

Front Porch Review



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118 Maida Vale, London
- Nancy Scott

After shrieking sirens quit,
after dust had settled in the rubble
and the stars resumed their light,
a ragged scar ran three stories
up the north side of the orphaned twin.

Years later, the garden's wild and dun,
saplings choking summer's bloom.
Barbed wire coiled along the fence.
Yet high ceilings set with cherubs
charm us into renting.

The lights blink at weird hours,
floorboards creak and faucets burst.
Steam hisses from dead pipes: perhaps
childish games, high jinks, mischief,
the house lonesome for her mate.

What unruly thing blows up
the dustbin, dangles a dead squirrel
from the eaves or lures the city's
most-wanted thief into our bedroom
in the middle of the night?

Truce, we say, we've months to go.
We've felt your bony fingers.
Today, we'll tidy up the tool shed,
restore the garden's luster
with dahlias, asters, and wild roses.

Monkey See, Monkey Do
- Joseph Glaser





A Matter Unsettled
- Mary Ann McGuigan

Eyes narrowed, skin tanned, Peter scans the rows of hard plastic chairs screwed to the floor and steps into the dreary ER waiting area like a man who knows his place in the world. His sister Maggie knows better. Like a mom on the lookout at dismissal time, she raises her hand so he'll see her. He slows his pace, perhaps not wanting to call attention to himself. But his tailored suit makes that difficult. Heads turn.

"Sit down," she says when he reaches her. He doesn't. He seems shaken. He slips his hands into his trouser pockets, then out again, runs his fingers through his hair.

"Can we go in?" he asks.

"Not yet. There's a cop talking to him, the one called to the scene. He's been in there almost ten minutes."

Peter mutters something under his breath, then leans forward, his face close to her ear. "Did she . . . Do you think she really . . ." He's sweating, his collar moist, and the sight of him in a situation he can't handle amuses Maggie. She shrugs, content to have him believe there's nothing to worry about, that she has things under control. "Do you think she meant to do this?" he whispers, glancing over his shoulder, as if someone might recognize him.

"Sit," she says, patting the seat of the adjacent chair. Assorted walking wounded surround them on every side, most looking as if they've graduated from downtrodden to loser still without a clue why the universe is out to get them. Maggie is certain that Peter doesn't want even these sorry outcasts to know what brought him here. His knee-jerk effort at propriety – even after what's happened – makes her want to laugh.

"Answer me, for Chrissake. Was Moira trying to kill him?" He keeps his voice down, but he sounds demanding, the way he did when they were teenagers, his take-charge ego already hardening, looking for answers even when the swollen lips and broken lamps all around them were beyond justification, a chaos their poverty didn't explain.

"Just sit."

He yields, tucks himself neatly into the chair close beside her. His expensive cologne is inescapable now, but it's not unpleasant, just a reminder of his good fortune, like his good skin, with barely a wrinkle, and his full head of hair, with just enough gray to keep things interesting. She's reminded that her roots are long overdue for a touch-up. They circle her crown like a yarmulke, her sons tease, but she can't be bothered.

He asks again about Moira, but Maggie has no intention of answering his questions. She shakes her head, pretending to be as baffled as he is about how their father wound up stepping in front of a truck. She doesn't want to believe their sister did anything intentionally, but she can't rule it out. In this family, anger lasts. "Let's just focus on what we know," she says. "A broken hip. He's lucky to be alive."

"He's always been lucky when it comes to things like this," Peter says. "It's amazing." She nods, keeps an eye on the double doors that separate them from their father.

"Remember that fight outside Gerrity's Tavern," he says, "when the Molinari brothers landed him on his face in the street?"

"Yup. Four stitches later he was back on his stool. You can't keep a good drinker down."

Peter adjusts his jacket, no doubt to keep it from wrinkling, and Maggie wonders if he's between appointments. "But this is a broken hip," he says. "It could take months of recovery."

"Not if you tell him he can't have a drink till he gets it himself." She reaches down for

her handbag, an oversized junk catcher whose contents defy inventory. She wants to make sure she has her address book. If things take a bad turn here, the others will want to know.

"I can find him an apartment," Peter says. "It will just take a few more weeks, but Helen doesn't want to put up with him one more day." He sounds desperate.

"Well, think positive. Maybe they'll find some cancer. The right kind could take him pretty fast." She rummages in her bag without success, removes a neon orange cosmetic case, and a can of ginger ale, places them on the table beside her.

"Nice talk," he scolds, nervously loosening his tie, then crosses his legs in a way that shows he's pissed.

He's embarrassed, Maggie thinks, and can't help chuckling. "Oh, please," she says. The real problem, the one he should be concerned about, is not how long their father will take to recover but what the old man is telling the cop who's in there questioning him. How is he going to explain why he stepped off the curb just when a truck was turning the corner – and just when his daughter was supposed to be telling him whether it was safe to cross?

"You sound as bitter as Moira," Peter says. "That's not like you."

"Not like me? Tell me what I'm like, Peter. Tell me all about it." She comes up with the address book from the bowels of her bag, holds it in both hands, like a prayer book she's already memorized. She's the oldest of her seven siblings, the matriarch. "Anyway, Moira's got her reasons for being the way she is."

"What reason could there be for letting a blind man walk in front of a truck? So, he roughed up Sean a bit. Probably did him good."

"It wasn't just any blind man," she says. "It was Pete Donnegan. And I can think of half a dozen without even getting around to the brutal stuff. He had no business putting his hands on her son."

"Will you stop already? Old guys like him don't know any other way to deal with kids." He lets out a sharp breath, all fussy and perturbed at her. "Moira dramatizes everything."

"Give her a break." She wishes he'd stop this lobbying and just sit quietly and wait. "Her marriage is in the toilet. She's got a lot to deal with."

"Ken didn't want them to separate." Peter sounds like someone accustomed to insider information. "He told me he didn't."

He recrosses his legs and Maggie sneaks a look at his socks, designer hosiery Helen orders for him special from London. They don't look that much different to her than the kind she's been getting for Owen from Sears for thirty years. "If you want the truth," she tells him, "Ken's not your man."

"Where is she anyway? Why isn't she here?"

Maggie checks her watch. "I'm sure she's half way to Bridgeport by now."

"Connecticut? Are you serious? She didn't go in the ambulance with him?"

"Calm down. She was with him when he got here. But she couldn't stay. She had an important meeting, a top client."

Peter jumps to his feet. The woman sitting on the other side of him has spilled her Coke, and he seems desperate to protect his Armani. His clumsy neighbor is emptying her bag in search of something to wipe the soda off her skirt, and Maggie can tell that the intimate little collection of gum wrappers and balled-up tissues and Tampax repulses him because he lets out another sharp breath. "For fuck's sake," he mutters. "Let's go stand over there." He heads toward the vending machines.

