worried about it."

"Oh, well, that's good. It's nice that something's still growing in the yard." The words left my mouth unbidden, and I wished immediately that I could bite them back. But there they were, hanging heavy in the air between us.

"What's that supposed to mean?" The edge was sharp to her voice.

"Nothing, Mom." I tried to look away, tried to focus on what was on the TV, to look past the fine layer of gray dust that had collected across the screen.

"No, what's that mean? I work all day, I'm not going to come home and mow when it's 95 degrees out there and I've been up and down stairs all day." She stubbed out her cigarette hard, the cheap filter crunching into a tawny wad.

"I just meant that the yard used to be like an orchard with all those fruit trees and the vines, and now the trees and the grass are dead and it's not even August yet. The whole yard's gone to pot, and you're only worried about one little shrub."

"Besides—" I gestured vaguely around the living room. The cluttered end tables, stacked high with old issues of National Geographic. The overflow of things onto the floor, encroaching slowly into the general area, the beginnings of pathways. Yellowed spider webs hung from picture frames that were older than me. "The house? How are you living like this?"

Mom's face had turned stony as I gestured to each corner of the room and beyond. I was dimly aware of the draw of Max's eyebrows. Without looking, I knew he was running his tongue over his teeth like he did when he got nervous.

"I didn't invite you over for this."

"No, we came to mourn the death of a bitter old man, who we haven't even said a thing about yet, by the way." The words slipped again from my mouth, and they tasted like ash.

"Oh, knock it off. Your life wasn't so bad."

She stood up and straightened the pile of cigarettes on their tray, tucking them beneath a dusty end table where the cats couldn't knock them away.

"Not so bad? He was a tyrant and a drunk and an asshole to boot." I bit back the urge to go on, to air it all out in front of us. "Come on... this is not how you live! Things were supposed to get better after he died, not worse!" A flight response was building up in my nerves, threatening to boil over and carry me away. I felt dirty just being in the house. I knew it would be a week before my lungs recovered from all the smoke, a few washes

before my clothes shed their new layer of pet hair.

“Your dad bought me that hibiscus.” She picked up the remote and flipped furiously through channels.

“No, he didn’t, Mom. You picked it out, you planted it. Dad never gave a shit about the yard. That’s why I don’t understand. The yard has always been all you.”

But Mom was done with listening. She marched to the back bedroom, slamming the door behind her and making the trinkets on the shelf rattle. I looked helplessly to Max, hoping to find some crumb of sympathy, but he was staring fixedly at the table, not daring to move or look at me.

I did the only thing I could to keep from shouting—I marched out into the yard, retreating away before I could slip and say anything else. Before I could make matters any worse.

I tromped through the yard, the grass crunching unresistingly beneath my flip-flops. Past the garden, past the pear tree and the filbert. I kept going until I stood under my favorite one, a sprawling apple tree with branches curling into perfect cradles. I used to sit high in the branches, plucking apples to eat until I was sick. I picked up a small green one. Worm ridden.

It had been a long time—eight years, maybe more—since I’d last scaled the tree, but like riding a bike, it was all muscle memory. The footholds were all the same, the old knobby whorls and the fine, sweet-smelling dust that came off on my hands, powdering them like a gymnast’s. There was one branch in the back center that was my favorite because it got me higher than all the rest. Things had looked different from up in those boughs.

Even now, all those years later, the tree absorbed me into its branches, cradling, comforting, consoling. My troubles fell away like leaves from the tree, and I sat for a long while listening to the birds and the highway and the wind. I watches as the shadows twisted and elongated and distorted through the branches.

I was being lulled into a cozy half-sleep, just awake enough to keep from falling when I heard footfall through the grass. I stayed, unmoving and holding my breath, watching as Mom marched away from the house, the amber bottle in her hand.

I scrambled down from the tree—getting down was so much harder than getting up—and ran six, seven, eight paces. Through dead grass and weeds and a tangle of a garden hose. I skidded to a halt at the end of the yard, where a dirt road ran through, separating us from an acre of flat land before a bluff.

“Mom, what are you doing?” The words caught ragged as I ran out of breath. But she said nothing, didn’t even flick an eye in my direction.

She just continued on in a straight line, and for a moment I couldn’t help but see her as a stranger. The short, slightly heavy way she

loped, her brown hair flickering to gray in the sunlight. The very peculiar way her shirt hung from her shoulders, like it belonged to someone else.

Like waking a sleepwalker, I didn’t want to touch her, so I kept pace instead. We were halfway to the bluff, where the basalt fell away to canyon and cliff. She marched with enough determination that she might just be able to walk on air to the other side. The sun was bright and high now, and everything was the same hot shade of sepia beige.

Mom stopped a footstep from the edge with military precision.

There was no cloud, no billow, but I could see the ash pouring out of the bottle as she raised it ceremonially high. A few heavier chunks dislodged from the mouth of the bottle and tumbled down.

“What are you doing, Mom?” I said at last, the words dropping out heavy too.

She sighed. She shook the last bits and pieces out and dropped her hands to her sides.

“I’m done. And if I could, I’d torch that house and every memory with it.” She paused. “Except for the hibiscus.”

I took the bottle from her. It was thick and heavy and pretty in the summer light. I threw it easily over the edge, watching until it disappeared somewhere among the basalt and brush below.

“I’ll help you replant.”



Reeds and Rushes

Laura Baran



Of Blood and Feathers

Megan Turner

You wanted to drive me south, but I told you no. The house—with its crumbling pavers and broken pots and wild grass—had grown white, shrieking by its lonesome on the sea-bound hillside. I had been there once, without you, and I didn't want to go back. The chimenea in the backyard was a melted mound of terracotta, beetles burrowing into the ground on which we used to sleep. I refused to go back. But you begged.

The moment I sat in your passenger's seat, I remembered what we had figured out years ago: we weren't supposed to end up together. One minute talking, the next arguing—hands flying, wheels spinning, gravel slurring, bodies scratching through glass and guardrails—until blood separated from flesh, and flesh separated from bone. Until we both grew great wings and flew. I saw fear mount in your eyes. I wonder if I looked the same.

