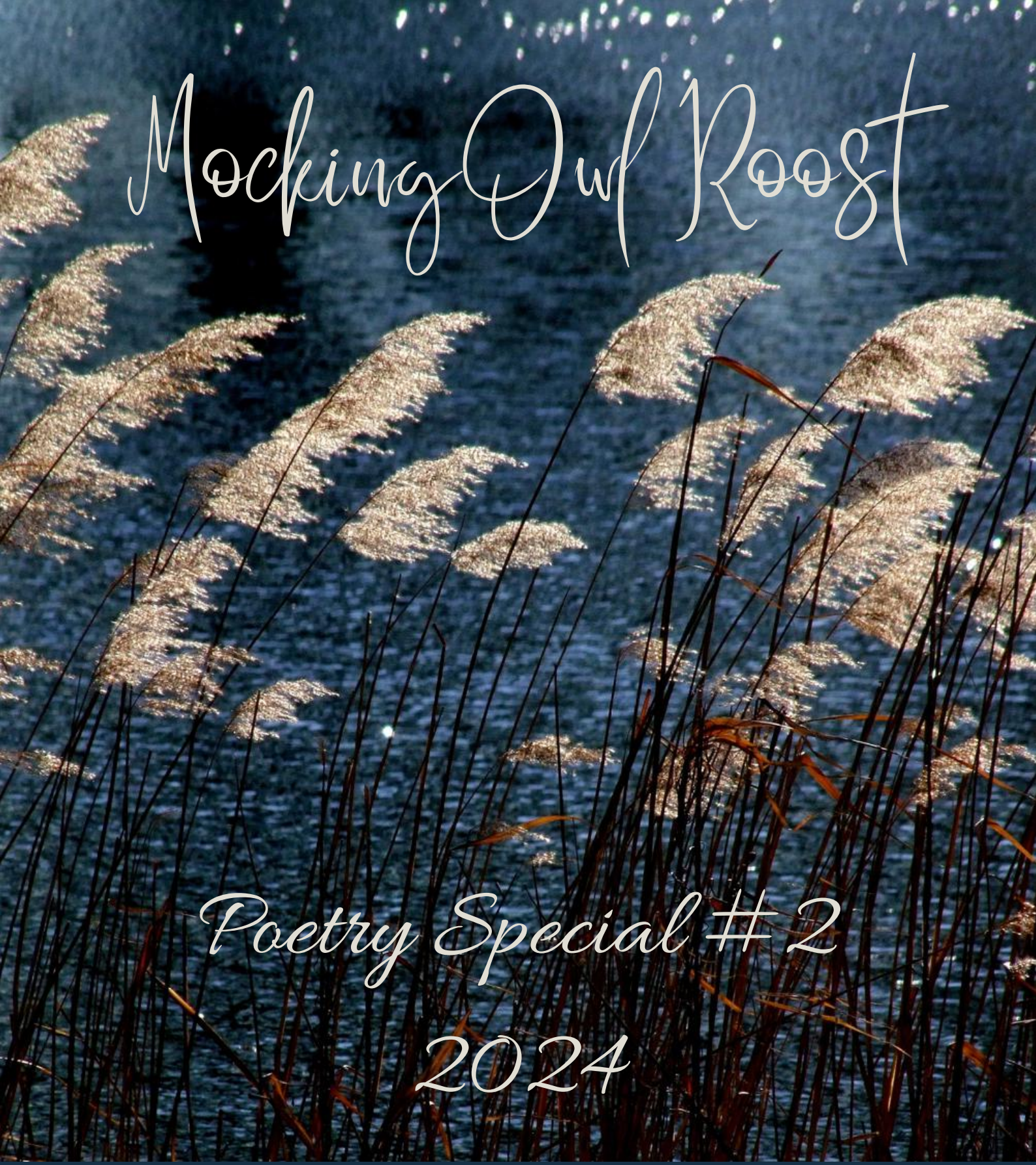

Mocking Owl Roost

Poetry Special #2

2024

Featuring

Outside My Door

Siberian Elm

Oarsman

My Photographer

Passing Front

Train to Munich

Masthead



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From the Editor







While shopping today, a fellow human stood in the aisle with me and commiserated for a good five minutes on "inexpensive" (read: cheap yet pricey) American chocolate prices that have soared in the country over the past year or so. Crappy candy that other countries don't even consider chocolate are now priced at the heights of imported quality chocolate from Europe (their throw-aways) or, at best, the high-end American candy.

While this woman in the chocolate aisle and I will likely never see each other again, the catharsis of that shared, personal expression clings, much like reading a poem by someone on the other side of the planet who has similar experiences to our own.

"What can you do?" the woman asked after a few minutes. "Buy it or don't, I guess."

"Complain and move on," I suggested.

She looked at me for a long moment, then nodded. "I guess so. Yeah."

It was a tiny moment in an aisle filled with strangers and cheap chocolate. But for those few minutes, we found a similarly suffering soul. Not that chocolate is a necessity, but that we both felt the burden of the economic problems enough to contemplate how much we'd pay for comfort food that even a year ago we wouldn't have blinked over.

Poetry for me is like that moment. It's both deeply personal and cross-culturally understood. It's both my own story and the story of millions of others. There's a quiet, soul-soothing peace in agreeing with an angry protest poem, pondering a holy rhyme about the untouched beauty of nature, or dancing in the celebration of a stanza of overcoming.

May you find your "chocolate aisle moment" in this issue of the MockingOwl Roost, amid the words of fellow rejoicers, sufferers, dancers, singers, writers, dreamers, chocolate-eaters, and angry ranters.

Rita Mock-Pike

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

The Waterfall



As I stand at the base of the falls, I
see the leaves fill the outcropping
a sign of fall and the glorious show of colors to commence.
The colors swirl in a welcoming dance
"You are here!" They cry!
I smile and wink.
Little frogs leap in and out of the spray,
moving between worlds.
Here they are frogs,
the netherworld gargoyles.

I laugh at my thoughts and without hesitation
step through the waterfall
into a different world
where the sun is blue.
The colors of the trees run together
flowing over me like crystalline paint;
a watercolor of my dreams.

I must be part of this landscape to know all its secrets.

Stepping back into the falls, I close my eyes,
allow the leaves and debris to cover me.
bury me in the wet film that flows into the river.
I can taste the scent of the pine and maple through the water.
This is my destiny –
Sprite of the falls.

My spirit merges with the waterfall –
That is the secret!
Individual droplets of water sing to me
as they dance off my body onto a frog's back.
My body
A body – iridescent,
radiant,
alive!
I am filled with the history of the falls.
Human-made of rock and sweat.
The salt! – I flick my tongue across my lips –
the water sweet,
resplendent;
it awakens long lost memories of unity
between earth and grave.

Sprite of the falls –
face upturned to feel the water's full impact.
Suddenly, yanked from the stream by a park ranger
"Stupid girl!" he screams.
"Do you know what you have done?"

I smile and look at the falls.
"Yes," I reply with unwavering determination;
"I have come home to the waters of my birth."
The falls move around me like a snake poised to strike the ranger.
I hear the water's surge
and the retreat of an engine.

Alone with my kin –
home.
Sprite of the falls –
home.