Maggie leans toward the woman. "I'll get you something to clean up," she tells her and

detours to the ladies' room. In a beat or two, she's out again, handing her a stack of paper towels. Up close, she sees that the darker spots on the woman's skirt are not soda. They're blood. Maggie takes some of the towels and wipes the chair dry.

The woman thanks her repeatedly. "I don't know what's the matter with me," she says. "I'm all thumbs." Her voice is small, humble, and Maggie wonders how someone so meek could wind up with a cut over her eye deep enough to bleed through the thick makeshift bandage. But that's not true. She knows how.

She joins her brother by the soda machine. The tired posters bearing messages about the dangers of drinking during pregnancy and signs of drug abuse are even more faded than the dull green walls. She watches Peter survey the room, no doubt searching to see if it holds anyone at least nominally above the poverty line. He's fidgety, ill at ease among the poor, like an escapee forced to walk past the prison.

"Anyway, who's talking about the truth?" he goes on. "Sometimes you have to leave well enough alone in a marriage. Not Moira. She's not happy unless she's got something to be righteously angry about." He looks down at the front of his jacket, flicks off dreaded beads of Coke. "If it wasn't Dad drinking his paycheck, it was the car they couldn't afford to get her. And if it wasn't the car, it was Mom moving to that apartment to live by herself. She can't let things go." He extends his arm, checking his sleeve for soda stains.

"She was very unhappy with Ken," Maggie says, resisting the temptation to point to an imaginary spot on his elbow, just to get a rise out of him.

"What does *happy* have to do with anything? You want to be happy, you go to the movies, go get your hair done. She's thirty-seven years old, for Chrissake. When is she going to stop grieving that her father was a drunk?"

"*Is a drunk.*"

"He's not drinking nearly as much as he was back then," says Peter.

"Nobody's Superman. Anyway, what happened to her marriage has nothing to do with him. By the time Dad moved in with her, Ken was already gone. She couldn't take his secrets anymore."

"That's just it. She *can* take it. She just doesn't want to. You take it for your kids, for Sean and Michael."

"Is that what *you're* doing?"

He looks away. "I'm doing what I have to do," he says. "And I'm sure as hell not blaming my family for my own mess or landing them in front of trucks."

"Will you stop with that?" Maggie is afraid for her sister. She knows their father is capable of anything, even blabbing to that cop.

Moira has a way of leading with her chin. Maggie has worried about her from the start, from the day their mother first plopped her down in a crib barely vacated by the child who'd come before. She would bellow if her bottle took too long to heat, and Maggie, already ten years old, would try to soothe and distract her, keep her from wanting things that badly. As Moira got older, Maggie steered her away from goals pointless to try for. But Moira often pulled things off – making it to the top of a firm where women were mostly coffee fetchers, getting pregnant a second time after the doctor warned against it. That's when Maggie would be drawn even closer to her sister – to breathe in the reckless hope.

Still, Maggie knew Moira was wrong to let their father move in with her, knew it would end badly, and it did. At first, he wasn't drinking as much. Moira wanted him to feel welcome. Maybe he did. There was no way to tell. He was mostly quiet, often surly. He was like a gnarled

old tree, half-dead, with just enough life left to keep from being immune to the seasons. He would share a meal with them or occasionally watch TV, but getting close meant tripping on roots so strong and starved they cracked open the pavement around him.

When he got physical with Sean, Moira made him leave, and Peter had to take him in. But now Helen is complaining. She doesn't want the tension in the house, the stench of cigarette smoke in the guest room, and the dark, foul memories that seep from the man's skin, wrapping her husband like a shroud.

Maggie opens her can of soda, takes a long swallow. She wishes Peter would stop talking, stop making everything worse. "We don't know that Moira had any intention of hurting him," she says.

"The cop is still in there talking to him, isn't he? Seems like there's a lot to discuss. And someone saw her on the corner arguing with him right before it happened. Moira told you that."

"Keep your voice down. Of course, they were arguing. They're always arguing."

"Did anyone else see them fighting?"

"Wouldn't surprise me. People were waiting for the bus."

"Jesus," he snorts, disgusted. "She couldn't drive him home?" A patient sitting nearby is called inside, vacating adjacent chairs, so they sit.

"Please, let's not start on that again." Maggie sighs deeply, tries to get comfortable in the narrow chair. "Moira couldn't take him home. She made that clear from the start. She had to get to Bridgeport by one o'clock."

"Well, I hope it was worth it, because we're in a real mess now. I don't know what I'm going to do with him. Helen refuses to have him in the house much longer."

Maggie turns to look at him. "What were you thinking, Peter? Why did you encourage him to come down here in the first place? If we'd left him in Boston, none of this would have happened."

He leans forward, elbows on his knees, stares at the floor. "I don't know. I thought he'd be different."

"Most people would be."

"You get older. You look back. I just figured he'd have some feelings about things, want to connect."

"Surprise, surprise." She resumes her surveillance of the double doors, desperate to know why the officer hasn't appeared.

"You were lucky," Peter says. "You always knew he'd never change."

"Lucky. Right." She thinks of the early years of her marriage, the troubles she had when their mom came to live with her. But her brother doesn't probe.

"You know what I mean, Maggie. You're strong. You got through all of it. He doesn't get to you the way he gets to the rest of us. You can handle him."

She wonders if this is the approach he uses with clients when he's about to charge them more than they can afford. "I have no intention of handling him."

"Just until he gets on his feet. Then we'll find him an apartment. Near me. I'll do the rest."

"I am not taking him in," she says, pronouncing each syllable with exaggerated force. "I don't know what fantasies Moira had in her head when she let him move in with her – having a father finally? who the hell knows – whatever it was, they're her delusions, not mine."

"But he's in real trouble."

"Yes, but he'll be no trouble to me because I'll have nothing to do with him."

“You don’t care what happens to him?”

“Are you not hearing me?”

“Then what are you doing here now?”

Maggie reaches down for her bag, plops it back onto her lap as if she’s about to leave. She wants this whole business over with. “I’m here for Moira, not for him. She called me, asked me to be here.”

“And what happens when they put him in one of those pitiful nursing homes?” he says. “They’re all dismal and crowded.”

“Might do him good. Builds character.”

Peter winces, and she’s glad she’s made her point. She thinks of the months when their mother and the three youngest moved in with her, after the eviction. Maggie had two kids by then, and the apartment couldn’t hold all those people, not without the kind of tension that can make running out of coffee or using the last clean towel turn volatile. Someone had to leave. Maggie’s husband volunteered, all too willingly.

