

RUST & MOTH

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Blue-Ink Ledger

The taluk office smells of wet ceiling lime and old twine.
A three-rupee revenue stamp peels away like dead skin
from the corner of the land deed my grandfather signed.
The clerk flattens the brittle margins with a carbon-smudged palm;
his thumb is stained purple from the stamp pad since noon.
The carbon sheets on the desk curl up from the damp,
transferring dark, indelible smudges onto his cuffs.
You cannot appeal a boundary line drawn in wet graphite.
You just wait for the ink to run into the fiber of the page.

Not the Bread Machine, but the Space It Takes

For years it rested beneath the pantry's
floating shelves, sap-sticky with spills:

hot honey and rice slipped from the bag.
Then, behind the giant soup pot I used only once,

to brine a turkey the way my mother used to
on my first Thanksgiving without her—Prussian blue

and dented, speckled like a bird egg. Later, I wedged it
beside the pasta maker and its many attachments,

another thing I never knew I wanted
until she gave it to me, as if to say I was worthy

of time-saving, of a homemade dough I didn't have to knead.
For weeks, it sat in the box of waiting donations,

where each time I bent down to haul it away, a stone
fell down the back of my throat.

Crusted with the bread I cultivated, crumb
of wheat, of banana, of oatmeal, from when I lived

alone in the rat house behind the landlord's five-bedroom,
pretending his black creek was my black creek,

that his chimney's columns of smoke
were my columns of smoke. She showed up

at my door with a box of new cutlery, knives so clean
I saw my face in them, with new dish cloths I had never

thought to need. She set the appliance on the green
tile countertop like a bouquet of roses.

I heard it whirl, warm with promise, loud as rain.
A memory so delicate it flakes in my hand.

Night Hike

As midnight approaches, the trail seems endless,
each step a useless gesture towards a destination

that draws no closer. Drawn to my headlamp,
a moth the size of a sparrow batters my cheek

with powdery wings, the softest slap I've ever felt,
and accidental besides—the creature wants only

to bask in the light I've strapped to my forehead in order
to banish the swath of darkness I point my face at.

Stumps, trunks, and boulders jump forward
in their brief illumination before being swallowed

by a darkness made total by contrast. On night
hikes with my father, flashlights were forbidden.

You'll ruin your night vision, he'd say. The trails
he chose were level and sliced cleanly through

the forest, creating a corridor I could walk through
with no fear. The moon, always visible through

the sparse canopy, the footing even and smooth.
My father slapped me once, for slamming the door

to my room after we'd fought. Shame dusted
my cheek, though I wasn't sure whose. I wonder

now, what he wanted me to learn from it. Not just
the slap, but walking in the woods after dark.

It's too late to ask—he's far ahead, walking
away from me into the endless, moonless night.

When I Say I'm in Pain

I mean, maybe someone took a bat
to the back of my neck. Hot oil to my shoulders
when I wasn't looking. Fire ants.
Maybe in the night, a secret doctor
left a scalpel inside my ankle.
Metal on bone. Sandpaper to skin.
I fantasize about unscrewing my legs
from my torso to hang them in the closet, so I can finally sleep.
I dislocate my hip, on accident.
When I say I'm in pain, I mean I wish I could leave
my legs on the side of the road and move on with my life.
Ibuprofen. Restful Legs. Tylenol Arthritis.
I have visions of hitting my knees with a hammer
to control the infliction of it. I imagine the relief.
I go to the chiropractor again.

I dread thunderstorms and hip pain
that gets brighter and brighter white until I can't see—
wires of lightning trapped in my joints.
I dread my periods, 29, 33, 38 days apart.
I dread being covered in blood that no one else sees.
Cramps like a small death. A swollen organ
wrapped around a piece of copper shrapnel.
Premenstrual vomiting, headaches, throat spasms,
unbearably vivid dreams.

Restless legs make me lunge and kick in the dark, an animal.
I whimper and wish I could run. I squat and sway, praying
that maybe my joints will pop right this time. I try not to panic.
Please let me sleep. Please. I have tears, I have blood.

I have a hammer.

Another Man With a Normal BMI and a Full-Calorie Beer Extols The Hidden Virtues of GLP-1 Abuse

Because this is a party, a smoke break
circling diet-culture syntax, discourse
disguised in an eating disorder's clothing.
And I am recovered and shooting
his darts in appetite suppressant exhales, still
he talks through my vocal-fried and lower-cased
*"totaalllllyyy liiiike what ever
happened to tape worms?"* with a full chest
and half head of hair, throwing up
numbers, pharmaceutical companies
and waist-to-hip ratios like weightless
inconsequential symbols of divine right,
while he determines—age, weight, or IQ—
my most marketable scarcity, like making his pornography
smaller will make the rest of him richer.
I am supposed to like myself.
Accept the things I cannot control.