I woke up next to you, a mangled mess of blood and feathers, on a bed of smooth sea stones. Your pale face reminded me of the day we met, when we were far too young to know it was possible to lead each other here. I woke you, smearing blood by accident across your cheek. I held your hand until you had strength to stand on your own. We both looked up at the marbled sea-cliff—the house sitting high on the land above us. You'd have never said it, but I felt your fingers tremble. I knew we were thinking the same thing.

* * *

When I finally arrived at your house, you had changed your mind. You had been begging to go back to the house, *our* house, for years, but today, somehow, you'd decided your mind had changed. The house was standing just as it had so many years ago, with its sand white walls and arched crescent ceilings. I still remember your laugh traveling through the night when we would sleep on the floor of the backyard, the warmth still trapped under the concrete, blanketing our bodies from below.

When you sat in my passenger seat that day, I thought to myself how beautiful you looked. Your hair pulled to the side, your lips painted with the red I always loved. I should have said it, because before we could even make it to the coast you were already in tears. Words flying, venom spewing, tongues crafting phrases that should have never been said. But I loved you still, and when I tried to calm you, you pushed me away so hard that the rest went black. I don't think you realized how fast it would all happen. 5 seconds of light before shadow.

When you awoke me on that beach, I knew we were in a place we had never been before. The house, our house, standing tall on the cliff above us, shone less like sand and more like bone. Your fingers, wound deeply within mine, shivered even though we both felt no cold.

You'd have never said it, but looking up together at that bone white freckle of a house, I knew we were thinking the exact same thing.





Civilization: Girl

Sarah Vorsheck

Dancers in a Parallel Universe

Clyde Kessler

It was snowing like blackbirds chasing fire.
Remember the ridge drifting through itself then clouds
to the next ridge? The stars could not smuggle themselves to us.

I dreamed my body was your body among mannequins.
All of them were working their hungry minds homeward
from everywhere inside my mind.

Remember the snow plow stranded under the bridge?
The sunrise poured in like a soldier's camouflaged rifle-scope
cramming a snowflake into every bullet.

You were dancing me across the frozen river.
The storm never ended. Saber cats and dire wolves
shadowed their skeletons towards us from the ice.
My memory was a blue flower from a parallel cry.

Defying Linear

Bailey E. Heille

His voice rang out clear, “Make a line.” We scrambled and arranged a horizontal line. “Form a line.” Confused, we all looked at each other and lined up vertically, like small children waiting for a door. “Line up.” Most of us didn’t move. “Line Down,” The creatives dropped to the floor and stretched out, as if trying to disconnect their hands and feet distally. “Line around.” No one in this dance improvisation class knew how to take that one.

Headlights and taillights in stream ahead and beside. Lanes creating lines, creating veins, of light. Red and white-yellow. Like blood. Rushing and gushing on the asphalt. Bleeding onward, confined to lanes, for order. Traffic at night. Pulse of red coming. Flush of yellow going.

The woman behind me in the checkout line stood too close. She stood taller than me and her breath settled on the top of my scalp. I inched forward, hoping that maybe she just didn’t realize how close she was standing. And when I inched, she stepped. Closer. Maybe it was the anticipation that made her abandon social expectations.

I am not the only one with dozens of silver-white lines dancing about my wrist. They read like a map. Each intersection a misguided attempt to make order out of the web in my head. I have hundreds of scars. Healed and glowing with strength. White like peace. I am proud that they are only scars. Records of past, not marks of present.

Picc line to his heart. After weeks of lying in a hospital bed in Beijing, after weeks of lying in a Chinese hospital because the doctors denied that he was suffering from Lyme’s Disease. After the Lyme had gone too far, after the rest of the missions team had left the country. He was left with a tube in his heart delivering antibiotics, with the hope that his heart would beat in order.

“You need to have long, clean lines.” That’s what Miss Ashley would say. Maybe that’s why Margaret never got any good roles. She was always cast in the male roles, which in ballet are the supporting roles. They would do the lifting, the females would do the dancing. She was beautifully strong from years of dance training, but strong wasn’t enough for her to be recognized as a capable dancer. She left that studio when she was thirteen, hoping to find her own appreciation of the lines her body could create.

My second semester in Chicago, all I did was ride the train lines. In the midst of a breakup the long stretches of rail, of steel, gave me something to stand on, gave me a path to travel. And so with anticipation I rode those lines, because distance traveled proves I’m moving on, even if I’m not the one in motion.

A clothes line stretched across the humid hotel room. The training camp we stayed at before going abroad sprinkled members of my team with ticks, ticks who would poison blood with Lyme. My roommate’s Lyme didn’t go to her heart. It crept to her brain. And for weeks while she lied in her bed, we’d keep the lights off not being able to move. I’d quietly hand wash her clothes in a periwinkle bucket, trying not to drip too much water

as I strung them on the line stretched across our room.

Erica and I shivered as we walked along the red brick line that delineated the Freedom Trail that winds through Boston. I told her I can be blackout drunk and still walk straight. She laughed and told me that during a party freshman year someone bet that she couldn't walk a line to save her life. She proceeded to do back handsprings all perfectly straight even though she couldn't remember where she was.

I talked to Margaret yesterday after seeing a video of her walking the line of a tight rope. I told her I missed dancing with her. We always got placed in the same parts, so we became close despite the five year age difference. She says she's still dancing, and that she is getting aerial training too. I tell her I'm proud of her strength for leaving.

We rode the bus to the very end of the line. We ended up in a lot full of purple buses with their front mirrors hanging down, looking like insect antennas. Ally, Stephen, and I stranded in a bus lot in Beijing, knowing not a word of Mandarin, or anything at all on how to get back to the Pearl Market. The straight rows on maps don't help if you can't understand.

Lined paper. Never make the mistake of buying the twenty-five line notebooks with recycled pages. Their pages are brown and textured, so when the tip of your pen meets, it feels like tearing. Like scarring deep in flesh.

When Jenna called from the psych ward, the line only reached my voicemail. Her message said she was fine, be out in a few days. Fine was the word she used. She said it wasn't a suicide attempt, she just wanted to see if she could die. As I listened in tears, I wanted to know what she expected.