Sue Cook

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Outside My Door

Ammanda Selethia Moore



Aloe vera, blackberry bushes, cactus,
green shrubs and wild grasses,
greet me in the morning
I prepare my coffee and sit at the cafe table
Slowly sipping it
as my eyes wander
over the hill across the street
It's green from recent rains
broken up with patches of yellow flowers
I search for the donkeys
that bray and buck
while playing with each other
If I'm lucky,
a hummingbird will join me
drinking from the pink flowers
shooting up out of the closest succulent

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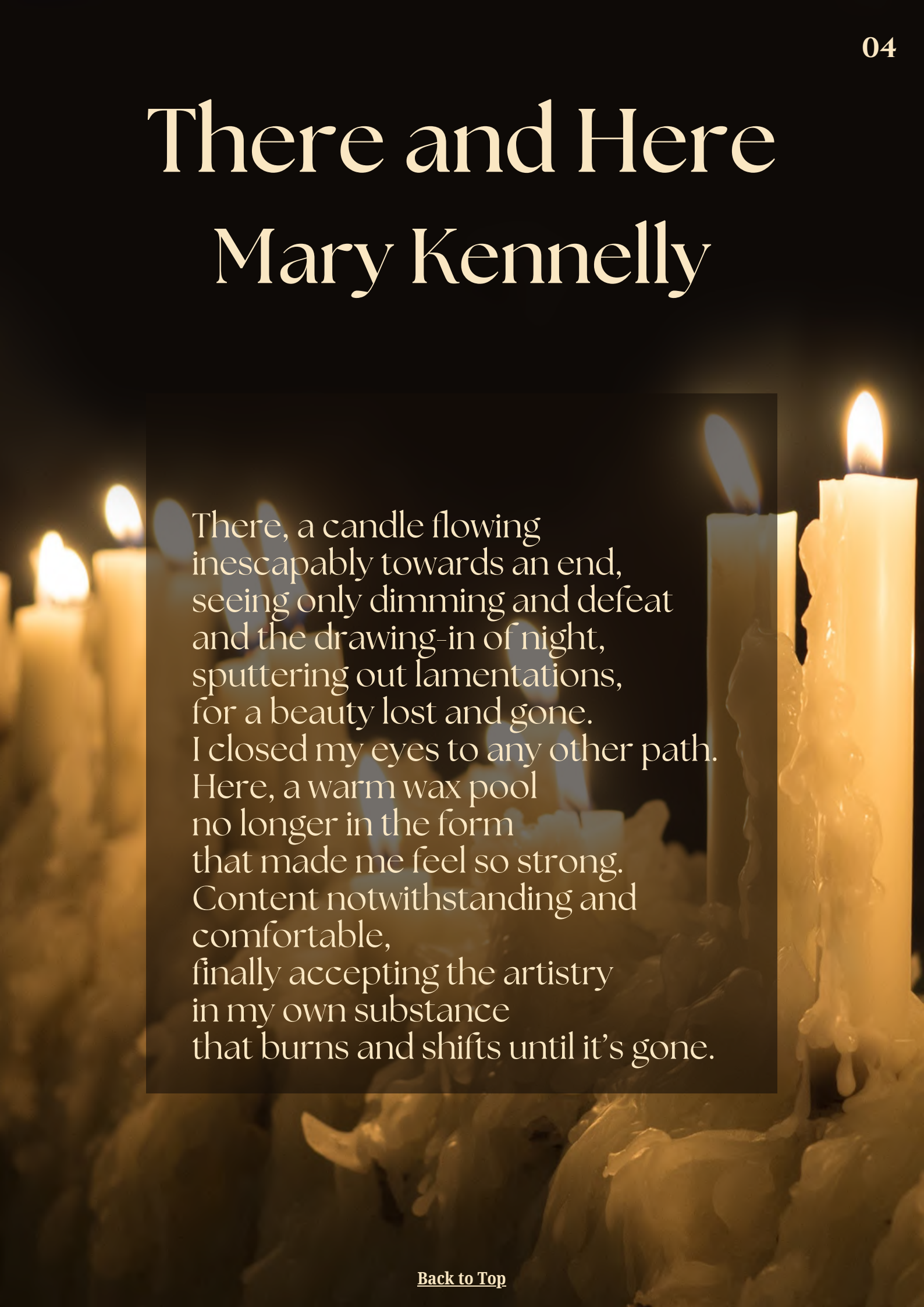
There and Here

Mary Kennelly



There, a candle flowing
inescapably towards an end,
seeing only dimming and defeat
and the drawing-in of night,
sputtering out lamentations,
for a beauty lost and gone.
I closed my eyes to any other path.
Here, a warm wax pool
no longer in the form
that made me feel so strong.
Content notwithstanding and
comfortable,
finally accepting the artistry
in my own substance
that burns and shifts until it's gone.

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Voice of Silence

Gargi Sidana

Startled breath
like a muffin gobbled in the mouth –
I am Silence – with pounds of singular emotions.
Fairy forests dancing in the frosty dawn,
on the muse of nightingale and crickets.
I am Silence – quietness summoning the forest flies
strangled pair of husbands tormenting the ripped soul
I am domestic Silence – sneaking through the bruised cheeks of women.
Women –
pinnacle of beauty, tangled in the smell of male chauvinism.
Mind trampled by the crown of agony and dismay,
I am Silence – half-beast; gnawing through the baggage of intrinsic thoughts,
scratching massive ice bombs from the vehicles in foggy winters
like cotton clouds furling their grey layers
I am Silence – leaving trails of veins.
Analog of void, triangular feelings
I am Silence – hopped in the mysteries and myths of the corpse.
Petunia swelled up on orange hues.
I am Silence – hovering on the moist languid flowers.
I am the language of the mystic realm.

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Shells - Image by Henry Vinicio Valerio Madriz
Barnacle Beauty - Poetry by Sue Cook



Toes of white dance slowly around the shells
their beauty only matched by the setting sun flashing in her long brown hair.

Shells beckon her to the sea,
the ocean's symphony playing only for her,
calling her to dance and feel the emotion of the waves.

Tide pools of lush treasures
coves of joy;
they are hers alone.

The city binds her feet,
slicks her hair,
makes her behave "like a lady should."
Glued to her chair, phone to her ear, she longs for the ocean song of the shells.

Again she runs to the sea with finality,
her feet filled with the joy the ocean provides.
She pulls out the hairpins unslicks her hair with the flick of a hand.
Freedoms floods her being.

She is home!
The shells replace the restrictive clothing,
her feet find the waves a welcome embrace;
her dance takes her beyond the edge of before.

Legs become fins,
the shells fill her hair and chest,
scales cover her body.

Gloriously bedecked in laces of barnacles,
she stretches in the goddess moonlight.
Her shimmering necklace shines as a beacon to sailors.
With a dive, she is gone.

Goodbye to legal briefs!
Goodbye to the grind!
Freedom comes from many paths;
perhaps she always was a mermaid.

Later a shell shaped as a woman washes up on the beach,

Her soul laughs as she frolics in the waves.

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An Artist Studying from Nature by Claude Lorrain



The castle,
Overgrown with bushes,
Stands proud,
Overlooking the dock
As sailors unload food
For the Duke.
How small the people are
Carrying their supplies
To feed the wealthy
Who live in the castle
And know nothing
Of the work it takes
To bring the food
They eat