Peter leans back against the hard chair, his body sinking into itself.

“I’ll help you find a decent place for him to recover if that’s what he needs,” she says. “Your friend Richard, the doctor, maybe he can help.”

But she knows Peter won’t want to call Richard. He’s too proud to explain why none of his sisters and brothers want anything to do with their father. And he won’t want to admit why he doesn’t either.

Maggie sees the nurse before Peter does. She enters first, holding the door for the officer, who nods to them as he strides through the waiting area. His shoulders are narrow, and he seems to strain toward stature. He extends his hand to Maggie first. “Thank you for your patience,” he says, sounding stern.

“No problem,” she says.

“I have everything I need now,” he says, looking down at his little notebook. He’s very blond, rather small, and he reminds Maggie of her oldest son when he played cops and robbers. “I think you can go in.”

“Is everything all right?” she says.

“Well, I think the nurse can tell you more than – ”

“No, I mean – ”

“Maggie, it’s okay,” says Peter.

“You don’t need to talk with us?” she asks.

“I’ll be in touch if I do. I’ll speak to your sister again this afternoon, but I think I have what I need.” He puts his cap on, which seems too big for him, and makes his way toward the exit. Maggie heads for the double doors.

The nurse waves her in, and Peter catches up, asks the nurse how his father is doing. “He’s doing well. But I can only give you a few minutes with him. He has to be prepped for surgery.”

“The hip?” asks Peter.

“Yes, it’s broken. He told us he had to fast this morning for some blood work. That’s good. So, we don’t need to wait.”

“Can he talk?” Maggie says.

“Talk?” The nurse looks down at her clipboard, as if she might have overlooked something. “I don’t understand. His head injuries aren’t serious. Just some lacerations. He –

“It’s okay,” Peter interrupts.

They reach the room in a few steps, and the nurse slides a curtain away from the bed, where their father lies on a small mountain of pillows, clad only in a thin cotton gown that shows how bony his wide shoulders have become. He looks oddly docile now that he's at the mercy of IVs and assorted monitors.

"Dad," says Peter. "How are they treating you?"

"She won't let me have a cigarette," he tells him.

Peter and Maggie respond with weak laughter.

"Maggie, is that you?"

"Yes. They're getting ready to fix you up. Sounds like you're going to be fine."

"Fine and dandy," he says darkly. He feels for the railing along the side of the bed but winces in pain from the movement.

"So, we saw the policeman leaving," says Maggie.

Peter glares at her, but her father makes no sign that he's heard. "Are they giving you something for the pain?" says Peter.

"God knows what they're givin' me. Can't be stronger than children's aspirin, whatever it is. They keep tellin' me they have to get me ready for the surgery, but so far it's all farts and no dumps. All they do is come in every five minutes and tell me they're gettin' started right away."

"Hospitals are all alike," says Peter.

Maggie's neck is stiff from tension. She wants to ask him what he told the officer, but she holds back, lets him gripe some more.

"Helen was in the hospital last year," Peter chimes in again, "had her gall bladder removed and –"

Maggie cuts him off. "What did the policeman want to know?"

Her father snorts, mutters something, then says, "He wanted to know what happened. I guess nobody told him I got hit by a truck."

"What did you tell him?"

"It's pretty obvious what happened, ain't it?" He says, moving his hand across his body. He sounds harsh, as if she's meddling in his business. "So that's what I told him."

Her chest tightens. She shoots a look at Peter, steps closer to the bed. "What do you mean?" she says, dreading what he'll say.

"I mean the cop keeps askin' me what happened. It's plain as day what happened. I'm sittin' here big as life in a hospital bed, ain't I? They're pickin' and probin' and tellin' me my hip's busted and God knows what else got scrambled. What kind of shit does he have for brains if he can't figure out what happened?"

Maggie wants to shake him, make him stop the nonsense. "What did you say to him?" A thought she can't suppress takes hold. If he told the cop Moira did this, she'll finish the job right here, right now.

"For fuck's sake, I ain't got enough sight left to spot a tree trunk at arm's length, now do I? So, I walked my ass in front of a truck while it was still movin'."

"You told him that?"

"I told him to go fight some crime."

Maggie feels her breath return. Maybe it didn't happen the way she suspects. Or maybe her father doesn't realize it. "Did he ask about Moira?" she says.

Their father takes a breath, grimaces. "He did."

"So what did you tell him?"

"Moira is none of his business – or yours."

Maggie closes her eyes, relieved, but her hands are trembling, and she's not sure why. She's struggling with something foreign, something she hasn't felt in so long she doesn't understand what it is. She looks down at her father. The sheet is clenched in his fist. He's probably in pain. His breathing is raspy, echoing decades of smoking. She wants to say thank you, touch him. The room is quiet, and she can hear the nurses' voices outside, surprisingly light and matter-of-fact, given what's at stake in this place. Stray sounds from the parking lot find their way in as well: a car starting, someone giving directions, a man saying *It's not going to work, is it?* in a voice that's about to break. Maggie strains to hear the answer, because she can't focus on the room, can't get herself to touch her father's hand.

The nurse peeks in again, tells them they need to go. "Okay," Peter says, and tells his father they'll be waiting for him when the surgery is over.

The old man makes a sound, as if clearing his throat, but Maggie isn't sure that's what he's doing. He looks upset, his eyes are watery, and she wonders how much pain he's in. Peter leans over him and touches his shoulder. The old man nods, and his son steps away, goes into the hall. Maggie is struck again by how small he seems, how faded. His skin is less ruddy, his white hair, normally so distinctive, barely visible on the immaculate sheets.

She wants to say something helpful, but there's too much in her way. He rubs his eyes as if they're itching, but she's convinced that's not the problem. "Looks like I'm out of the finals for the reel," he says.

She laughs. That's what he wants and for now it's easy to give. The nurse peeks in again. It's time.

"Dad," she says, her voice brittle. She has no way anymore to soften it. "I'm sorry about this. I'm sorry you got hurt."

He sighs, a dark, resigned sound. "Me, too," he tells her. "You can never count on Moira to get a job done proper."

Included in the collection *Pieces* (Bottom Dog Press, 2017)

Have a Seat
- Melissa Patterson



A Moment Everything Felt Right
- Douglas J. Lanzo

Passing under Southern oaks
draped in Spanish moss,
silver-tinseled garlands
twinkling through sea-sprayed sun,
we tracked its feathery radiance
to regal heights, robed around
twisted trunks and branches
of mighty oak trellising
into azure sky, gently veiled.

As we walked, hand in hand,
through this otherworldly kingdom,
an ocean breeze whispered
the scent of coral honeysuckle,
drawing us toward trumpeted flames
of vivid red flowers, powdered with pollen
and flush with nectar, a bright green jewel
maneuvering from tube to tube,
daintily imbibing its aromatic sweetness.