I have never been able to follow my mother's line of thought. She took away my notebooks and told me that if I didn't have anything happy to write, I wouldn't be allowed to write at all. Since then I have never been able to write in public and all of my words feels like they're hiding in riddles and knots.

Ballet became complicated for me when I finally looked in the mirror and realized the lines in my mind weren't the same on my body. My body had curves and shapes that didn't fit, and after having spent too many years trying to change my body, I refuse to look in the mirror when I dance. As long as I don't look it in the eye, I can think it to be the lying one.

I chose to go on a mission trip to China because I was fifteen, and I had reconciled my struggles with my beliefs, and I wanted to share love. My small group asked me to cover up my scars. She told me that the religion she wanted to share had no room for marks like those.

When it rains I look to the white lines as my guide. My hands on the wheel become locked with tension and my eyes held wide, trying not to startle at the squeaking drag of the windshield. I have been terrified of hydroplaning ever since my dad told me what it was. Because the moment he told me that hydroplaning was when your tires lose friction with the pavement, and you slide with no control, I knew that was exactly what was

happening in that reoccurring nightmare. In the nightmare my family all dies. Except me.

When I get anxious in class, I slide my fingers from the neck of my pen down to the end where I hold it loosely between my thumb and forefinger. I let the pen flick against the paper creating its own cut, little marks finding themselves on my paper, like rain falling. Cascading lines of black ink. Channeling synapses of panic into motion. Not too much pressure or the paper will tear open and the ink will bleed to the next page.

In Cultures and Histories of Dance, my professor explained unspoken social norms and how they form a sort of choreography. She gave the example of how people enter Starbucks and look for the line and then decide to fall into it, even if it is not the most direct route to the register. She said lines bring an understated order in most situations.

I hate drawing lines. I have the least steady hand and so the lines always waver. And if the lines aren't straight, is there any order at all? What is to keep in from falling apart, bursting with anticipation? And so I don't draw lines. I just buy lined notebooks.

I walk in the city repeating to myself "Make a line, form a line, line up, line down, line around," as my eyes bounce from building, to street, to lights, through masses of peoples. Something about the order, the structure keeps me upright and walking. Abuzz, I glide over horizontal lines in the sidewalk. Anticipation, expectation, a sense of order keep me standing, keep me moving, guiding me onward. But often I stop walking, let my body contract and contort, a little dance of defiance against the linear.





Hypnotic

Kelly Joy Ladd

Gift

John L. Stanizzi

*...that conflux of two great rivers, Tapajós, Amazon,
...that watery, daz̃zling dialectic.*

*Santarém
By Elizabeth Bishop*

For my granddaughter, Taylor Stanizzi

Taylor, my granddaughter,
is a sophomore at Keene,
and she is working on
finding her way,
as she should be,
learning what it means
to be a woman,
half Italian,
half Black,
a Black woman,
in America.
I worry.
She smiles beautifully
and hands me her Christmas gift.
I am her grandfather.
I can say *she smiles beautifully*.

The gift is a copy of
*The Meaning of Freedom
and Other Difficult Dialogues*
by Angela Davis.
It is signed,
and I think, selfishly,
that *I* have taught her well.

When I am able to spend time
alone with the book
the first thing I do is stare
at Angela's signature,
three wide looping symbols
which I know say
A Y D
though they look like dancers,
slender as the wind.

The *A* has softly lowered
herself into a split,
and raised her right arm gracefully
above her head.

The *Y* has leapt into the air,
an allegro of grace,
before the *D* bows,
her wrist a supple arc.

The three dancers
are followed by a
sharp straight line
that says
the dancing does not stop here,
though you have danced
from Dynamite Hill to Santa Cruz,
danced above the jeers of
go back to Russia,
go back to Africa,
though you'd been to neither, yet,

and danced into the heart
of a young woman
in New Hampshire,
half Italian,
half Black,
who is also dancing,
moving like those two great rivers,
Topajos and Amazon,
where they come together,
and drift toward
the massive Atlantic.

This Kind of Man

Sean Murphy

The ground beef has been mixed with two eggs, salted, and shaped. Hands thoroughly scrubbed with soap and water, I'm ready for action. Next step is going to the grocery store for the rest of the ingredients.

What kind of man does this?

A man with lots of time to kill.

My wife was like most women. She would ensure she had everything she needed before preparing a meal. But even before our second child was born, she'd already cooked enough dinners to lose any fondness for the routine. Food became another chore, fuel which fed a family, another task to accomplish with as little effort as possible. The more time it required meant less time to do anything else, and something else always needed to be done. The bathrooms weren't going to clean themselves, the dishes aren't going to put themselves away, the carpets don't get miraculously vacuumed.

If I didn't comprehend all this then, I do now.

I could—and according to my daughter should—just hire a cleaning service. It's only me, though, and the house remains pretty manageable, at least compared to the days when four of us were living in it. I tell her I can handle things, that this isn't about the money. And it isn't. The truth is, I have too much of what my wife always wanted more of: time.

My wife came to consider it an unforgivable lapse if she had to make separate trips to the store in a single week. Her shopping lists were legendary, almost scientific equations, precise and unerring. Years of trial and error led to an exact awareness of how much milk and bread and toilet paper and detergent our family used. We never had extra supplies but to my knowledge we never once ran out of anything. I can't recall ever needing a razor or a Q-tip or a tissue. There's a discipline there anyone might emulate. Never especially organized when we first got married, my wife became an expert at efficiency. Housewives from our generation learned how to balance budgets and resources in ways that should embarrass these clowns in today's government.

When my wife got sick, I learned how to cook, and I hated it. Prepared food or frozen meals were fine with me. Maybe I was busy doing other things (by that point I was doing everything), or simply took no pleasure in eating. It's difficult to enjoy familiar flavors when you live with

someone who can hardly recall what they taste like. My wife once told me she envied my morning bowel movements, something I never imagined hearing one person say to another.

I was a terrible cook, like most men from my generation. It should have been easier, following a formula for consistent results. Nevertheless, getting comfortable in my own kitchen took longer than I'd like to acknowledge. Then again, I couldn't have become an accountant the same day I learned to add and subtract. Anything done with some degree of competence involves practice, and a great deal of failure.