Ammanda Selethia Moore

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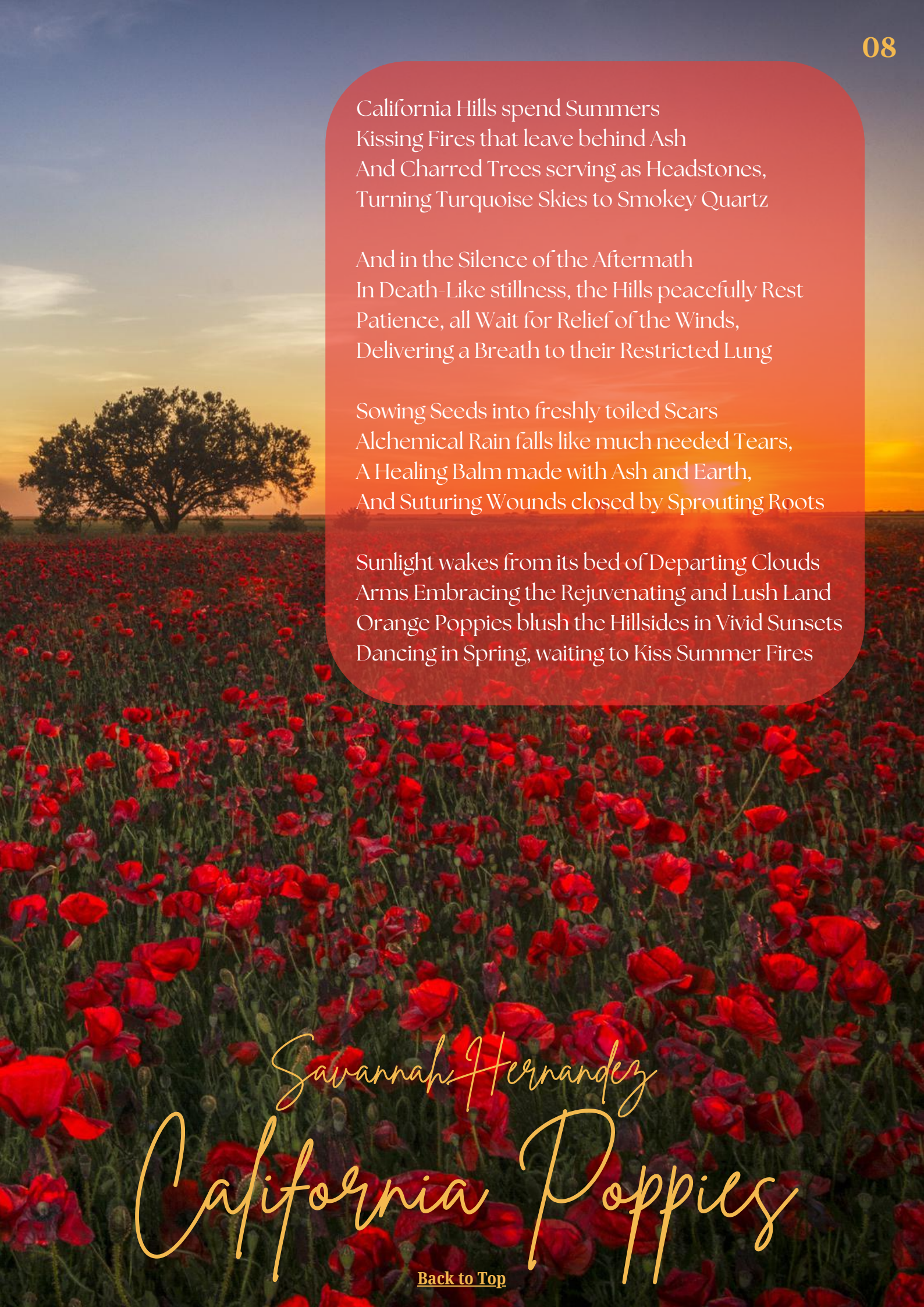

California Hills spend Summers
Kissing Fires that leave behind Ash
And Charred Trees serving as Headstones,
Turning Turquoise Skies to Smokey Quartz

And in the Silence of the Aftermath
In Death-Like stillness, the Hills peacefully Rest
Patience, all Wait for Relief of the Winds,
Delivering a Breath to their Restricted Lung

Sowing Seeds into freshly toiled Scars
Alchemical Rain falls like much needed Tears,
A Healing Balm made with Ash and Earth,
And Suturing Wounds closed by Sprouting Roots

Sunlight wakes from its bed of Departing Clouds
Arms Embracing the Rejuvenating and Lush Land
Orange Poppies blush the Hillsides in Vivid Sunsets
Dancing in Spring, waiting to Kiss Summer Fires

Savannah Hernandez

California Poppies

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Displaced Watermelons

Diana Raab, PhD

Early this morning
on the beach
with wandering canines
joggers and hungry seagulls,
fifty feet from the crashing waves,
round and untouched
on the ivory sand
were three whole watermelons;
one-hundred feet apart,
as my dog and I wonder
from where came
these titanic fruits
so out of place, so bizarre,
so begging to be sliced open,
and starved for attention.
We pivot and resume our walk
towards the espresso stand
and order two shots but decide
not to aim them at those melons.

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Renee Cronley



An artist sees everyone
beneath their veneer finish
and recreates them into abstract pieces
they can display in a public gallery.
Our eyes gloss over the broken lines
and disjointed patches of paint—
violent but vibrant colours
merging with subdued shades
imbued with brutal overtones.
Convention disregarded, composite forms
dismembered and broken down into mediums
we enjoy without judgement.
Each one has an essence – a pull
vibrating within the gallery
as chills and tingles
morph into macabre music notes
singing to our subconscious
to read the encrypted nuances.
Instinctively, we avert our eyes
to cleanse our psychical palates—
never lingering long on an image
in case we start to see ourselves in it.

Art Imitating Life

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Virtual

Janet McCann

Behind my glasses, I was in Anne Frank's house.
I looked down at my hands, they were gone.
My feet too. In this other world I climbed the stairs,
read documents, looked out the window she looked out
in 1944 when I was three.
It all came back, the shock and sadness I knew
When in grade school I first learned about it,
The lady teacher proudly praising America.
After the museum I had nightmares.
I was locked in another world, a frightening one.
Everything was missing or wrong, and I could not get out
Unless I could find surfaces, touch the table
with my hand, sit on a chair.
If not, I would be stranded there forever.
Today I read how they're fine-tuning the system
So you feel the virtual surfaces with physical hands.
And I saw an ad for a company that rents these sets
To nursing homes, and all the occupants
Can go to Paris together or even Prague
And chat about it when the trip is over.
Some of them believe the trip is real.
Does it matter if you're there, if you're not there?
Is not this world a crazy Disney ride?
I touch the keyboard, and the keys depress.



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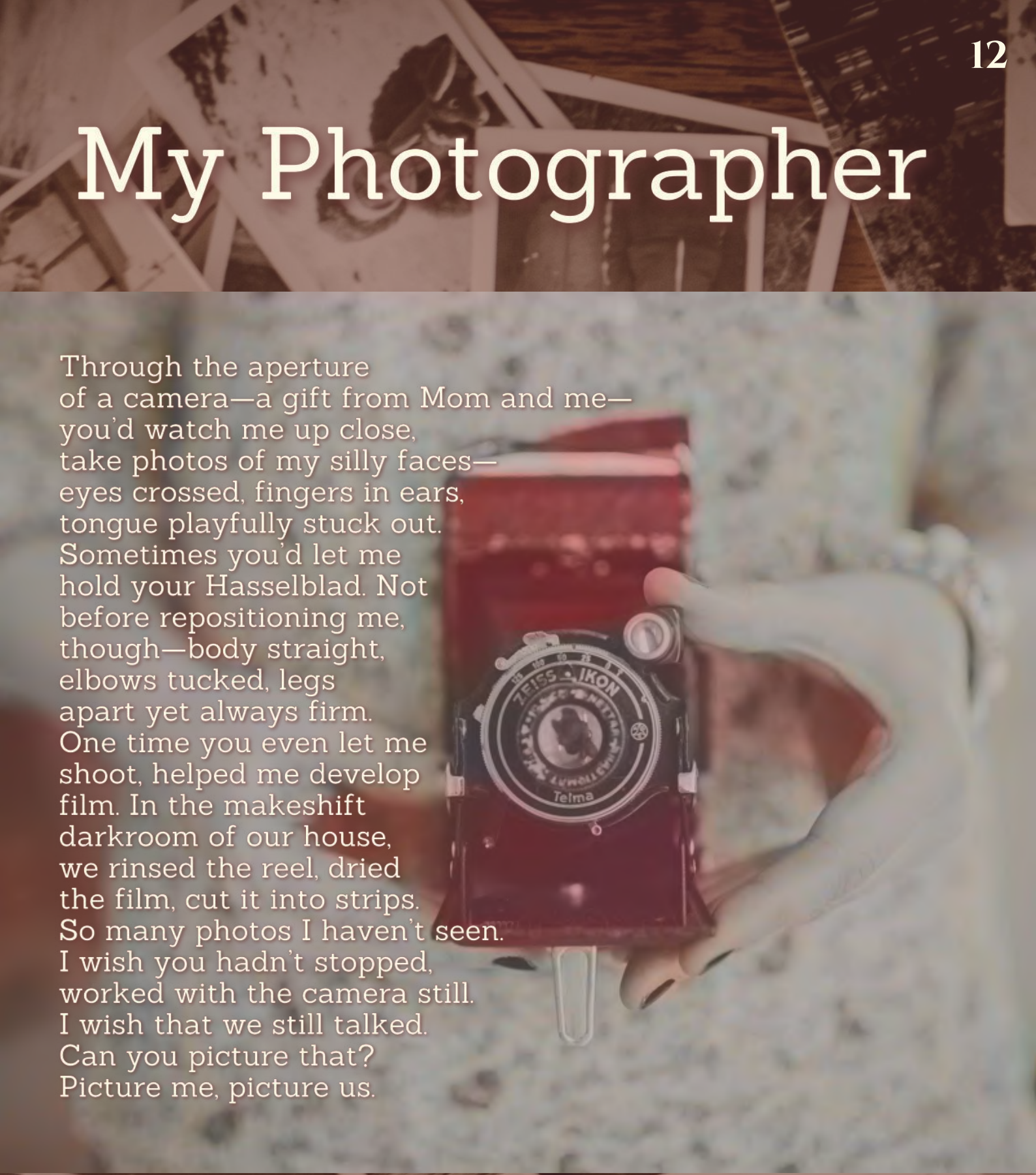
My Photographer