Our souls refreshed, we came upon
a pergola, drenched in sunlight and red roses,
overlooking a gleaming bay
reflecting pure white
dappled red with love.
Gazing into each other's eyes,
renewing our vows...
everything felt right.

Shannon River dawn
sparkles orange and lemon hues
of meadow butterflies
awakening lush marshlands
with delicious scents of spring

Abandoned Place

- John Tustin

I am an abandoned place.
Perhaps a hotel set for demolition
Or a farm long dead of domesticated animals
Or living produce.

I am an abandoned place
And once in a great while
An intrepid lovely will arrive
With a camera around her neck
And a love of ghosts and the long rusted
And the dead.

I am an abandoned place
That trembles like newness
When someone treads upon my fallow fields,
My ramshackle home
Where the spiders live
And the rain comes in.

What is it about me that lets them in?
What is it about a ghost that haunts those so fragile
And willing to want?
Is it the desire a vampire has for new blood?
Is it sanctimony?
Is it that the need to be wanted is stronger than death?

I am an abandoned place.
My floorboards creak ever louder,
The wind through the broken windows ever colder

While the lovely lady with her curiosity, her timid footsteps
And her thirst for life
Turns the knob on my door
And enters
Without knowledge
But so much bravery
Mixing inexorably
With tragedy.

At the Grape Bowl Festival of Bands
- Cecil Morris

On this fall day washed clean by wind and rain,
in this parking lot of this old high school,
everything gleams, every instrument,
every uniform, every young musician.
Every valve and stop, every bell and curving throat,
whether brass or chrome, all sparkle
in the sun, all glitter and glint at every step,
syncopating sound with light.
Every glossy-sided drum, big or small,
every hoop and tension post,
every white-taped drum stick flashes,
rhythm flaring through the lot.
Every uniform looks newly loomed,
clean and crisp as this day, each button
and buckle twinkles, each braid and tassel,
each badge and banner winks with sun.
So, when they march off, each shined shoe in step,
they coruscate, their music scintillates –
our own children made of light and sound,
giving both back to us in this parade
of our best wishes.

Descending a Staircase
- Lois Greene Stone

Downsize. Change. Simple words sometimes remind us that our passage through time has changed from 'endless' to closer to ending. Our adult lives were shaped by observation and quiet commentary from others. Reflection, yet always noticing a 'new' in familiar, is part of the present.

As sun streams into my personal office, in what once had been my daughter's growing-up bedroom, I've noticed that my oak desk drawers no longer match the plastic laminate top. The real wood slowly faded its color in streaks of sun-bleached patterns; the effect has a modern art appearance.

Cardboard boxes that once contained shoes currently store unsorted photographs my widowed mother had once given me to assemble and hand down to the next generation. Stacked on my desk, the boxes look like steps leading to nowhere. My memory flashes to a futuristic painting I had to study for an Art History class: Nude Descending a Staircase. As if taking a test, I scribbled Marcel Duchamp's name on a scrap-paper pad, then added 'lines, angles, experience going down a flight of stairs.' I marvel a moment at the human brain and its ability to store, then process, information it received decades ago.

Outside the double-hung window with its plastic partitions to form window panes, only mounds of snow seem visible. My calendar changes the year.... a good time, without birds chirping or need-to-go-outdoors distraction, to force myself to pull down the uppermost cardboard box, descend its stairs-shape, and clump that collection into distant past, a past more current. A brand name from shoes once nestled inside amid thin tissue paper, assaults my eyes. I pull several nasal tissues from a holder propped near a desk lamp, and cover the box's shoe logo. Tissues drift down and clump helplessly.

The house is quiet; I am alone. I glance again outside the window glass as a few flakes of snow tap and briefly cling to a pane, then I look at the first black and white photograph. My short-stature maternal grandfather is being sworn in as an American citizen. Pin stripes on his suit look narrow next to thick stripes on our country's flag, spread open and tacked to a wall as if it were a huge picture. The flag's stars are fewer than now. 1917. Mama had been secreted out of Russia by horse-drawn cart as a sixteen-year-old girl, settled in New York City, sent for her fiancé who came in steerage, and they were married in New York. Papa is a photographer. My mother had affixed this data on the 5x7 photo's back. The new citizens' swearing-in event, even to my mother, had less importance than her sentences about her parents' courage plus their wish to be part of America's people. The photograph concealed their traveling in steerage, having to learn to speak English, living in a walk-up tiny apartment with one bathroom for all tenants on the floor. My mother's handwritten note had me think about her parents as refugees, also once young with 'endless' life ahead.

I picked up the second photo lying in my cardboard box. My grandpa was on a stage with Eleanor Roosevelt; she was at a podium delivering a speech. An on-stage sign read "Learn the 3 R's of To-day Registration-Reconversion-Reconstruction Women Make History on October Registration Days" My grandpa had much less hair than in 1917, so I quickly turned the photo over to see if, perhaps, someone had scrawled the date but no one had.

Negatives. In our present Smartphone or digital camera time, no negatives slip into envelopes we have to date so if/when we want a copy of an old picture, we slide the negative from its sleeve and give to a developer. Negatives were the actual size of the photo back in the

early 20th century. A brown envelope had preserved a collection of 5x7 black and white ones but no developer today would even have the equipment to make copies from any. My boxes of 35mm slides, capturing my children's growing years, are obsolete and no projectors are being manufactured anymore. I put the negatives in the bottom of the shoe box.

When I was teaching English Composition at a local college, I found myself so absorbed in each student's words that I spent way too much time reading/grading individual essays. I was doing the same with these old pictures. Realizing that just one box would take hours, I did the 'easier' thing, what I couldn't do with students' essays: I put the cover back on the box for a 'someday,' pretending that the future years have longer lengths.

Going downstairs, I wondered if that cubist painter, studied in my Art History class, would have captured more than the lines and angles of my legs and arms in a 'z' shape just like my staggered cardboard boxes of photos appear? What might he have drawn had he seen the boxes on my desk? I'm superimposing people and cardboard storage in my head; perhaps that would be painted.

Downsize. Quite impossible when choices have to be made. Easy to toss out the trash or today's newspaper, but tangible pieces of our lives require consideration even if there's no monetary value. How much easier it'd be to put an old leather baby shoe into the garbage.... or would it? Why was it saved for decades in the first place?