I'm not sure if I enjoy cooking now so much as I appreciate having control over a process I oversee from start to finish. My son makes a good living but he could save a lot more if he didn't eat out or order in every meal. In fairness, I would have been the same way if I'd never settled down. I'd explain this to him if we still spoke to each other, but he'll figure it out, eventually. Or maybe he won't have to. We shouldn't want our children to be exactly like us, especially if it entails making the same mistakes.

What kind of man doesn't speak to his son?

A man whose son won't speak to him.

I used to spend weeks with difficult clients, doing everything possible to convince them and occasionally still lose the account. When I cook, I know exactly what I need, the precise time, materials and effort expected. If we were able to know what was expected of us, what we should expect, I reckon most people would be perfectly content.

My wife and I always joked about how I would die first. Which of my friends, I'd ask, will be the one who flirts with you? Which ones would you consider going on a date with? Would you ever remarry? What on earth would you do with all the extra time? I never admitted it, but it was that last question that caused me the most distress. That was the one I wasn't sure I wanted the answer to.

What kind of man worries his wife will be at peace when he's gone?

Any man who is honest, I say. Women from my generation are capable of losing sleep over a simple question: How will my husband manage, living alone? Men worry that, after so much time spent serving and fretting over us, our wives would relish an autonomy they're unaccustomed to. Perhaps even regret the wasted years, the missed opportunities.

Thank God for religion. Without its mechanisms of control our hospitals would become retirement homes for chronic alcoholics. Our streets would be overrun with once highly-functioning husbands who can't do anything other than work, sleep, eat, and sometimes screw. If not for religion—not to mention the self-regulating shame it imparts—it's safe to suggest my own mother, once I was out of the picture, would have been as well. Religion, money, and viable options: without the first and with either of the other two, how many wives would stick it out?

I know there must have been times my wife saw greener grass on

the other side of our marriage, and I can't blame her too much. If she had followed through, though, she wouldn't have had a partner by her side when for better turned to worse. Or maybe she would have. Maybe she would never have gotten cancer at all. We always figured I would be the first to go.

Losing your wife tends to complicate your feelings about the afterlife. If it's there, she's there, and someday, God willing, I'll be there. But so will everyone else. That means God—not to mention countless strangers—will know everything. They'll have seen all the fights, the times I wouldn't speak to her, all the lies (mostly small ones), that one time at the Christmas party that I was too drunk to remember exactly what happened anyway. Her parents will have seen the way their grandson and son-in-law squared off in the garage, just after their daughter's funeral. The day he felt he finally had the right to pop off about how miserable I made his mother, as if he was the one wiping stains off the bathroom floor, or double-washing sheets soaked with sweat and puke, or keeping track of the meds or driving to another appointment, or sitting alone in the waiting room bracing for bad news—always bad news no matter what you think you've prepared yourself to hear.

What kind of man would trade places with his dying wife?

No sane person would want to suffer like that. It's difficult enough dealing with disease from a mostly safe distance. Still, once it became obvious how our story was going to end, I won't say I didn't envy her a little.

We never get to see our own funerals. We never know what everyone will say, what they really think of us. And unless there's some type of eternity, we never will. Unless we die first, unless we have the type of death that attracts a crowd. You expect sympathy, but it's the ones who show up that tell you everything you need to know. I couldn't believe the people who came to say goodbye, not just the viewings, but those last few days. People I hadn't seen in years, people I had frankly forgotten about, people I know would never have come to see me.

Who will come see me? I can count on my daughter, even though she lives in a separate time zone. I don't think my son will even be there to see me buried, but he'll have to live with that, just like I did, not attending my father's funeral. And I'm pretty much at peace with it.

Of course, I was relieved so many people showed up for my wife. I know it meant a great deal to her. It provided proof she was loved, that her life *mattered*. Most of us won't get that same opportunity. And if we do, we might not like what we discover.

Even when her bones hurt, she worried about me. My bones hurt when I breathe, she said. And she still told me she worried about me. Mostly, she reminded me everything would be okay, that I deserved a break after this ordeal, that I'd enjoy my space, that we'd never have to fight over the remote control anymore, that kind of crap. But she really did worry. Her concern was the one thing, besides her pain, that I remember most clearly

about those last weeks.

Although I saw her give birth and breastfeed and get up in the night with sick kids and make bag lunches and wash dirty underwear and maintain every important relationship and send out birthday cards to relatives and put everyone she loved before herself, even as she lay dying, it wasn't until then that I finally understood the real difference between husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, men and women.

What kind of man doesn't have some regrets?

A man who has tried his best, whatever that means. A man who owns what he's done, whatever that is. I know I was there when it mattered most, and my wife said it meant everything. But did that make up for everything else? The wasted opportunities, the forgotten slights, the countless times I could have told her something sweet, the times I made her cry, the days and nights I wasn't there?

The only promise I ever cared about keeping was the one I made to myself when I swore I wouldn't be like my old man.

I saw him do things, and say things, and mostly *not say* things, but I don't think he ever entertained a moment of doubt. He checked all the boxes men of his generation were supposed to: when he wasn't working he was sleeping, or in church, or building something, or repairing something else. He was the only man I've known who didn't appear to have an imagination. I don't think he ever envisioned anything other than what he expected to happen. I couldn't forgive him for this, and now I'd give anything to experience what that feels like. Especially if there's no afterlife. If it all ends, what's the point of all this wasted thought? All this useless energy convincing ourselves that anything matters...

What kind of man do the neighbors, or paramedics, or whoever, find when someone finally finds him? Impassive, as though he simply fell asleep on the same couch he'd slept on during so many forgettable TV shows. In the same suit he hadn't worn since his wife's funeral. With an emptied bottle of pills he'd stolen from the hospice nurse and hidden away. Without a note or phone call or farewell. A half-made meatloaf on the counter, some kind of signal or surrender.

A man who hopes he's not around to ask or have to answer any further questions.





Life of Mine: Icon of Belief

Manit Chaotragoongit

September City

Kirby Wright

The espresso breeze nudges
Copper clouds west.

Petits fours and croissants
Glisten sugar and butter.