This is me. This is a good thing. He wants
to eat me. I want his willpower and you
want to condemn smoking but Kendall Jenner
is the highest earning supermodel of all time
and Facetunes her thigh gap
wider, to her mother complains
on national television: her breasts
sit too low, jacks them from chest to chin.
She pouts. Because I am the cool girl
on this porch and do not flinch, cry
wolf or drown his tongue in the party's tepid pool,
see him swell with chlorinated rot,
pruned to an irredeemable organic shape.
No, I am the gun, smoking. Shoot me. Eat me.
If you can still see me, I am doing this wrong.

What if by the Sheer Will of Rhythm I was to Become Sex Again?

When I was young, sex felt like swinging
between tops and bottoms of mouth sound
and honey cream. I was bear-hungry

in the candy shop, skin syruped &
proving that I was a place to buy and sell. My register
open. Dimes in my eyes. Bent over to sell me out

of validation and hopscotch.
I was simply transactional. Younger still, I remember
the pink squares drawn on the side of pools

filled with lemonade and one giant
straw for sucking
yellow light

into the belly while jelly
sandals flapped wet prints in circles
around all the mamas with their plastic

tits and glasses and my nanny
Amy—my gleaming perfect
nanny Amy—with her boombox,

her short shorts triumphant
against the chorus of daddies who sang
Her legs go all the way from the ground to her hips.

What if I was that sex again, and not exhausted?
Not abandoned-car-lot-tired, not
a fatigued healthcare system reject,

not the *she just stayed*
to get rent paid, not
fire-season-is-the-easy-season

bleary eyed ho. What if by music
or something simpler like the ancient
clapping of the hands, I could return

to the pre-problematic and find an elbow.
A glowing elbow lightly dusted with hair.
His or mine or hers. Maybe then I could return

to the cathedrals
of skin—both marble cold
and mother-never-left warm

to contemplate a city
where each building
holds a part of me.

Behind a newly
painted door they've kept me.
Pigeons cooing on the windows outside.

The radiator like a ribbed beast
heaving on the inside. Kept in a room is me
as sex, and I am drawing maps

on the walls of all the places I will never be
in a dead-of-ending-night-blue
ink before I turn and say,

Salt

Three moths waft
through a clearing,
from the trees
on all sides. Aligned
to the glimmer
of mates, they push
their soft bodies
into flashlights and headlights
and fires, flickering
in lust and in certainty.
Moonlit, the white dust
of their wings
bursts under our feet
like gunsmoke.

Heliotrope

For years—
decades, perhaps—
it has fought
its way upward

out of dark brush,
climbing the side
of a tall, bent,
twisted oak

each day
a little farther,

each minute
a perpetual reaching
through the linked fingers
of gnarly branches—

a thin green vine
winding beneath them.

And there it is:

atop the highest limb,
a single trumpet flower
lifting its red-faced cup
to the sun
for a long drink.

A smile blooms
in my chest,

for I too
sprouted from a swath
of dead leaves and brush,

spent a lifetime
reaching for light,

forgiving
the ones who made the dark,

allowing
my heart
to tremble for them.

Field of View

Tonight, as we sleep, birds migrate overhead. Call in the darkness.
Navigate by stars, by the earth's magnetic field.

Green heron. Virginia rail. Hermit thrush,
over New England hardwoods, black billed cuckoos. Once,

we kayaked through mangroves, moonless, towards a bioluminescent bay,
blindly dependent upon the stern of the boat ahead. The night silenced us.

I imagined creatures slipping into the water beside us,
unwinding off a branch above.

I could never stand still in darkness and listen to a star-by-star navigation,
content myself with the journey instead of the arrival.

This morning, outside the bedroom window, the first oriole
of the season touches down.

I don't have it in me. To find my way without fear.

Nest

My mother believed in leaving something behind for the birds. In late spring, when the yard turned that deep New England green—wet grass, sap thick in the pines, the blueberry bush just beginning to ripen. She would gather every hairbrush in the house. A barbie themed pink one from the bathroom. The cracked black one from the kitchen drawer. The one missing half its bristles that no one had the heart to throw away. Even the cat's. We sat on the back steps and pulled. Strand by strand. Our own small winters. She said bluebirds liked the softest pieces, so mine were perfect. Cardinals preferred the longer ones, the ones that could wrap twice around a fragile beginning. The wind took what we were letting go of. Carried our hair toward the tree line where the yard stopped and the woods began. I remember the way the wind took it, her honey blonde hair and my brunette, knotted together.