Through the aperture
of a camera—a gift from Mom and me—
you'd watch me up close,
take photos of my silly faces—
eyes crossed, fingers in ears,
tongue playfully stuck out.
Sometimes you'd let me
hold your Hasselblad. Not
before repositioning me,
though—body straight,
elbows tucked, legs
apart yet always firm.
One time you even let me
shoot, helped me develop
film. In the makeshift
darkroom of our house,
we rinsed the reel, dried
the film, cut it into strips.
So many photos I haven't seen.
I wish you hadn't stopped,
worked with the camera still.
I wish that we still talked.
Can you picture that?
Picture me, picture us.

Jonathan Fletcher

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Our Time May Have Gotten Away From Us

CLS Sandoval

Her text started out, "Hey, Darlin'!"
I was expecting something sweet to follow
at worst, innocuous
instead, she announced that
she was no longer joining us on that trip
we had planned for the fall
and my family was no longer welcome to stay with her
for more than a night or two at a time
She claimed it was a decision she came to with her husband

We had just stayed with them for Easter
had a lovely time
It opened that old wound
the one pried open by her manic episode five years prior
when she didn't want to see her oldest daughter
or only grandchild
for Thanksgiving
or Christmas

I sent her a text in response
expressing my pain
asking to talk
When we did
she explained that it was her physical limitations
her lack of energy rather than desire
that made her need to limit time with us
but she wanted to keep my daughter by herself for a weekend
and still travels yearly to Mexico with her husband
is social with large groups of friends most nights of the week

I can see her body is weakening
but I cannot help but feel
I'm still that angsty teen to my mom
the one she can only handle to be with for so long
I know she loves me
but I feel our time may have slipped away
a moment at a time
many years ago

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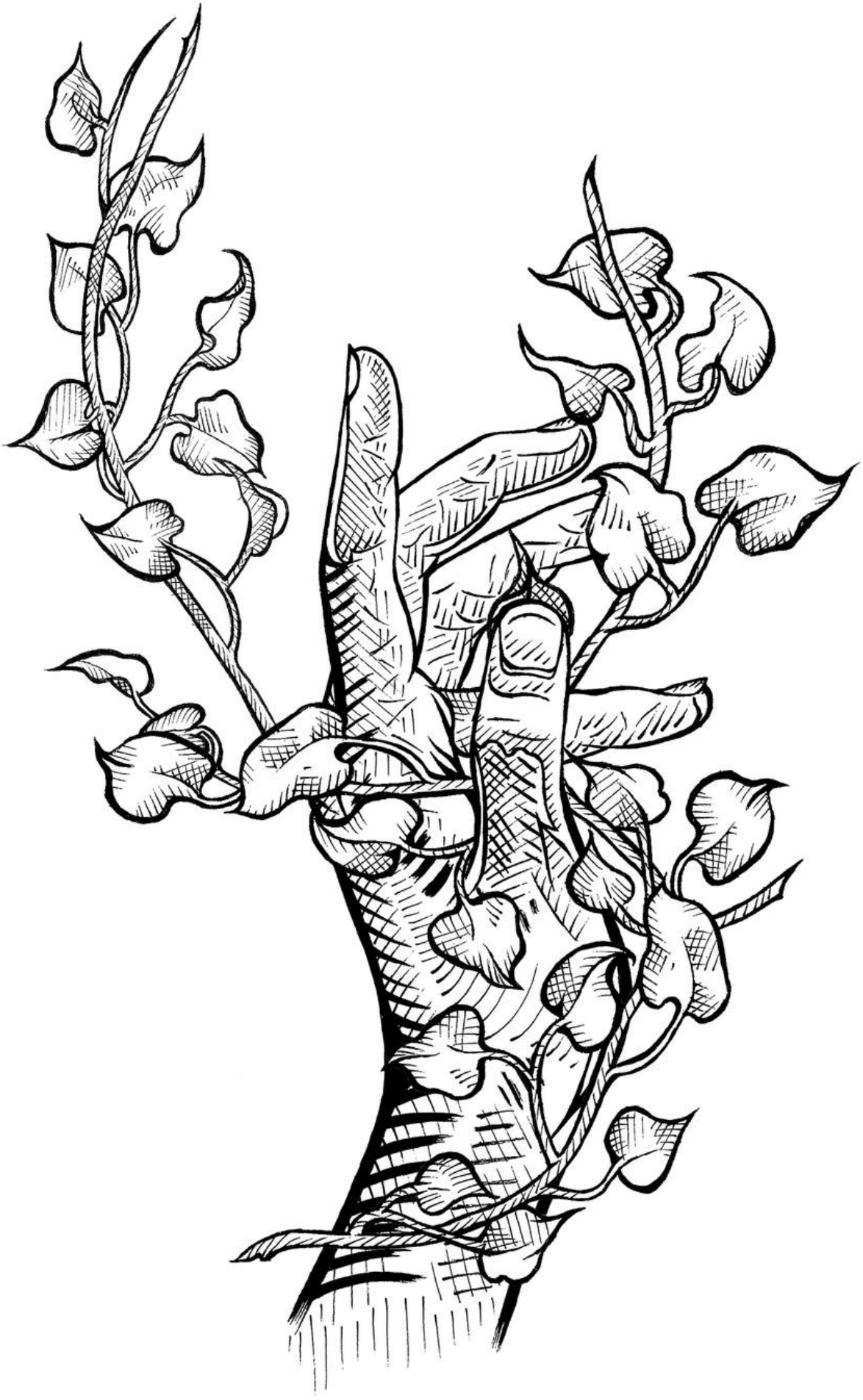

Tangled Transformation

"Tangled Transformation" is an intricate ink drawing digitally enhanced to depict growth, change, and transformation. The artwork features an outstretched hand reaching gently upward, symbolizing the human desire for progress and evolution. The hand is wrapped in delicate leaves and thin vines, intertwining with the fingers and extending upward.