Buses unload beside
The Obelisk at Slottsbacken.

Cameras carve angles
Of Storkyrkan Church

And the Royal Palace.
The palace façade

Shrouds in plastic.
A pink neoclassic

Framed by scaffolding.
Gods and Nordic heroes

Cast bronze
Glow green

In 26 degrees Celsius.
Charles XIV John and horse

Propped on wooden crutches.
Lily pads and trash

Bob in a freeway pool
Below Monk's Bridge.

Stockholm vogues
Its masterpiece of self-destruction.

Displays of Affection, Mercy, and Other Things

Catherine West

Momma doesn't weave perfect tales of love. No diatribes about l'amour comforting me like the silk-woven fabrics I wished lulled me to sleep at night instead of the worn mattress with the metal spring poking out.

No. Love is wherever you decide to take it. Even if that love is damaged, discarded fruit in garbage bins.

Daddy's love is brown bananas, mottled pears, moldy strawberries.

Something rotten is better than nothing at all.

There are glimpses of the man she fell in love with. The man in the park who sat across from her on bright green grass and promised to cherish her as the bright sun tanned their coffee-bean colored skin a shade or two darker.

April 22, 1988

One time Daddy plans a birthday party while Mommy's at work. "Ssshhh, it's a surprise," he whispers. "She thinks I forgot, but I didn't."

He did.

He buys roses from Walgreens. I tell him those aren't her favorite flower. Mommy loves lilies. "Lilies are expensive," he responds. "Flowers are flowers and it's the thought that counts, even if the thought isn't that much."

It comforts Daddy to think I'm still naïve, but I'm almost ten years old. I'm practically a grown up. He likes me to play along. Makes him feel better. So I brighten my eyes and tell Daddy, "Mommy is gonna love it!"

"Damn right she will," he boasts. Teeth sprawling wide in self-satisfaction, white as the shower tile he laid in the unfinished downstairs bathroom.

We're all using the upstairs bathroom. It's been six months.

He gets cake with the icing in her favorite color, royal blue. The cake is dry, but Daddy's taste buds aren't quite as good as mine or Mommy's. Brother draws a picture of the tree in our front yard. I got an 'A' on my spelling test. Those are the best gifts a 7-year-old and 8-year-old can give the woman who tucks us in at night. We clutch paper in tiny brown hands.

Rain comes hard. You can't see the street, just the water. The clouds block the sun and Daddy doesn't turn off the lights.

She's really tired when she comes in. I run to her and give her the best hug I can because I'm a great hugger. All my teachers say so.

The dark brown wool coat she's worn since I was born scratches my chubby cheeks, but I want Mommy to hold me tighter. She asks about my day.

Pulling her into the living room, we shout, "HAPPY BIRTHDAY!" Daddy hands her wilting flowers. Brother and I give her paper. We eat dry cake with royal blue icing.

* * *

I can't remember Momma's honest reaction to the party. It's been almost 27 years. She still paints expressions on her face. Creates masks of happiness with beauteous curves of flesh imitating a smile.

March 14, 1992

There's no reaction when I flip the switch. Just darkness. Me and Bro try at least three times, but nothing. Mom and Dad are 'whisper fighting' in the basement. They don't argue in front of us so they lower their voices, but we still hear most everything 'cause the vents connect all the noises of our red bungalow house.

They still use their nicknames when they disagree. They still might say 'honey' or 'baby', but there's sharpness to it. You can love and fight, I guess. Sometimes Bro and I fight over which television show to watch. I like "Quantum Leap", but he doesn't. Then after we have lunch, we're not so mad anymore and we decide to look at my show this week and he can pick next week. Mad doesn't last long with us.

I hear wide feet thump on wooden stairs, and Mom and Dad appear in the kitchen. I think her mad is gonna last a little while longer than me or Bro's.

She says, “By the time we come home Sweetheart, this better be fixed!”

Dad just stands there, face screwed up like he bit into a lemon. I did that once, bit into a lemon. It’s an ugly face. This is the face Daddy makes.

Mom, Bro and I went to see THREE movies that day. Back-to-back!!! We ate burgers and got ice cream! It was awesome!

I saw light from the front room of the house as we make our way from the bus stop. Dad waits on the porch and when Mom passes him, he kisses her cheek. Her body stiffens. Mom tells Bro and me to get ready for bed. Church is tomorrow. They stay on the porch for a while. I fell asleep before they came inside.

* * *

It took me almost three years to realize Dad didn’t pay the damn light bill and didn’t tell, Momma. How do you trust someone who hides things? “How do you still love this man,” I ask. Her gaze never reaches beyond the horizon of my eyes. “It’s never been about your Father. Love goes beyond butterflies and children and even the truth sometimes. I made a promise to God to love him. For better or for worse. I keep my promises.”

January 11, 1996

It takes exactly three comforters and two pairs of socks to warm my body. This is the perfect combo of heat and comfort. I also know three cups of water, which converts into roughly .71 liters of liquid, fills my bladder to overflowing, causing me to abandon my cloth-cocoon and go pee.

All Pops had to do was pay the damn gas bill! I think we’ve lived without every single utility in this house, including the three weeks this past summer when the city turned off the water. Ms. Diane next door let us get some from her house every day until we got caught up.

Mom almost has the money she needs and we’ll go pay the past due balance soon. I don’t like her going anywhere by herself. All the stress of travelling sometimes messes with her stomach. The doctor says she’s going to need surgery soon in order to repair the damage.

Mom, Bruh and I wonder what Pops does with his money. It’s not gambling or a hidden family. It’s not drugs either, though I swear up and down he makes crackhead moves with his finances. Pops just sucks when it comes to properly providing for his family. I hate him for this. I hate him for a couple other things too, but mostly for the pressure in this house bending my

mind in unnatural ways. Our complicity enables his bullshit decisions and endangers all of us.

Damn, I really had to pee. I have exactly five hours and 20 minutes until I have to get up for school. Sprinting back to my now semi-cool bedsheets, I ponder other ways to hate my father, but I need to concentrate on tomorrow’s math test. Good grades equal scholarships, which equal college. I know I’ll be the one paying for my Bachelor’s Degree in Journalism.