Later, we would look for nests tucked into the maples. Watch as the blue of a bird's back flashed through the rhododendrons. She would point and say, *See? That one's ours.* And I believed her. I still do. Because with the birds, we never got it wrong.

Two Snow Storms, Then Morning

For days, the air will toss up crystalline ghosts, like rice
at a wedding. Murmurations of snowflakes will
dazzle themselves into oblivion across the conquered city.

In the freshly emptied sky, the birds ascend,
waiting to sprout fingers through their feathers
and stretch out long hollow-boned limbs to become angels.

But the people know where they are. They go out jogging,
trying to cast steady shadows against alabaster abstracts—
they pass by transmutations without pause.

The light-tipped fingers of giants reach up through the earth
where the lampposts used to stand; the people pay
them no mind. Around everything, a thick cotton skin.

What wounds are we, all wrapped together in one big gauze,
tripping over the ruins of sidewalks in a kinder Pompeii?
The wind whips skin into numbness,

roses it red with the ungrieved casualty of feeling.
These bodies shiver in the presence of the sublime.
Not knowing what is possible,

we surrender to what we understand ourselves to be.
This may be the greatest human triumph
or the grief that buries itself in our marrow.

Blank pages unfurl in the place of windows.
Diamonds materialize on lashes. Hell freezes over
and the joggers do not let up their pace.

Asmara

Thirty years the rifle slept in the
woman's hands like a child learning
to pray. Jacarandas spilled their blue
grief along boulevards the colonists
half-finished & abandoned to the
slow patience of weather.

Listen—the espresso machines still
hiss in the cafés, same fricative as
memory. Down at the harbor the
water keeps a private ledger of
phosphorus, of the boys who
learned to swim by drowning.

My grandmother roasts green to
black over coals older than the
borders, & the smoke makes a small
flag nobody saluted. In the trenches
up north they sang in a tongue built
from honey & sand. The hyena was
its own kind of psalm.

Frankincense & gunmetal— the
highlands taught the body two ways
of burning. Somebody's father is still
walking out of the photograph
toward the camel-bell, the camel, the
long red road wherever the dust
agrees to settle.

The sycamore figs drop their small
dark commas into the white page of
the road.

After Chemotherapy

In the year of public access television
and the kitchen window northern flicker,
oxycodone and ring dings, hospital
parking lots and waiting in line

to enter the grocery store – in that year,
every day some new knowledge
met my father and me, stood

between us, the fold in the rorschach.
Pulling mats from his cat's fur,
I watch him sleep on his side,
one hand under his ear, the other

between his knees, the same pose
I find myself in each morning.
Antiques Roadshow soundtracks the year

of tending – to an old cat, a burnt
garden, a dying man not yet dead,
not yet. A man who threads through me
like the smell of cut grass

as it passes through the window screen
above his bed. Salt poured into sugar,
sifted like sand through the fingers.

Maker

I fold origami figures out of Post-it Notes
for my students—mementos for our last class.
I pair Aqua Splash with Guava, Acid Lime

with Iris Infusion, stick them back-to-back—
not easy to manipulate with aching fingers.
Fingers crimping and pressing ever since Mom

taught me how when I was little. The first figure
I learned was a tsuru, a nineteen-fold crane
symbolizing good fortune and longevity.

My ojiichan made them from silver paper
to sell for gas during the Depression. He drove
the family in a jalopy from Brooklyn to L.A.,

boarded a ship to Japan before the war.
I tell my class the word “poet” comes from
the Greek poiētēs, meaning “maker.”

Like creasing precise folds in a paper square,
the poet pens their voice on a blank page.
I pass on this making to my students.

Each takes a turn stepping up to the podium,
reads their poems, and before sitting back down,
picks out a tiny lily, crane, or ninja star.