Created using a crosshatching technique with black ink on a white background, the artwork emphasizes the complexity and interconnectedness of growth and transformation. The contrast between the bold lines and the negative space adds depth and dimension to the composition, enhancing the piece's sense of movement and energy.

"Tangled Transformation" invites viewers to contemplate the beauty and challenges of personal growth, highlighting the intertwined nature of life's journey and the continual process of change.

- Alyxander LaBranche

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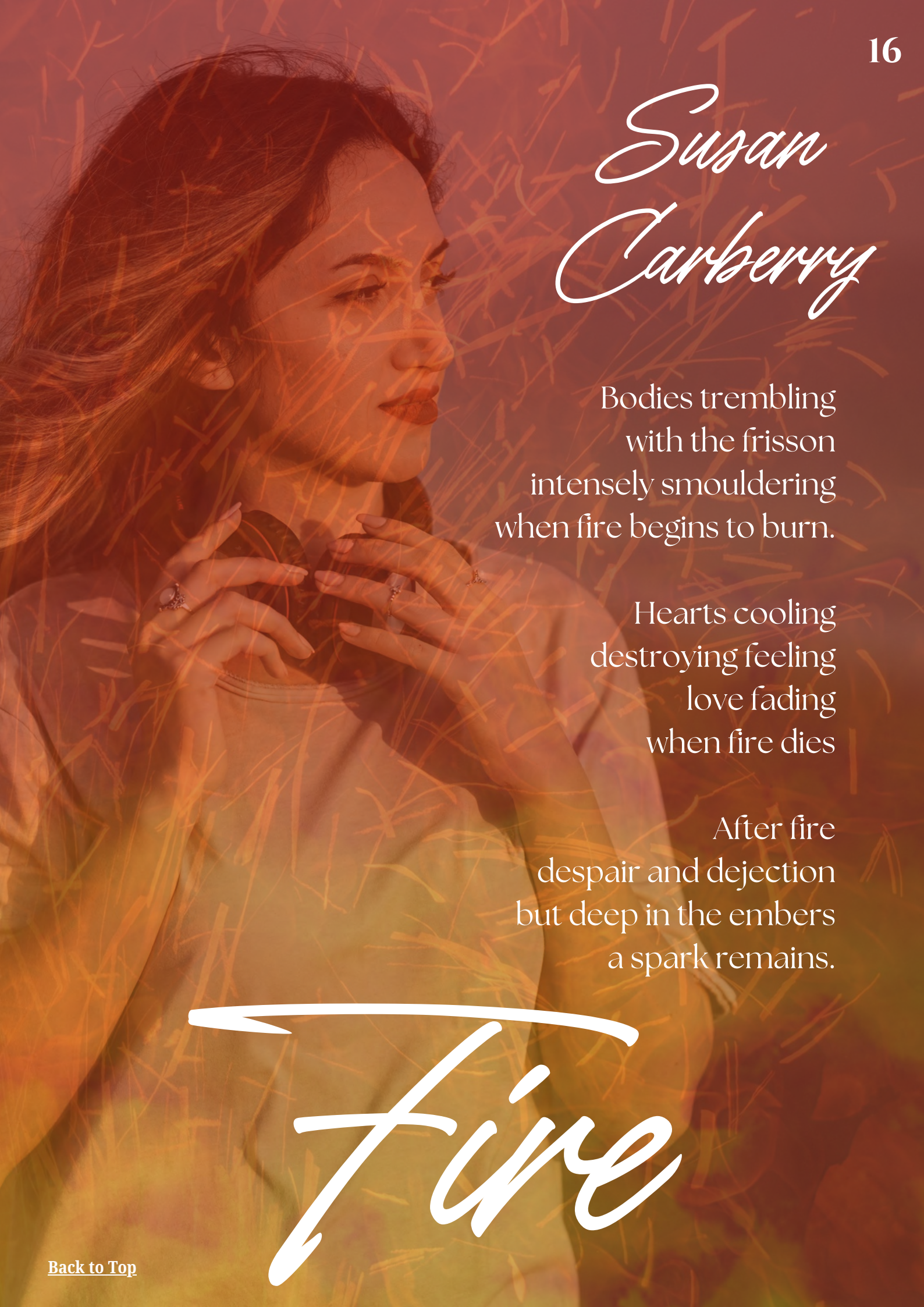

Fire

Susan Carberry

Bodies trembling
with the frisson
intensely smouldering
when fire begins to burn.

Hearts cooling
destroying feeling
love fading
when fire dies

After fire
despair and dejection
but deep in the embers
a spark remains.

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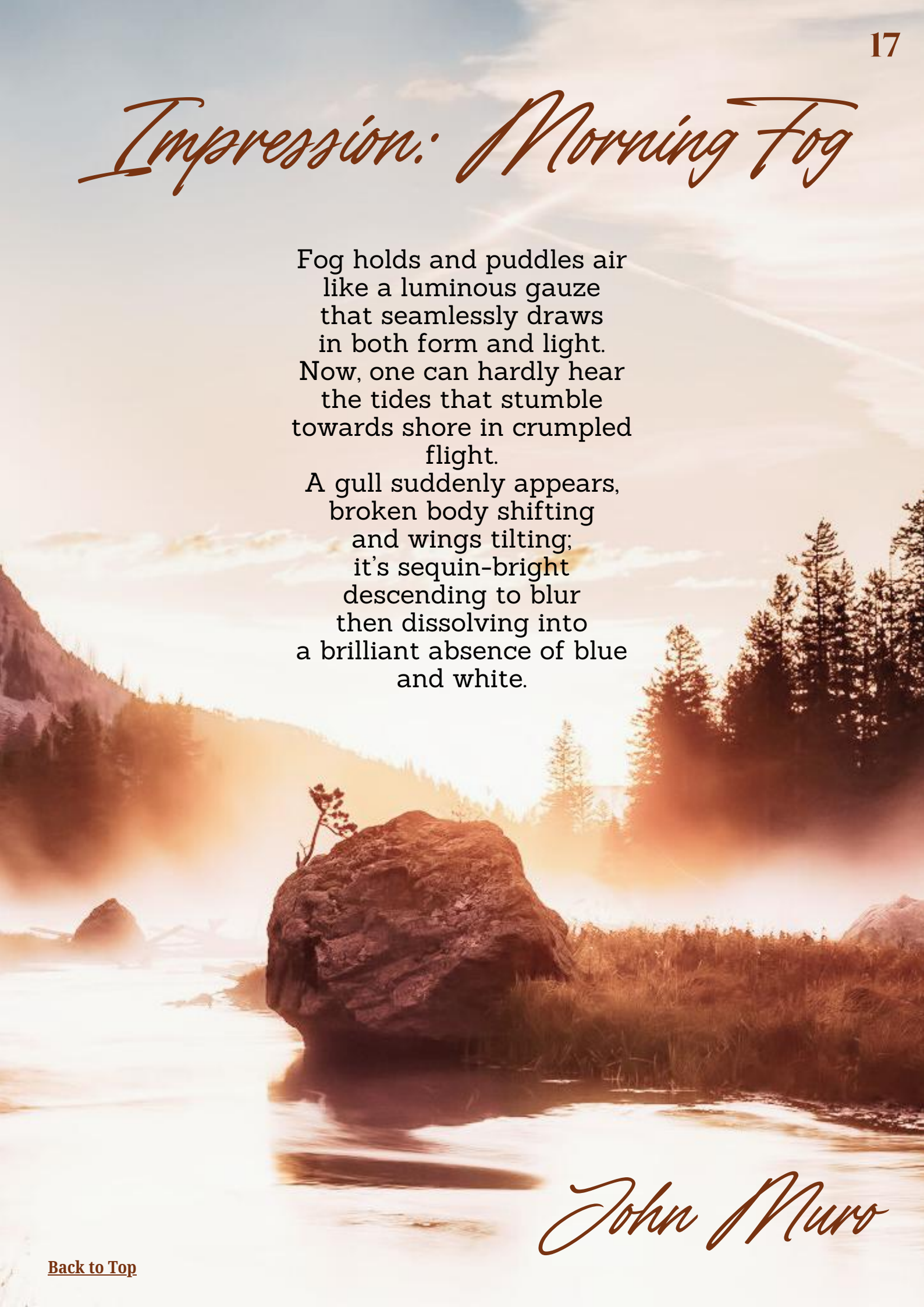
Impression: Morning Fog

Fog holds and puddles air
like a luminous gauze
that seamlessly draws
in both form and light.
Now, one can hardly hear
the tides that stumble
towards shore in crumpled
flight.
A gull suddenly appears,
broken body shifting
and wings tilting;
it's sequin-bright
descending to blur
then dissolving into
a brilliant absence of blue
and white.