* * *

Dad likes to show me off to his side of the family. He tells them I’m his little girl. How he’s proud of me. How he always knew I’d grow up to be somebody. Look at those Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees! She gets her smarts from me, he brags. Momma tells me to stop rolling my eyes when he talks at the table during Thanksgiving dinner. Eye rolls are better than saying, “This man had little to do with the responsible adult I grew into.” Momma says I shouldn’t be mean. Momma asks me to forgive. “That’s what we do for the people we love,” she says. Do I love my father enough to forgive him?

August 25, 2013

Bruh and I yell, “HAPPY 35th ANNIVERSARY!!!” Our refrain shakes the walls of the red brick bungalow. Momma always says she wanted 10 kids, but she just had Bruh and I, and that in the house we played and lived and fought like 10 kids. That’s true.

They weren’t expecting a party though. Momma hates parties. Daddy loves them.

I don’t remember ever hugging Daddy as hard as I do now; like I did when I was a little girl, when I was still unwise in the ways of the human spirit and how the parts divide into wondrous and awful pieces. Heart attacks have a way of bringing things sharply into focus.

Well let me correct myself, heart attack scares. Daddy had an inflamed muscle in his ribs which have similar symptoms to possible cardiac arrest. That’s what the physician told us as we sat in a waiting room preparing for the worst.

Either way, it was the first step in getting over things that happened long (and not so long) ago. Not necessarily saying what Daddy did all the time was okay, but I’ve slowly realized the people we love make so many mistakes. I’ve made my share as well.

I try hard now. I remind myself of several things when I see him. Show the

grace you desire from others. Don't be such a dick to the Old Man. When he calls you, pick up the phone. Don't roll your eyes so much.

Love your Father.

* * *

Momma likes it when Daddy dances with her even if everyone watches them. She closes her eyes and smiles. In the solitude of her mind, I believe she lists all the ways in which Daddy blesses her life, not curses it. All the good he's done, not the wrong. This steadies her, renews her commitment. She knows love isn't about cupids and candy and karats. It's mercy. It's understanding. It's divine and the ability to love is beguiling. She holds to Daddy tighter and he holds to her tighter still.

Show me love. I'll pay attention this time.

I swear.





Floral Plethora: Coming Through

Kate Salvi

an intention

Sara True

i want
to live somewhere long enough
that no one need know
i have been a wanderer

for awhile

to know someone well enough
that i can write
poetry
that means something

as if the separate spacing of
words
distinctive
didn't indicate
a lack

of depth or
perspective

as if syllables
and homes

weren't just

buildings
and
sounds



Family Portrait
William C. Crawford

Nightmares

Kasia Merrill

On my twenty-eighth birthday, I realized I'd stopped having nightmares.

I woke from a dream that I was standing in an empty field. Its blandness left me feeling apathetic. I rolled over and checked my dream journal: pages and pages of nothing, of dreams that were neutral, or even worse, happy. I hadn't had a nightmare in 18 months, 22 days.

Immediately, I panicked.

My sleep life had always been occupied with nightmares. Dreams in dark places with dark characters. I was chopped in half by a serial killer. I was hanging by my hair from the Manhattan Bridge. I was naked in front of my co-workers without any nipples. What was my life without my nightmares? Experiencing the worst in sleep was what brightened my waking life. Now, I woke to nothing, to desolation, to despair.

"You've just overthrown your ego," my sister said to me on the phone. She was a yoga teacher in Napa Valley and frequently wore colorful bandannas in her hair. "You're on your way to freeing your soul!"

"Do you have nightmares?" I asked her.

"Of course," she said. We both grew quiet. There was not much in common between those darkly dreaming and those who weren't.

I joined a group that discussed nightmares. They met under the church one hour after the AA meeting. I arrived early and sat in my car, watching the addicts filter out into the setting sun. I tapped my fingers against the steering wheel. One addict lit a cigarette and sat on the steps. He had dark hair and thin glasses, a tuft of hair below his bottom lip and a tattoo on his fingers that said WANT ME? He shakily smoked three complete cigarettes until it was time for the nightmare discussion. I followed closely behind him as he filed in. I trusted he knew a good nightmare when he had one.

The meeting started ten minutes late and only six people showed up. I sat close to the leader, who was a woman named Tanya with purple rhinestone glasses and a t-shirt printed with an ax. She told us about a recent dream she had in which she melted into a glass of milk, and was then spilled by her parents. She explained that it was related to her mother's refusal to breastfeed her when she was a baby. She believed it had left her feeling dry inside, and this nightmare had finally helped her escape.

We all clapped. She gestured for me to talk about the dream I had last night and I panicked.

"I dreamt about a witch," I said. "Who was wearing my grandmother's lipstick. She was hiding in a closet in the hallway and suddenly leapt out at me, grabbing me by the arm. She kissed me on the lips

and I pushed her away, watching her vanish into smoke."

"Wow, that is heavy, babe," Tanya said. "I think it means you're getting in touch with your feminist side. Really digging in deep there, you know? What do ya'll think?"

Everyone else in the group nodded in agreement. The addict with tattooed fingers looked at me with envy. I was a hero.

After the meeting, Tanya passed out a basket of cookies and took down our first names. Last name, optional, she said. She winked at me. I was the favorite.

That night, I was even more desperate for a nightmare. I watched *The Exorcist* in hopes of gathering images for my uncreative mind and fell asleep listening to Norwegian death metal. I woke up from a dream that my grandmother had never died and that we were picking chamomile in a field. Reality felt bleak in the aftermath of such a positive dream. I hit the wall behind me and exhaled in irritation.

At the next nightmare meeting, the addict with tattooed fingers approached me.

"I can't believe you just dreamt about your father feeding you to a lion last night," he said. "That's some psychological shit, man."

"Thanks," I said. "I really liked your nightmare about being stuck on the moon with the ghost of Elvis Presley."

He shook his head sullenly. "That one was scarier than it sounds," he said. He breathed in deeply through his nose and I could read the anxiety he carried in his shoulders.

"What do you think gives you dreams like that?" I asked.

"I don't know," he said. He shrugged. "I guess I just have a lot of shit to sort out, with my family and past. That, or my mind's just fucked, I guess. But nothing like yours, man," He laughed hoarsely.