I can alter my daughter's growing-up space into my personal office room because furniture and square footage don't have handwritten notes affixed. However, I was shaped by observation and quiet commentary by so many faces in black and white photos, I can't consign them to oblivion

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Desert Leap Frog
- KJ Hannah Greenberg



In America: Remember
- Betsy Holleman Burke

Not poppies here but acres of white flags
 seize the morning breeze. By a trick
 of light a school of menhaden dart

under an ocean of death --
 shimmer, scatter on the wind
 up the hill, a pod of dolphins flash.

Faceless dead command attention at last
 flags hold names, pictures, entire families
 a woman wearing angel wings.

Junkyard
- David Mihalyov

It's eerie seeing the flashes of faded blue
viewed through a stand of beech.
A twenty-minute hike from the parking lot
through vegetation thick enough
that you'd believe it's been there since Eden,

but stories survive of an open field
where teens raced, cars swerving and bumping
and then abandoned where they died,
left behind to bewilder us.

Mice and other vermin use it for a home,
or for parts to take elsewhere, upholstery
ripped and removed to insulate a nearby nest.

A sugar maple claims the steering wheel,
emerging through the rust-edged gap,
more hole than floor board.

Tires no longer visible, it's hard to say if
the car emerges from or sinks
into the earth.

Flakes of rust spread everywhere; doors, hood,
everything breaking down,
though recognizable parts survive;
belts long gone, the engine fan rests,
ready for another spin.

Knowing & Unknowing
- Sarah Dickenson Snyder

The light at the end of knowing must be the calm of a lake
suddenly settling into itself to become a mirror of unrippled
sky like the gentle exhale of the Hindu monk who sat
in the wide leather chair, his whole body draped
by the orange folds of his robe.
His eyes water still.

If I could have, I would have
reached cupped hands and filled them
with the glassy sheen of his green eyes
as he chanted in my living room, those words
living room meaning something different that morning.
What is the word for knowing you are not close to knowing?

Leaf Lessons
- Claire Scott

brazen reds, fiery yellows
 blaring oranges
flash the New England hills
 like Van Gogh's *Mulberry Tree*
 painted the last year of his life
trees conserving energy
 in the lessening light
no need to make chlorophyll
 faster! faster!
 like a frenzied tycoon
pigments hidden for months
 under spring's green swagger
 have their moment center stage
stagehands shift the scenery
 moving oleander blossoms to the wings
wheeling out musty scarves and mittens
 rescued from the backs of closets
lingering walks through leaves
 crinkled like great aunts
apple picking on lofty ladders
 reaching higher! higher!
 for the sweet smell of cinnamon streusel
time for one last fling
 in the flaring and fleeting
 spectacle of October
before the stagehands return
 wearing wool coats, towing
 the weighty watermark
of winter

Touchy Feely
- Len Kazmer







River Teach Me
- George Cassidy Payne

Inspired by a sacred Ute prayer

River teach me change
as falling leaves decompose in the formless current

River teach me hope
as the source and end, both come from mountains

River teach me how to get lost
as two young lovers walk along your bank not needing to be found

River teach me how to savor the now
as the sun glistens on the scales of a snake bathing

River teach me how to manifest what I want
as the immortality of your course is guided by creation

River teach me how to accept
as the chaotic swirling foams cover and pull all beings asunder

River teach me how to live without fear
as the salmon do when they breach the surface of a bear's claw

River teach me how to listen
as the empty space of the blackest ice is ancient and unborn

River teach me how to close my eyes and see
a force eternally moving when I am not looking

River teach me how to understand
as the memory of geese returning from their far off flights

River teach me how to believe in myself
as a beaver does when they forgo their fragile homes of sticks and mud

River teach me how to do nothing
as a heron wading, full of hidden knowledge, instantly unleashed

River teach me God
as there is nothing false about the opinion of creatures who need you to survive

Rivulet

- Carol Casey

An infancy of river,
forest filigree,
rock tears, taking years
to carve a craggy face.

Vibrant with minnow
cress, insects skating
upon clear surfaces
while the embryo current

quickens toward
the massive matrix
of water forming,
transforming.

Clouds, raindrops,
oceans, emotions
spill over rocks
snags, sparkle

in sunlit places.
I breath out and see a frond
of heartache ease
into a reedy culvert.

The Absence of Memory
- Olivia Hajioff

This year, Spring came for the first time.
Never before did this greening chatter of infant leaves gather above my head
nor did these birds shoot like arrows through marbling clouds.
How did I forget that frowzy seaweed wriggling through the pond
or the sprinkling of those moonbeam coreopsis, buttoned to softening earth?

These advents are not renewed, but truly new.
You cannot forget what you have not known
and I had seen only their kin before.

The unremembered world is a gift we cannot keep,
for presence is the absence of memory.

Flora and Fauna
- Michael De Rosa







The Award
- Toby Tucker Hecht

Several minutes before opening her eyes, Nora was aware of being awake on a hotel bed, with its cloud-like duvet and downy pillows. She felt a wave of anticipation wash over her. It was the morning of the prize, a lifetime achievement award for a powerful and sustained influence on her field of research, and she wanted to savor every last minute.

There was much to do. Her lecture in the early afternoon session of the symposium was prepared and rehearsed but this morning she was going to have her hair done and have a professional apply her make-up. She didn't own any of the products young people put on their faces these days. For most of her life, she had worn only coral lipstick and had pulled back her hair in a knot at her nape. The photographer, a lovely woman who visited her at the university to get some preliminary candid shots in the lab, suggested she "do herself up" for the occasion of her award. Nora had not given it much thought at first, but then, after studying her seventy-four-year-old self in the mirror, decided, why not, and booked a day spa appointment in the hotel.

The society sponsoring the award, the symposium, and the dinner gala was paying for everything, including the sumptuous breakfast which had just been brought into her room. Her usual breakfast of yogurt, fruit, and herbal tea was there, but in addition there were eggs, buttered toast, cranberry scones, jam, and slices of cheese. It was more than enough for a full day's feeding. She didn't want to be weighted down on this most significant day of her career but also didn't want to ignore all this glorious food, so she tasted a tiny bit of everything on the tray.

The salon's hair stylist appraised Nora from several angles and suggested putting highlights in her hair and then fashioning an updo. Nora had no idea what she was talking about but asked if it would look appropriate for an elderly molecular biologist getting an award. The woman laughed and said, "You'll look elegant." Nora was happy she didn't say younger or less dowdy. Elegant sold her.

"I'm game," she said.

Two hours later, she emerged as sophisticated as she'd ever looked. The stylist had a light touch with make-up, and Nora felt like a pampered woman of the world. Back in her room, she dressed in her burgundy suit and pearls and headed down to the ballroom where the lecture would take place.