John Nuro

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Black Swans of Adelaide



Rita Mock-Pike

Gossamer droplets, a web across backs, black as midnight,
a shimmering dance in the sunset sky.
Floating lights quiver in oscillating silence
as the world sinks into night
and hopes imbue hearts with impatience.

These black swans
floating, gazing, sparkling in the moonlight
as ruffled feathers shake away the day
and I rest on banks of River Torrens
uncertain of my movements,
my steps,
my plans.

Dazzling swans, can you hear my heartbeats?
Do you know the roiling torrents of my soul?
Do you feel the quavering of the spirit
that sought refuge in your quiet abode?

I prayed answers in your homeland,
a partnership and hope.
Flew away with Akubra, black as your feathers,
and more fantasies than answers,
more promises than plans,
more hopes than realities.

Resplendent swans, can you hear my exhales?
Do you know the longing deluge in my soul?
Do you feel the fluttering of the spirit
that sought refuge along your quiet stream?

Luminous birds of river, water, sea,
your symbol of hope, your story of migration,
your shining, sleek wings of legend
call me home once more that this longing may cease
and the water may flow beneath my feet.
Call me home once more.
Call me home.

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Oarsman

Robert Priest

Sail on my father
what a silly walker the world has lost
what a deafening emitter of raspberries
what that doodlebug missed when it missed you

You saw London burning from your front door
you heard the sirens screaming
you sailed through the Pillars of Hercules
to Aqaba and back
your photo anchoring the home shelf
over two small boys who waited

No one could row a boat
like you
accurate, even, parting
the Trent River precisely
in long widening vees —
V for victory, for the geese overhead
and sunfish below

You placed me atop the piano
so I could loose my 2-year-old song
at a work party
my first show
my first applause
you strode to the bully's house
and the bully never threw a stone
at my head again

Everything was money
or so you said
until those last two decades
volunteering at the hospital

You were stingy when we were poor
when I held the ladder as you painted
the high eaves
but you came from poverty
from hunger
to get your wage's worth
feeding the famished families of Easter
turning them loose on the all-you-can-eat
like locusts on a granary. Ha!

What a worker the world has lost
what a nicker of goods
The earth hanging from your grip
like a piddling pup
as even to your last breath
you held
the hand of the mothership

There are sandwiches
hidden in places
behind the stars
for your pilfering
to feed the birds
and beasts of eternity's backyard

and the dogs are with you
Sally, Rocky... striding the sky beside you
never letting loose a bark or a sniff
at the God you didn't believe in

but you were real
you were, you are my father
You took your time
knowing it would require years
for things to come around right
but things came around right
Now you sail on
priestless Priest
Big Ed
the prow of your vessel
heading to that promontory
where a man can turn and watch and wait

Your hand only empty
a while
your hand a country
a house
a weapon
steady at the oars
every stroke
moving you beyond

every stroke
widening
in the world
you leave behind

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Mourning Dove Cry

Savannah Hernandez



Misty Dawns mask the Mourning Doves
Who Coo, then Hum and Sigh in thrice–
Meant to be a Symbol of Anew, instead a Wake the Morning Brings
The Rising Sun now a Gentle Pyre, A Silent fire Respectful of Somber Psalms,
Transformed by the Woeful Birds' Funeral Song
While Taupe Feathers sit in Pews above
I rest at the Trunk below in Solemn Wonder–
To whom do these Birds Grieve this Day and many More
In their Coos, and Hums and Sighs of thrice?
An invited Guest among them I become
As I bear witness to these Ancient Hymns, I find myself to Ponder–
Who might be Lost to me? Will I ever know a Loss that is Undiscovered?
But these Doves will Remember in my stead, Memorializing the Unnoticed and Forgotten
Rhythmic Heartache strains my Throat, and not from Guilt but Reassurance I start to Cry,
And with them, I Coo, then Hum and Sigh in thrice

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Train to Munich



C I S Sandoval

At seven years old
I was completely oblivious
to the deeply rooted histories
surrounding trains in Germany

I was just on vacation with my family
exploring the beautiful city of Vienna
taking a train for 3 1/2 hours to Salzburg
to toboggan down the mountain
near where The Sound of Music was filmed

Though I had seen the film
everything about the Nazis
just seemed like the typical bad guy to me

I hadn't quite made the connection
to my class reading of The Diary of Anne Frank

Another hour and a half
from Salzburg, we were in Munich

My most vivid memory of the place
consists of the hard rolls and cheese
that were served for breakfast
in stark contrast
to my American expectations of soft sweets

After a night or two in the German city
our train left the station
4 1/2 hours back to Vienna
then a plane bound for the United States
our American passports
I was a little girl oblivious
to how many would have wanted those passports
that allowed us to easily board
I lived in blissful ignorance
as we rode then flew to the New World

me not knowing that going home was a privilege

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Driving Alone

CLS Sandoval

The officer said he was doing me a favor
just a regular speeding ticket
no reckless driving charge
I was headed south on the 15 going 90 miles an hour
driving alone
even though it was a Tuesday
and I should have been going east on the 78
up the hill
slowly
turn by turn
I was headed to Trevor's
instead of Michael's
Michael had dumped me
like Trevor warned
my tears were genuine
I wasn't sure what was making me cry the most
the loss of Michael
the speeding ticket
or the way I kept letting
Trevor convince me
that I owed him

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Pinocchio

Jonathan Fletcher

Though your nose
didn't grow the first time
someone asked you,
it might as well have.
Eyes wide, face flushed,
expression anything
but wooden, you denied
the accusation: I'm no fairy.
I knew the truth but said
nothing. You'd have
to choose when to tell yours,
no Jiminy Cricket to help.
I couldn't blame you.
Who would? Unlike Geppetto,
your father treated you like handiwork,
did his best, his worst,
all to make you a "real boy"

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With A Plastered Leg and A Cat

Kushal Poddar



If you sit beside a cat,
grey, and watch what
it watches through the window
almost all day, and yet
do not comprehend why
it does so, you are doing it wrong.
There must be a meme on this
or a koan. Balancing your plastered leg
on the sill is an art. Practice.
The birds call the rain.
Today, because of your eyes,
the clouds suffer performance problems.
One bicycle crosses the yard.
Another 'To watch' box is ticked.
A few crows unroll the interior of a rat.
Night grows behind the bushes.
There must be a text prediction on these.

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Siberian Elm



An alien assembly
of light and leaf
and brooding boughs;
oracle of travesty,
the tree's full-gnarled,
and it's very reach
could be an acre.
Mangled leaves,
thickly clustered,
eerily conjure
the hiss and rustle
of dry rain or receding seas.
Breadth is ample
and seems to hold
this quixotic season,
as well as still
the sun–
dusted clouds
drifting overhead
or idyllic choirs
in shade-hung
lofts; even beds
of irises, with languid tongues,
seeking light-swept air.
But more than this:
how it savors
being; insists
on still becoming
something other than just
a labyrinth filled with starry corridors.