"Yeah," I said. I stared at my shoes. I felt embarrassed for myself.

The tattooed addict told me his name was Tom. He shifted on his feet, then asked me if I wanted to see a movie some time.

"Sure," I said. "Do you like horror?"

Tom grinned. I'd stolen his heart.

At home, I found a dream catcher in my house and burned it. I called my sister and told her I felt as if I was always in her shadow. I told her she didn't do enough for me and that I was angry with her. She called me a pot-stirrer and hung up on me half way through.

I rented more horror movies and watched them in the dark. I took walks in the cemetery. Still, nothing. My dreams were getting more positive, happier. I dreamt I bought a kitten from the grocery store. It cuddled with me. I dreamt that I won the lottery and danced in a storm of cash. I dreamt that Conan O'Brien proposed to me on TV.

And each morning, I'd awake in disappointment. I'd open my eyes and see that everything in my dreams wasn't true, that my waking life was the real nightmare that I couldn't escape.

But I didn't say this at the meetings. At the meetings, I talked about the nightmare I had when I was eighteen years old where a serial killer kidnapped me on a school bus and infused my lungs with poison. I talked about how the witch from Snow White drowned me in a lake of lava. I talked about pulling out my eyeball when it got stuck to my contacts. Everyone cheered. Everyone at the meetings respected me.

After one meeting, Tom took me to see Deliverance. He bought me popcorn and stroked my thumb. On the way home, he told me he used to be addicted to meth, but he was over it now. He wanted me to know because he really liked me, he loved the way I thought. I knew he just loved the way I dreamt so I kissed him quickly and ran from the car.

One night after dreaming that Tom was a respectable doctor with a high-paying job and a Ferrari, I decided to stop sleeping. I'd had it with the waking up part, the post-partum with my too restful sleep. I spent my nights watching FEARnet and taking cold showers when I drifted off.

At the last nightmare meeting, Tanya told me that I looked like a bird on crack.

"But your nightmare about Ben Stiller attacking you on a plane with a sharpened key was amazing," she said.

"Thanks," I said.

Tom took my hand and led me away from Tanya to his car. He asked me if I was okay.

"Fantastic," I said.

"You haven't slept for a while, have you?" he asked.

I shook my head.

"You're afraid," he said. He touched my chin with one tattooed finger. It was the ring finger with the question mark.

That night, he offered to keep me company so I could sleep more soundly. He slept in my bed with his arm around my waist and his forehead against my temple. I wished he could pull me into his skull.

In the middle of the night, I heard him stir in his sleep and call out. I stared at him with envy, placing my index finger against his bottom lip. What world was he in? What terrible things were happening to him? I knew he would wake with me next to him and feel a sort of ease that I hadn't felt in months. He would experience a gradual departure from the darkness of his mind to see what was lying beside him and he would see me, heavily stagnant in the morning light, continuing to breathe into the mundanity of a day I was certain would be tasteless. Of a version of me that I was certain would always be tasteless.

The next day when he asked if I'd slept well, I told him I slept better than I had in months. He looked into my red eyes and I could tell he didn't believe me, but I didn't try to correct the situation. We had coffee in silence and spent the afternoon on my balcony, listening to the sound of the rain hit my neighbor's tin roof.

At the group meeting that evening, the police walked in to disband

us. Discussing nightmares was a dangerous situation, they explained.

"In what way is this dangerous?" Tanya said through gritted teeth. Her hands were balled into fists and she kept using them to push her glasses higher on her nose.

The fatter policeman, who was wearing a ruby class ring and had his hair combed into deep lines, hiked up his pants. "I heard just last week you were discussing terrorist attacks on the U.S. government," he said.

"That was me," Charlene from Minnesota said. She raised her hand timidly. "I was telling them about a nightmare where I was a member of Al-Qaeda and asked to walk into the NYC subway system strapped with bombs."

"See?" the skinnier policemen said.

Tanya glared at both of them. "It was just a dream," she said.

The fatter policeman took a step forward and narrowed his eyes at her. "Dreams are what make reality, miss," he said.

After the meetings were canceled, I saw less and less of Tom as well. The last time I saw him, he told me that he had a nightmare about me. The idea thrilled me. Me, in a nightmare, finally.

"What was I doing in it?" I said.

"You were digging," he said. He looked down at his hands, then back at me. "You were digging and digging for something and you wouldn't stop, and eventually, I just lost you. You were real deep in the Earth and I just watched the soil cave in on you."

He frowned. I placed my chin in my hands, imagining how it would feel to lose myself in the Earth. I closed my eyes.

"I wish I coulda been there," I said.



Artist + Author Bios

Laura Baran loves unconventional story-telling. She looks for opportunity to connect seemingly different things and discover how they work together. She is inspired by nature, culture, food, and Gestalt theory. To Laura, the world is just a gigantic puzzle inviting us to complete a larger narrative.

Manit Chaotragoongit is from Bangkok, Thailand. He received photography awards from Globalhunt Foundation in India and Berggruen Institute in the US. Photography is his passion, and he journeys to streets and alleys to take his photos.

William C. Crawford is a photographer based in North Carolina. See more of his work at forensicforaging.com.

Jamie Grove is an emerging writer with stories featured in *Oregon East* and other literary magazines. In 2009, she won the Rising Star Creative Writing Competition in fiction for the 19 to 25 age category. That story was subsequently published in the *WriteNOW!* anthology. Jamie lives on the dry side of Oregon, where she works as a proofreader, with her husband and children.

Bailey E. Heille is an essayist and poet from Minneapolis, MN. She holds a bachelor's degree in Creative Writing from Columbia College Chicago with minors in literature and dance. Her work has been published in *Habitat Magazine*, *The Paper Lantern*, and *Punctuate*. In addition to writing, Bailey enjoys choreographing and walking her dog, Tennyson.

Clyde Kessler lives in Radford, Virginia with his wife Kendall and their son Alan. Several years ago, they added an art studio to their home and named it Towhee Hill. His book of poems, *Fiddling At Midnight's Farmhouse* was recently published by Cedar Creek. It also features Kendall's illustrations.