Upon exiting the elevator, Nora ran into two of her former post-doctoral fellows who had grown in the field and established eminent laboratories of their own. She was thankful she could recall their names and something about the work they were doing. They gave her a hug and congratulated her on the award. Mentoring students into scientists had been one of the most satisfying and enjoyable parts of her long profession. Of course, not all of the individuals who passed through her lab were of the highest caliber. She had made some mistakes over the years, and mostly they had left before finishing. She did not imagine these people would be at the lecture today. She remembered one person in particular, a young woman, rather arrogant, who she suspected, with some evidence, might have doctored the results of an experiment. When Nora asked to see her lab notebook, she threw it across the room and stomped out, never to return. As it turned out, it was impossible to assess whether the woman was guilty or not, and Nora often worried over the years whether her suspicions short-circuited a career that might have been promising. But now she needed to stop thinking about such incidents and concentrate on enjoying herself.

The ballroom was filled. Looking out at the audience, she saw one of her contemporaries,

Richard, a man she had known almost forty years before, a scientist who'd had a lab down the hall from hers. He had a brilliant mind and was a kind and generous colleague. She had been deeply in love with him, but he never gave even the smallest sign he felt anything in return. That unrequited longing, painful and destructive, had ruled her early days in the lab as a university assistant professor. She slowly inured herself to that kind of injury and vowed not to let romantic emotions interfere ever again with the work she was destined to do.

And yet she was surprised Richard had come to the award lecture even though he did live and work in this city. They had not kept in touch. Nonetheless, she'd followed his research in publications over the years and knew he was a great success, not as impactful, perhaps, as she had been, but still in high regard. Looking at him halfway back in the auditorium, she remembered how smitten she'd been and saw he still had the magnetism she'd felt then. He'd married a woman outside of research, a publicist, and had three daughters, grown with kids of their own. He'd crafted a full life for himself, at least that's what was implied on Google.

Absorbed in nostalgic memories, Nora missed hearing the beginning of the introduction to her lecture but abruptly became aware things were being said about her that she could hardly recognize. There were her accomplishments, of course, and other awards she'd won over the years, but the generous special attributes mentioned seemed to be descriptions of another person: her extreme dedication to the field and to others, selflessness, personal sacrifices, and inspiring energy. She wondered what personal sacrifices the introducer was talking about. She had gone about her work; what did others know about what she gave up in order to do that?

She walked slowly to the podium and put on her glasses. The first slide appeared on the screen. Several members of the audience snapped pictures with their cell phones. She understood the photos were of the slides and not her. That was common these days. In the past, photos during lectures were not permitted. She wondered why this had changed. So many things in life moved ahead at lightning speed – things added for no discernable reason or discarded as though they never existed – she couldn't keep up. She began to speak, and as she described the overall goals of her life's work and presented data both published and new that verified those goals, she became transported back to a different time – a time when she had to prove herself as a young woman worthy of respect in the field. There were no female mentors at the institution where she earned her Ph.D. The man with whom she did her studies put more pressure on her than the other graduate students in the lab, and he told her that was to see if she had the mettle to stick it out. He was afraid of investing time and resources in her, only to have her get married, have children, and drop out. He expected her to work around the clock – nights and weekends – and write papers non-stop for high-impact journals. And she did exactly that.

Nora was halfway through her lecture. She'd lived with the data and analyses for so long that the talk was on autopilot. But she was coming to a part that required more concentration. She willed herself to stop thinking of the past and zoom in on the exciting bits of the story she needed to tell her audience. She could feel energy surging through her body. The story had many intricate elements that at first seemed disparate, but in the end clicked together like pieces in a jigsaw puzzle. She saw the audience was engrossed in her words. No one was checking their email or whispering to each other. She was now close to the end and wanted to draw out the denouement. This moment would never happen again; a lifetime award is given at the end of a career, not when the scientific community thinks additional breakthroughs are forthcoming. In fact, she knew she was aging out of the field – so many new technologies had been developed that the young people were already experts in – and recently the chair of her department asked her about her possible retirement. She was on the last slide, which gave credit to all the

collaborators she'd had over the years, many of them in this auditorium. With her final words and the thunderous applause from the audience, some people standing and cheering, a bubble of joy burst in her chest. She understood that all the choices she'd made, doors she'd opened and others she'd left shut, were worth it.

The award itself was a crystal sculpture of the double-stranded DNA molecule. After a photographer took several pictures of her holding the award, she left it on her chair and went down into the audience to greet her colleagues. She scanned the ballroom, but Richard had already left. Although it was foolish, she wanted him to see her now that she'd made an effort with her appearance. Perhaps he would be at the dinner that night. It was something to look forward to.

Current and former students and post-docs crowded around her with congratulations. One woman showed her pictures of her son, born during the first year at her position as an assistant professor. Having a child, apparently, did not dampen the institution's enthusiasm for granting tenure, as this woman had recently been promoted to an associate professorship. In Nora's days, once a woman was pregnant or even married, she was asked to resign. There was no tolerance for that kind of thing and certainly no maternity leave. Men in the same positions were encouraged to marry and have kids; it would keep them hard at work and tamp down their social lives. Today, it appeared, you could have it all. Nora wasn't sure that was the best for research. No one could really have it all.

Once the crowd had dispersed, Nora was aware of a man standing in the first row of seats. As he came forward, Nora thought she recognized him: Darren Davis, a pharmacologist she'd known when she was in her early thirties. He'd been single and had asked her out many times. Finally, she decided to say yes. She was lonely and wanted to have a physical relationship, something she'd never had. Darren was easygoing and they had many things in common. She was naïve enough to think it would be simple – just sex, with no fuss or commitment. But it was a disaster. After months of dating and brisk activity in bed, it became obvious he was looking for a wife, one whom she suspected would support his career and follow him wherever it took him. She cut him off with a single blow.

"Congratulations," he said, smiling. "I loved your presentation – clear and compelling. The award is richly deserved."

"I'm glad you came, Darren. I hope you are well and enjoying life." She'd expected him to say something more, something personal after all these years, but he didn't. He stood there blinking and looking confused about what she said, but then turned and walked away. Perhaps he wasn't well, and it was something she should have known.

Who invited all these people from her past? She had not seen the list and had not asked to see it. She assumed the hall would be filled with scientists in her field as well as graduate students, post-doctoral fellows, and members of the society. Someone must have gone through her computer contacts, but even so, some of these attendees were in her life before the advent of email and the modern computer. She wondered whether they were also invited to the dinner and were asked to speak about her, to parody her life, adding humor to what might be a dull, humorless reception. There were many embarrassments over the years – awkward things she said and did – starting in high school and continuing throughout her career. Would all the characters in these dramas rise up to confront her on the happiest day of her life? She knew she was starting to think dark thoughts, and the touch of paranoia so many scientists work hard to fight off was showing its colors today. Nora needed to get out of the hotel and walk in the fresh air. She retrieved her award and brought it to the front desk.