*Certain information about the poet's grandfather Shinkichi Hoshino
comes from the blog 落合学 (落合道人) (tsune-atelier.seesaa.net).*

Septic

Man of the house keeps the dogs outside.
They belong. People get the brick & mortar,
the AC; animals get ten acres of wooded
pasture land and soil. Fleas and gophers.
My dogs, like me. I mean, resemble.
Dig pits in the yard and want to be lazy.
Long time since we grew grass on the lawn.
Texas dirt is warm for grass. It's yellow.
Drought and heat and that spot on which
I piss every morning and the patch died.
It's not the only withering spot. There is a green
line veering 'cross the hayfield to the fence,
the septic line, and I know something about
those tanks, on account of my dad,
for whom I've taken shovel and unearthed
shit many times. It's an old house,
that old story, and it demands to be dug up
more frequent than you think you should.
You never fix the septic. We did not.
Just dig it up, work with it, wonder why
the shit line grows weeds and nothing else
between horizons has the miracle of produce.
A kid doesn't understand work is tough.
The kid is bored. He hates discomfort.

Keeps quiet to the father, but simmers hot
and waits his turn, ineluctably.
Maybe gives thanks, later, when
I've washed off the sweat, and sat
still with my anger, that he forced my
hand to labor thus, made me do this work,
made me like this. I mean, resemble.
Akin to.

I won't ever be completely clean,
but on a certain day, I see the green
patches, our dogs rolling, scratching
in the growth, and I wonder
we didn't labor in vain.

In the flat light of a funeral reception

your oldest niece asks for career advice,
hair down her back glossy as the close
-lying coat of a racehorse in high summer.
You wouldn't call the last ten years a career

so much as a lukewarm bath of vitriolic acid.
At twenty-three you followed your boyfriend's
jawline to the same city as half your high school,
bought a capsule wardrobe in neutral tones

of gabardine and cashmere, and gritted
your teeth through three winters of electrical
fires on your daily commutes. Amidst the blur
of early-stage funding and microservice

architecture, you were right a lot. Played
a lot of fantasy football with ivy-league
business majors, learned to wield a turn
of phrase sharp enough to disarm high-fiving

sexism in a drop-ceilinged boardroom.
In Pittsburgh, four days after Trump
was elected for the second time, you drank
citywides at Brillobox with your tech lead,

disassociating. Still, it took another year
and a depressive episode so sinister
your handwriting changed for you to crawl
back to poetry. Now, over the second sweating

gin and tonic losing to the 300 mg of Wellbutrin
pounding dull against your temples you tell her
to leave. It will seem impossible but it will never
get easier and you are talking to yourself.

Awakening

Living under the thumb
of a black walnut tree
it comes in October
that jolt
the fist, the walnut hull
bumping, bouncing off the roof.

You see the hand
of the hull in every bloody bang.
Between roots, dirt grows
only stones and vetch
despite all those
seeds.

Across the yard,
seedling rustle
and the throat-stung gasp
of sod breaking.

What Rain Will Do and Girls

Light rain persists, a pittering
on branch knuckle and petal mold,
a wet whisper glazed into leaf-sheen.

I recall another rain day,
a green slicker without a hood,
a girl with a girl
under a covered bridge

not knowing exactly where
to put our hands,
glasses off or on when we kiss—
whether or not
to keep my eyes closed
the whole time.

Bad Wheels

None of us were above Walmart.
That's how we knew it was real.
Our fluorescent love. Our automatic
door love. Love under a giant sign
the color of hearts and blood. We went in
for batteries and came out with
socks, cereal, a shower curtain,
two candles smelling like burnt hair.
Bottled beverages with made-up flavors.
Midnight linen. Mountain whisper. I mean,
okay. You pushed the cart with
the bad wheels and I said this is probably
what marriage looks like, broken yet still strong.
In seasonal they already had plastic pumpkins out
although it was July, which still felt a little
chilly at night. Every purchase is part
show-off, part bad timing. You held
up a waffle maker like a wedding
proposal. I said don't you dare unless
you mean it. We laughed in
that stupid way couples do
when they are briefly unbearable to
everyone else on earth. At checkout
the cashier looked exhausted enough,
like a statue of some retired cupid.

Behind her, the sky was the bruised blue
of our cheap denim. We put our bags in
the trunk and kissed beside the
cart return, the most American chapel
we could manifest. Nothing fancy.
Nothing sacred except this: you, me,
a receipt long as a scarf,
and some midnight linens waiting
to lure us out of bed in the morning.

Everything Melts

My attic sweats through July.
Everything up there warps eventually.

My Atari still has Japanese lettering
on the box.

I never learned Japanese.

My grandfather learned enough
Japanese to get by.

The joystick made him anxious.

He held it like he held his pocketknife,
then spent an hour making two G.I. Joes
high-kick each other across the carpet
while the television flickered blue light
across his glasses.