John Muro

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The Passing Front

Nathaniel Patterson

for Jessica Nelson

To find yourself lost in a pregnant passage
of impertinent truth
is one thing
or to be knocked over
by the furious waves of
non-refundable youth sung harrowingly sweet
is quite another,
but to find the you that never was
and never will be again,
engulfed, folded timely into the mixture
of a vanilla cerulean, vast and solemn,
like a waking dream,
entrenched in the unnameable joy
of silken laughter,
blindsided by the careful ear of a tender heart,
will transport you to the western end of a discarded life,
relishing the unearned pleasure
of curious words emitted
long-distance
on a cool summer evening
surrounded by the stern breeze
of the approaching storm
and coming to realize
it is retreating
instead of arriving.

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Less than a Dollar Short

CLS Sandoval

First grade
lunch time
in line in the cafeteria
Mom finally let me buy lunch at school
Lunch was $1.25
including the milk that they sold for 25 cents a la carte
fruit punch was 35 cents
My seven-year-old brain did the math
if I didn't take the milk
I only needed ten extra cents for the fruit punch
Dime was warm in my pocket
approached the lunch lady at the cash register
grabbed my fruit punch
proudly handed her my dime
inquisitive eyes prompted my explanation
including my proud arithmetic
"That's not how this works"
I traded for chocolate milk

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The Fire

Fires surround me in my dreams.
Like a Phoenix, I rise from the ashes
triumphant.
Never count me out.
I will find a way to play the game
and rise above the disparity.

True power is determination of the soul to explore the depths of the unknown.

So much of my soul is unknown.
There is a passion to create – to ignite the fire
that lay dormant far too long.
Sleeping like the giant under the mound
waiting...

How much of myself have I lost to complacency?
Will I find the words to create the power of the spells
long forgotten,
a queen held enthralled by a body
succumbed to destruction –
no more a young soul.

Queen again,
the power of fire courses through my veins.

I will explore all that the fire can offer.
Fire does not weaken steel;
it tempers those who walk through it.

I have walked through the flames
and emerged victorious.
“Come to me.
Come for me!
Your warrior queen will offer you the blessings of fire.
Your lips will burn with Valhalla’s songs.”

Sue Cook

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Nostalgia

Gene Goldfarb

I do not live in ethereal dreams
or a lush, teasing fantasy.
No, no, Mr. Thurber.
I do not worship
those smart posters of classy travel,
so you can take Cassandra away,
you snooty Francophiles.
I do not pine for, or even dig,
rock bands, boy bands, or
rubber bands, and don't
pretend to know their names.
But another slice of that sweet,
warm, crumbly pie would be
great, I'm not kidding,
and if I could call you
Mabel when you served it,
whatever your real name is,
that would be heaven.

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Contributor Bios

SUSAN CARBERRY – LONDON, UK
Susan was born and lives in NW London. For thirty years her inspiration is an eclectic mix of social commentary, the natural world, the human condition, humour and a deep faith in God. She spends her time between Roundwood Lodge and Rubio Café, having breakfast at Roundwood, and in the afternoon arriving at Rubio for a latte and a 'to die for' slice of carrot cake. She is a familiar figure in her neighbourhood, speeding along in her mobility scooter. When asked how she is, her response is always: I'm still alive. Yes, Susan's still alive!

RENEE CRONLEY – MANITOBA, CANADA
Renee Cronley is a writer and nurse from Manitoba. She enjoys long walks in the cemetery and hates when people chew with their mouths open. Her work appears or is forthcoming in Chestnut Review, PRISM international, Off Topic, Love Letters to Poe, and several other anthologies and literary magazines.

JONATHAN FLETCHER – TEXAS, USA
Originally from San Antonio, Texas, Jonathan Fletcher, a queer, disabled writer of color, holds a Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing in Poetry from Columbia University School of the Arts. He has been published in Arts Alive San Antonio, The BeZine, BigCityLit, Catch the Next: Journal of Ideas and Pedagogy, Colossus Press, Door is a Jar, DoubleSpeak, Emerge Literary Journal, Flora Fiction, FlowerSong Press, fws: a journal of literature & art, Half Hour to Kill, Heimat Review, Hyacinth Review, LONE STARS, Midway Journal, The MockingOwl Roost-An Art and Literary Magazine, MONO., Moot Point, The Muse, and The Nelligan Review.

GENE GOLDFARB – NEW YORK, USA
Gene Goldfarb lives in New York City, where he ponders love, hate, mortality and what's up with the guy who hangs around the building. He loves movies, books, travel, and international cuisine. His poetry has appeared in the small press including: Black Fox, The Daily Drunk, The Gorko Gazette, Rat's Ass Review, Bullshit Lit, and Stoneboat.

SAVANNAH HERNANDEZ – CALIFORNIA, USA
Savannah Hernandez is a creative story writer, poet, and visual artist who graduated from Cal Poly Pomona University with a Bachelors in English Literature. Her themes often focus on healing, growth, and reflections on life.

MARY KENNELLY – IRELAND
Her previous books include; 'Sunny Spells, Scattered Showers', Carroll R. & Kennelly M. Glenwood Press, 2004, 'From the Stones', Fitzmaurice B. & Kennelly M. Evensong Publications, 2010, 'Catching Bats Takes Patience', Kennelly M. Liberties Press, 2015, 'Splinters', Fitzmaurice B. & Kennelly M. Evensong Publications, 2017, 'Into the Grey', Kennelly M. Evensong Publications, 2022. Her work has appeared in several collections and anthologies and Mary has been published in newspapers, magazines and e-zines. She has edited several publications. She lives by the advice given by her grandfather, "Take it easy, and if you can't take it easy, take it as easy as you can."

ALYXANDER LABRANCHE – MICHIGAN, USA
Alyxander LaBranche is a mixed race, trans, Mass Communication BA and Graphic Design AAS student born in Detroit, Michigan. A defining aspect of his life was growing up surrounded by supportive educators who nurtured his creativity fostering a commitment to art. With the whims and woes of life, he found his spark flickering, which was reignited by the adoption of his kitten Bynx (Thackerie). The fight for economic equality and food security is a cause that he cares for personally, making conversation about what those terms mean to individuals within the community and volunteering at local food pantries.

JANET MCCANN – TEXAS, USA
Janet McCann, is from College Station, Texas. Journals publishing Janet McCann's work include Kansas Quarterly, Parnassus, Nimrod, Sou'wester, America, Christian Century, Christianity and Literature, New York Quarterly, Tendril, and others. She has written four poetry books and six chapbooks. Her most recent poetry book: The Crone at The Casino (Lamar University Press, 2014) She taught at Texas A&M for 47 years. She lives with her dogs, Marple and Poirot, and writes copiously about them.

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AMMANDA SELETHIA MOORE – USA
Ammanda Selethia Moore (they/elle) is a non-binary poet and writer who also teaches English at Norco College. Their poetry has been published in Synchronized Chaos, Literary Yard, and The Journal of Radical Wonder. They live with their partner in sunny southern California.

JOHN MURO – CONNECTICUT, USA
A resident of Connecticut and a lover of all things chocolate, John Muro has authored two volumes of poems – In the Lilac Hour and Pastoral Suite – in 2020 and 2022, respectively. He is a three-time nominee for the Pushcart Prize, a nominee for the Best of the Net Award and, more recently, he received a 2023 Grantchester Award. John's work has appeared in numerous literary journals and anthologies, including Acumen, Barnstorm, Delmarva, Moria, River Heron, Sky Island and the Valparaiso Review.