“Please keep this for me for now,” she said. “I am going out for a while, and I’ll pick it up later.”

“Room, please?”

“802.”

The receptionist grabbed the award as though it were a trinket from a souvenir shop, plunked it on a table behind the desk, and continued taking reservations over the phone.

Nora stepped out the front door and walked down the street. It was a warm, fall afternoon. Suddenly, she wished she had someone to walk with. It would be good to see and speak with Richard again or even one of her former students. But she was alone and thought about how she would spend the hours until the reception. She didn’t know the city well and was afraid of getting lost. Shops lined both sides of the street but there was nothing essential to buy for herself, and no gifts were needed for anyone else. She hardly knew anyone well enough to do that anyway. After a half a mile, she became tired and considered taking a taxi back to the hotel. But then, she saw a café and decided to enter and have something to drink. She took a seat and scanned the menu. The café had an extensive wine list, and Nora thought, why not have a celebratory glass of Cotes du Rhone? She rarely indulged in alcohol, but this was such a special occasion, and she was feeling a bit down about something she couldn’t put her finger on.

The wine was excellent, and, after one glass, she ordered another. She hadn’t realized how hungry she was until now but didn’t want to fill up because of the dinner in a few hours, so she also ordered a small salad. As she sat sipping her wine with nothing to read, watching young couples flit in and out of the café, her thoughts drifted to the past. Should she have been more forthright with Richard back when she had feelings for him? Should she have been more tender to Darren, a sweet man who didn’t deserve the abruptness and cruelty of her rejection? She should have been more caring about all the men who wafted in and out of her life. Her behavior in support of her career ambitions was not at all exemplary. It left her a lonely old woman. Dried up. Unlovable. She received an award for her work, but her life was in shambles.

She paid her bill and began the trek back to the hotel. There was time for a nap before the evening festivities. She’d need to be careful about her hair. If it came down, she wouldn’t know how to fix it. She was a little woozy from the wine, and her shoes were pinching her feet, making it hard to walk. That’s all she’d need, twisting her ankle stepping down from a curb. There were times when she’d predicted events that were about to happen, a clairvoyance, like the time her keys fell through a crack between a train and the platform; she saw it in her mind’s eye several seconds before it actually occurred, but was helpless to prevent it. Now she felt that strange foretelling again, the sprained foot, the bruise and swelling, and the pain. She needed to be vigilant, to watch for cracks in the sidewalk, to be cautious crossing the street.

Two blocks from the hotel, the walk sign flashed, and as she stepped into the street, carefully avoiding a muddy puddle, a delivery cyclist zoomed directly into her path. She looked up, and right before his front wheel grazed her left leg, sending her sprawling into the gutter, she saw a young man with anger on his face and hard luck entrenched in his soul. He didn’t stop to apologize or to help her, but instead screamed as he swerved to right his bike, “Stupid hag. Someone should put you in an old age home. Worthless, drunken bitch.”

A young woman passing by extended her hand to Nora. “Are you okay?” she asked. Nora nodded and allowed the woman to help her up. Her suit was soaked and dirty, and her stockings were ripped. She limped back to the hotel, took off her wet clothing, and stared in the mirror. Her beautifully coifed hair was a mess. She pulled out the pins, let it all down, and got into the shower. She scrubbed the blush, eyeliner, and lipstick off her face. It was ridiculous to think she

could look glamorous at her age. A stupid hag. That's what he called her, and was he that far off?

She crawled under the covers. There were several hours left before the dinner. She wondered if it was possible to make an excuse (was getting run over and landing in the gutter good enough?) and skip the event. She knew there would be speeches, and although she was the guest of honor, she wasn't expected to say anything. What difference did it make to anyone at the gala whether she was sitting on the dais or lying in the hotel bed? She wished she had brought someone with her to the symposium, but who would that have been? She had no siblings, and it had been years since she spoke with her first cousins on her mother's side. As far as friends went, there was no one close enough to invite.

She had a deep yearning to talk to Richard. He came to her talk, so he must have thought about her over the years. Perhaps he was back in his lab. She could find out the phone number and call. Just to hear his voice would calm her and help erase the nasty words screamed by the delivery man.

She grabbed her cell phone, did a search, and was able to get the number of the department in which he worked. It was almost five o'clock, and perhaps the offices were already closed for the day. Without preparing what she would say if he were there, she dialed. The department secretary picked up; Nora gave her name and asked to speak to Dr. Richard Lowitt.

"Hold, please."

When he answered, his voice was friendly, but it was clear he didn't quite understand the person who directed the call to him because he asked, "Who is this?"

"It's Nora, Nora Edwards."

"My goodness! It's been decades. How are you?"

"Just fine."

"To what do I owe this honor?"

"I just wanted to thank you for attending my presentation and award ceremony."

Nora held the phone. When she heard nothing, she thought the call had dropped. She said hello several times, and finally Richard said, "Was that meant to be sarcastic?"

"What do you mean? I was glad to see you in the audience. That's all."

"I wasn't there," he said. "You must have thought someone else was me."

"I'm sorry. Please forgive me."

"No problem." The phone clicked, he was gone.

Nora sat on the bed breathing hard, willing herself not to cry. Richard was no longer the person she remembered so fondly. Or had she completely misjudged him years ago, seeing only what she wanted to see? Either way, she mourned the destruction of her long-held, treasured image of him. She opened the closet and stared at the navy silk dress she brought to wear for the dinner. It would be a torment to sit for hours listening to speeches and eating lukewarm food, smiling all the while, thinking about all the humiliating things that occurred on what should have been the happiest day of her life. What she really wanted to do was to get on a plane, go back to her lab, pore over data, and do analyses. None of these other trappings – including celebrations with no real purpose – made her happy. Only discovery – making observations, asking questions, and figuring out the answer – provided her with joy. And even then, what she accomplished would mean nothing if its importance didn't stand up over time.

Nora placed her suitcase on the bed and packed her belongings in a few minutes. She found the phone number of the person in charge of the dinner and dialed.

"It's Dr. Edwards," she said when the woman answered. "I had an accident this afternoon. I was hit by a moving vehicle a few blocks from the hotel. I think I'll be okay, but I

was rattled by what happened, and I need to get home to have my doctor check me out. I won't be able to attend tonight. I'm so sorry. Please send my regrets to everyone who asks where I am." Nora held the phone for a few minutes while the woman went on talking about getting someone in to see her now.

"No, please don't bother. I'll be all right. Thanks for your concern."