Self-taught artist **Kelly Joy Ladd** began working with paper about five years ago. Over time, she developed a number of techniques involving ripping, folding and cutting pieces of paper and adhering them onto canvas to create texture. Kelly is often surrounded by tiny scraps of paper while she carefully constructs them into intricate patterns. She is inspired by rhythmic repetition, texture and pops of color. Based in Orlando, creating art is a joy for her and she hopes to share that feeling with others.

Kasandra Larsen has been published *Stoneboat Literary Journal*, *Literary Juice*, *Flumes Literary Journal*, and *Stonecoast Review*. Her manuscript, *Construction*, was a finalist for the Four Way Books Intro Prize in Poetry, and her chapbook, *Stellar Telegram*, won the 2009 Sheltering Pines Press Chapbook Award. Featured in *Best New Poets 2012*, and nominated twice for a Pushcart Prize, she works as an accountant for the Providence Public Library.

Kasia Merrill's first publication was a seven-paged newspaper featuring articles such as "Everything My Father Ate This Week." She was eight years old. The newspaper received mixed reviews from her family. She has since received her BFA in creative writing from Pratt Institute and been accepted for an MFA program in fiction. She lives in Brooklyn, NY, and can be found at kasiabmerrill.com.

Sean Murphy has been publishing fiction, poetry, reviews (of music, movie, book, food), and essays on the technology industry for almost twenty years. He has appeared on NPR's "All Things Considered" and been quoted in *USA Today*, *The New York Times*, *The Huffington Post*, *Forbes*, and *AdAge*. He is an associate editor at *The Weeklings*, where he contributes a monthly column. He writes regularly for *PopMatters*, and his work has also appeared in *Salon*, *The Village Voice*, *The New York Post*, *The Good Men Project*, *All About Jazz*, *AlterNet*, *Web Del Sol*, *Elephant Journal*, *Punchnet's* and *Northern Virginia Magazine*. He is currently the writer-in-residence at Noepe Center for Literary Arts at Martha's Vineyard. Murphy's best-selling memoir *Please Talk About Me When I'm Gone* was released in 2013. His novel *Not To Mention a Nice Life* was published in June 2015, and his first collection of non-fiction, *Murphy's Law, Vol. One*, in spring 2016. To learn more about Sean Murphy's writing and to check his events schedule, go to seanmurphy.net.

Julia Ponder is a poet and teacher living in the Hudson Valley region of New York. Her poetry has been published in the *Susquehanna Review*, *Stonesthrow Review*, and *The Hudson Valley Chronogram*.

Kate Salvi is an award winning photographer who resides in Providence, RI. She has exhibited and had her work published internationally. Kate runs a small photo greeting card company and her cards are currently in 15 shops including the Rhode Island School of Design Store. To view more of her work, go to www.katesalviphotography.com.

John L. Stanizzi is the author of the collections *Ecstasy Among Ghosts*, *Sleepwalking*, *Dance Against the Wall*, *After the Bell*, and *Hallelujah Time!* and *High Tide – Ebb Tide*. John's poems have appeared in *Prairie Schooner*, *American Life in Poetry*, *The New York Quarterly*, *Rust+Moth*, *Tar River Poetry*, *Rattle*, *Passages North*, *The Spoon River Quarterly*, *Poet Lore*, and many others. A former New England Poet of the Year, John has read at many venues throughout the northeast, including the Sunken Garden Poetry Festival. He lives with his wife, Carol, in Coventry, CT and teaches literature at Manchester Community College.

Sara True is a traveler, painter, poet, and performer. She has been published in *Entropy Mag*, *Leviathan Jewish Journal*, *Red Balloon Literary Magazine*, and others. A Los Angeles native, she is currently beginning her

MA in Fine Arts at Central Saint Martin's in London. She seeks magic in all places. Her art and writing can be found at saratrueart.com.

Megan Turner lives in San Diego, California. She is completing an MFA in Fiction at San Diego State University, while also teaching 11th grade English. Her time is spent traveling to warm and distant lands, explaining the stories she loves to her students, and finding suitable homes for the ones she writes.

A writer born, raised, and living on the South Side of Chicago, **Catherine Adel West** fixes punctuation and grammar for big companies to pay the mortgage. She's recently completed her first novel. Her work has been published in *Black Fox Literary Magazine*, *Five2One*, *Better than Starbucks*, and *Doors Ajar* and is forthcoming in *The Fem Lit Mag*.

Kirby Wright's *Treatment* took first place for an animated TV series at the 2017 Calcutta International Cult Festival. *Rag of Man*, his short play, was performed in February 2017 at the Manhattan Repertory Theatre.

Sarah Vorsheck is a senior at La Roche College in Pittsburgh, PA. She is majoring in Writing and Journalism. Her main focus is in poetry and creative Nonfiction, but she also loves to dabble in photography and watercolor. Upon graduation, she plans to do a year of service before beginning graduate work. This is her debut publication.

Monica Zarazua earned an M.F.A in creative writing from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Her short stories have been published in *The Collagist*, *Asia Literary Review*, and *The Blotter Magazine*. She is the co-founder of Pochino Press, a micro press based in Oakland, California. She teaches at the International Community School of Addis Ababa in Ethiopia.





Lit + Art

Submissions Information

We seek writing and art that is unexpected, striking, and moving. We accept submissions from residents of Manatee County as well as the rest of the universe. We take submissions from debut, emerging, and established authors and artists.

Before submitting, read our publishing agreement on our website. By submitting your work(s), you are agreeing to the outlined terms.

See our site for submission periods. There is no fee to submit. Submit works not published elsewhere. We accept simultaneous submissions, but if your work is accepted elsewhere, please withdraw it from Submittable.

Submit text in standard manuscript format. We accept files in the most common formats including .pdf, .doc, .docx, .rtf, .jpeg, .tiff, and .png.

Art & Photography: Five at a time

Fiction or flash fiction: Two at a time, max 2,500 words each

Creative nonfiction: Two at a time, max 2,500 words each

Graphic fiction/nonfiction: Two at a time, max 8 pages each

Poetry: Three at a time

Submit at www.805lit.org/submissions.