NATHANIEL PATTERSON – WEST VIRGINIA, USA
Nathaniel Patterson is a writer and former high school English teacher in Falling Waters, West Virginia. His work has been published in the 2023 Ohio Bards Poetry Anthology by Local Gems Press and the Anthology of Appalachian Writers, Volume XIV: Marie Manilla by Shepherd University. In 2017, he was awarded the Denise Giardina Prize for Fiction by West Virginia State University for his short story "Get Along."

ROBERT PRIEST – CANADA
Robert Priest, is the author of 17 books of poetry, 3 plays, 4 novels, and lots of musical CDS. His words have been debated in the legislature, posted in the Transit system, quoted in the Farmer's Almanac, and turned into two hit songs. His latest book of poems for adults is If I Didn't Love the River, (ECW). A new album of songs and spoken word pieces, Love is Hard, is available on Spotify and YouTube.

KUSHAL PODDAR – WEST BENGAL, INDIA
Kushal Poddar The author of 'Postmarked Quarantine' has eight books to his credit. He is a journalist, father, and the editor of 'Words Surfacing'. His works have been translated into twelve languages, published across the globe.

DIANA RAAB, PHD – CALIFORNIA, USA
Diana Raab, PhD, is an award-winning memoirist, poet, blogger, speaker, and author of 13 books. Her new poetry chapbook is, An Imaginary Affair: Poems Whispered to Neruda (Finishing Line Press, 2022). She blogs for Psychology Today, Thrive Global, Sixty and Me, Good Men Project, and The Wisdom Daily.

CLS SANDOVAL – CALIFORNIA, USA
CLS Sandoval, PhD (she/her) is a pushcart nominated writer and communication professor with accolades in film, academia, and creative writing who speaks, signs, acts, publishes, sings, performs, writes, paints, teaches and rarely relaxes. She's a flash fiction and poetry editor for Dark Onus Lit. She has presented over 50 times at communication conferences, published 15 academic articles, two academic books, three full-length literary collections, three chapbooks, as well as flash and poetry pieces in several literary journals, recently including Opiate Magazine, The Journal of Magical Wonder, and A Moon of One's Own. She is raising her daughter and dog with her husband in Alhambra, CA.

GARGI SIDANA – INDIA
Gargi Sidana is a voracious reader and a skilled writer from India. Her poems were chosen for the OPA Anthology, Rosethorn publication, Iceblink Literary Journal and Spillword Press. She experiences the poem's emotions, trauma, and intricacies of it. An artist never sleeps unless she visualizes sincerity in her verses.

HENRY VINICIO VALERIO MADRIZ – ATENAS, COSTA RICA
Born in Atenas, Costa Rica, Henry Vinicio Valerio Madriz is a teacher who graduated in English Teaching and Linguistics & Literature. He published "Strange Fate" (short story), Darkness Falls (anthology) and "Loving Shadows" (poem), Dear You – Poems Through the Heart (anthology), The Red Penguin Collection, USA; "Running" (short story), Strangest Fiction Anthology Volume One, USA; and The Cyrenian (short story), Otherwise Engaged Literature and Arts Journal Volume 11, USA. He got shortlisted (top 10) with his poem "Soldiers' Death Sentence" (North American Continent) in Voice of Peace: 1st Intercontinental Poetry and Short Story Anthology 2021, The League of Poets.

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ANNALI CARMEL - CO-FOUNDER & CREATIVE TEAM
Annali Carmel (she/her) enjoys her life in rural New South Wales, where she listens to a lot of music, does some singing, and welcomes the occasional affection of Aria the cat when she deigns the peasant worthy.

SUE COOK - STAFF POET & WRITER
Sue Cook (she/her) lives in Freeport, Illinois with her husband Randy and two dogs. Her passions include assistance dogs, rescue dogs, music, acting, theater, poetry, and Doctor Who. She's been in both film and theater and is a regular cast member of the podcast Doctor Who's Line is it….Anyway? Sue is an advocate for the use of Service Dogs to assist their disabled handlers to maintain their independence. Quigley's Quest, her first children's book, addresses how a dog becomes a Service Dog.

MILENE CORREIA - REGULAR CONTRIBUTOR
Brazilian multidisciplinary artist. Major in English Language and Literature, taking a specialization course in Teaching of Drama. I write, rewrite, draw and compose and expose because my heart can't fit all these feelings. Leo, Queer, 92.

KATIE DANIELS - STAFF WRITER & INTERVIEWER
Katie Daniels is a lifelong Florida kid, where she still resides with her husband and their pup-child. She loves reading, meeting new people, and seeing new places. If you need anything, just bribe her with a donut.

CYNTHIA ANN LUBLINK - COMMISSIONING EDITOR & CREATIVE TEAM
Writing has been a part of Cynthia's life since she was 9. In the early 2000s, she became editor-in-chief of her motorcycle club magazine. For 5 years, her column, Gracie's Heart, in Christian Biker Magazine inspired bikers across the United States. She has contributed to various biker magazines and newsletters. Beyond her writing, Cynthia is a biker chick with a lady's heart and 40 tattoos that tell her life story. She is not just a cancer survivor but a life thriver. She is Mama to two grown children and Oma to eight grandchildren, all of whom she adores.

EMILY MACKENZIE - COPY EDITOR
Emily MacKenzie is a Canadian-born writer who currently teaches Secondary English in Scotland. She studied English and Creative Writing at Carleton University in Ottawa, although her love of writing developed long before that. Emily loves exploring different narrative formats and styles in her own writing, and while she tends to stick with long or short prose fiction, the odd poem slips through from time to time. She can most often be found tackling one of several young adult fantasy stories she intends to publish, both on her tablet, and on the walls with stickies, markers, and poster paper.

TANDY MALINAK - HEAD COPY EDITOR & STAFF WRITER
A Seattleite by birth, Tandy Malinak loves mountains but not rain. So she escaped to Chicago to learn what 'winter', 'summer', and 'real thunderstorm' mean, and she decided she liked them all. Tandy earned a BA in Education specializing in English and now spends her days homeschooling, nannying, and helping to lead her church's kids' ministry. In her free time, she writes fantasy and sci-fi, solves crosswords, and plays Nintendo. She lives with her husband, two dragon-loving kids, and three black cats.

NANCY MOCK - PROOFREADER
Nancy was born in Montana, raised in Ohio, and moved to Florida almost 30 years ago. Mother of Rita Mock-Pike and her two siblings. Nancy learned to make computers "dance" in the early 1970s, with her husband's encouragement, before most people had computers in their homes. She's had a lot of experience formatting magazines, flyers, etc. throughout her life. As a retiree, her favorite hobbies are still crafting (mostly sewing) and reading.

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RITA MOCK-PIKE - CO-FOUNDING EDITOR-IN-CHIEF & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR/PRODUCER FOR MOCKINGOWL STUDIOS

Editor-in-Chief of The MockingOwl Roost, Rita Mock-Pike (she/her) is the granddaughter of aviatrix, Jerrie Mock, first woman to pilot an airplane solo around the world. Rita has found inspiration from her grandmother's life and flight and pursued many of her own dreams in theatre, podcasting, novel writing, and cooking up delicious food from around the world. She now writes on food, travel, pets, faith, and the arts. She's happily married to Matt, and faithfully serves the very fluffy kitten queen, Lady Stardust.

SOREN PORTER - CO-FOUNDING COMMISSIONING EDITOR & CHIEF CREATIVE OFFICER FOR THE MOCKINGOWL REALMS

Soren Porter – He/him, INFJ, 30s-ish I think?, happily forever taken (sorry lads and ladies!). Writing reflections of faith and philosophy. LGBTQIA+ ally and sworn enemy of white supremacy. You might hear Soren ranting against evil policies, sharing ridiculous pop culture, or tossing around some theological thoughts on Tumblr or Twitter.



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