The taxi pulled up minutes after Nora arrived downstairs with her luggage. The evening was in its bloom with magenta skies filling the city, and the streetlights shimmered. She worried she might not be able to change her airline reservation, although there was an hourly shuttle which should have a seat or two vacant on one of the late flights. By the time she arrived at home, it would be late, but it was better to sleep in one's own bed and get an early start at work in the morning. She gave instructions to the cab driver, sat back, closed her eyes, and relaxed. But the cab driver was talkative. He was from an Eastern European country and wanted to practice his English. He asked about the hotel, what she was doing in the city, and where she was going. She rarely spoke to strangers, but for some reason she indulged him in a conversation, a made-up story of all the exciting things she'd done in the town. It was the first chat she'd had in a long time about something outside of science or her career. It was playacting, simply to appear normal.

"There's so much more to do here," he said. "You should come back and visit the museums." He gave her his card and said if she returned, she should call him, and he would pick her up at the airport. "Such a nice customer," he said.

As they took the exit, Nora noticed a helical sculpture at the approach to the airport; it reminded her that she'd left her award at the hotel desk. She considered asking the driver to turn around and take her back. She could instead call the society and ask that they retrieve it and mail it to her. Or, she could go on with her life, as she had done for decades, and do neither of those things.

The Fisherman
- Amanda Rosas

I still see the rust of
bloody fish hooks
under your nails, and
smell the bait decayed
and absorbed like lather
into the skin of your left hand.
I remember the nomadic sand
and sweat crusted on
the calloused, perpetual motion
of your feet as you
patrol the night water
and avoid the hauntings of sleep
and bite of bed.
You pace quietly,
flatly in the shallows
searching the single eye flounder
to carry home like a bundle
over your shoulder.
Then, the spear drops, floats,
sinks away.
The midnight bronze of
the Gulf cloaks you in the melting
metal of shadows and you fold your
humid hands together and stare
into the black ink of concentration
between them. You genuflect
as you once did at seminary,
a plea for forgiveness,
your agony extended to the pardoning
voices of a sea in prayer.

The Thing About Ghosts
- Leah Jones

Feeling haunted the whole drive up – so
house beyond the gravel road with its
legends. Shadows and skeletons. Ghosts wander
here - I fear the next to come and sit. Autumn
ruffles her earth tone feathers along summer
dying face. Cotton is blown across the roads edge
tangled into field grass yet to fade. Slim Jim's
left their grease along lips licked while contemplating
how many foxes this back road has absorbed.
Pastures are glassy in morning like dew covered
webs barn hung. The old cabin
wears its familiar frowning face. Derelict shed lingers
in fog streams like rejection. Ghosts begin to bargain
with one another about who gets to touch me
this time. Night begins all encompassing. Heavy. Union
soldier, dusted in howitzer smoke, stares at me near
the cliff of blankets. Eyes heavy with war glare like
a bobcat through hawk-hovering woods. Why this ghost? Were we
once devoted to one another? Did I promise I'd wait
and that's why you have yet to pass
your wandering soul into light?
You prefer darkness. My
Darkness. You ache like winter bones
to be seen
when all I wanted was to
remain not found.

Warehouse of Dreams
- Lee Hudspeth

The grocery warehouse smells of sundries
Cardboard and tobacco
Rising

Rising
Rising
On pallets and shelves
Waiting for deliverance, just as we were

Idle chatter floats above the machinery's din
Elders pontificating
Youngsters skeptical, yawning behind hands
The cigarette-tax stamping machine cl-cl-clanks along, mindlessly devouring an endless supply
of cartons
We were innocent, at the time

Streets aplenty, in this small rural town
Some are paved, some are dirt
Winding their way to unkempt graveyards
Right up to the very edge of unimaginable mortality
Colliding with a golden, carefree, insect-buzzing summer day

Abandoned homes collapsing
Down into the weeds and scrub
Anxious to win
No condominiums here

Small creeks full of fishing holes
Passageways to yesterday
Smells and old photographs beckon me back
Summer after ever-shortening summer

Previously published in my poetry book *Incandescent Visions*

Windmills on My Mind
- Fabrice Poussin





Where To Look for The Good Stuff
- James T. Knoll

Today, in the cool green of Kansas morning,
up to my neck in the love of summer,

I walked with Linda and Arlo the Labradorian
on the tension of the good earth.

Grasshoppers spun off
like green and yellow helicopters

and a red-tailed hawk called out
as it landed high in a catalpa tree.

I am telling you this for same reason
that I underline passages and scribble

in the margins of books
so when you come upon them

in the 50-cent bin at the flea market,
you will know where to look for the good stuff.

Guidelines

We publish thoughtful, provocative fiction, poetry, essays and visual arts.

Submissions are accepted year-round.

- If accepted, submissions may appear in any quarterly issue.
- Biographical information will be requested for accepted submissions.
- If your submission was previously published, please cite the reference.
- Simultaneous submissions should be accompanied by a statement stating so.
- If your work is accepted elsewhere prior to our evaluation, please notify us.
- All work must be original and in English.

We do not publish novel excerpts, memoirs, genre material, flash fiction (less than 1000 words), book reviews, erotica or works which rely upon explicit language or gratuitous violence.

Fiction can be up to 5000 words. It should be relevant to a general audience, compelling and thought provoking. Finally, it should contain a protagonist with a positive, articulated, universal goal (e.g., freedom from oppression) who actively struggles to achieve that goal, overcoming emotional obstacles in the process. We expect the protagonist's values and beliefs to be reflected in his or her behavior, which behavior initiates conflict with other characters. Ideally, the protagonist is motivated by a past wound which he or she attempts to heal. By story's end the protagonist learns something significant about human behavior.

Essays can be up to 5000 words. We do not publish essays which are life stories. We do publish essays which express perspectives about topics of general, timeless interest. That is, we are not interested in essays about current events but are interested in essays about the vagaries of human behavior.

We are interested in poems which contain vivid images, resonating voice, rich language, discernible rhythm and thoughtful messaging. An example of these attributes is Mary Oliver's *Wild Geese*.

Visual arts which elicit the comment, "How interesting!" are desired. Submit visual arts as **.jpg** files; do not send **.tif** or **.bmp** files. Accepted visuals may be reduced to fit the available space.

Mac users, please be sure that your files are readable by Windows 10.

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Accepted material will be edited. If changes are deemed significant, the contributor will be notified and given an opportunity to accept the changes or request that the piece be withdrawn from publication.

Send submissions to gphillips938@comcast.net Send 1 prose piece, 1-5 poems, or 1-4 photos at a time. For prose or poetry, type or paste your submission into the body of the email message.

We will not open any unsolicited print attachments. Photos, however, should be sent as attachments. Include your name and e-mail address.

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