My mother called him a hoarder.
This means after he died
she sold his life by the pound.

An antique dealer weighed his medals
in one hand like loose change.

I stole back the patches
and hid them inside a silverware box
beside forks nobody wanted.

My attic smells like fall leaves
and wet cardboard.

Every summer the humidity worsens.
The Atari shell curls inward slightly.
By August, everything up there
fits differently in my hands.
The edges soften first.

I keep checking the medals for rust
that never comes.

Prayer for a Woman Peering Down to a Toilet

Lord, bless these days that start with blood.

Bless extra acetaminophen and her liver
for processing it. Bless her mother
and hers for imparting their genetics.

Bless the pretty white skirt she used
to love so much. Bless the little blue
heating pad that soothed her thirteen years.

They don't last long anymore, so please
bless her new one. Bless boxes and boxes
of tampons and pads. Bless ruined underwear.

Bless stretchy pants. Bless the stupid,
immoral pink tax. Bless nurses and techs,
even the mean ones. Bless the sterilized

gels, grainy pics and sticks defining
her appointments. Bless radiologists
too, though she never gets to see them.

You can even bless her former doctors
who said this was normal. Blessings
to anemia and compounding fatigue.

Blessings to estrogen for making her
grow things. Bless another year, another
differential diagnosis. Bless cysts and

polyps and endometriosis. Bless the next
surgery to fix the last surgery. Bless you,
who also took a scalpel to the side.

Bless the bleeding woman bleeding
issues of blood. Bless her, bleeding
Lord, bless me. Bless me.

That Which Glows in the Gray

It kinda snowed then didn't snow
this winter and kids went
sledding only once and then
when it should've already snowed
the sky dumped that 34° snow
heavy like cement
and it gathered on the trees
until limbs cracked like gunshots
and fell to the ground.

Some
only broke and bent, still
connected by magic and slight
xylem & phloem, the pith
exposed to the haunted world.
Now in May those limbs
are bowed to the ground
and flowering. They are
taking in the air, they are
taking in the sun. They go on,
eyes opening to a mid-spring frost
warning, their blossoms blasted by late
cold—but what is *late*, what is time,
now.

I learned the names of vaping products
from the litter in the parking lot at the park
where kids were playing baseball
in the freezing rain when their
coach kept them going out in the
icing drizzle, eight-year-olds toughening
up in case an F-150 isn't enough,
pale maleness making them
run laps when they complained on that
tan grass surrounded by office buildings.
What
counts as a park anymore,
do we zone parking lots as open spaces yet,
do we count the snack wrappers
plastered to pavement as flowers yet—
the mechanical messiahnnical gas station glowed
dull in the gray haze across the way as traffic
buzzed & sprayed, invisible routine eating
everything until all fuel is
gone,
devouring whatever you have until it starves.
Our new American flag above it,
electrical wires torn & frayed, flapping in the storm's wind.
The bludgeoned blooms somewhere beyond
groaned farther into the ground,
into the soil's always open palms.

Requiem In Iron

Rust gathers in the backyard
of an elderly neighbor I no longer see,
painting the charcoal grill, fire pit,
and patio chairs—a requiem in iron,
oxygen, and hydrogen, played
like slow piano music across the periodic table.
Waning days as predictable as a doctor
tapping the patellar tendon and the reliable jerk.

I remember how I thought I could think
my way past anesthesia, past the clean
erasure of consciousness,
and the anesthesiologist's smug certainty
that I would be sleeping at ninety-three
if I counted down from one hundred,
and how he laughed when I woke
and asked if I had won.

I go down to the riverbank at dusk
and choose two smooth, wet stones,
turning them over in my hand,
let their coolness pass through me.
In the coming abyss, with no beads
to count, no cross in my pocket,
I speak silently to the stars.
The stones grow warm in my hand.
It's almost time to put them back.

Poem

He asked an AI bot to write a poem
about the angst that living in these times
creates in all of us, set in the home
of some untethered soul, with end-stopped rhymes,
and wholly built on unlinked metaphors,
opaque and inaccessible to most,
with open windows and deadbolted doors,
and maybe someone talking to a ghost.

What came back didn't mention missing lovers,
or references to ancient, sacred hills,
or cow cats crawling under duvet covers,
or aching thumbs, or after-dinner pills,
no spirit of a parent with vague answers,
no children making images in song,
no acrobats, contortionists, or dancers,
no dreams where everything you do is wrong.

O'Bannon Creek

This poem has a rope swing in it,
tied to the limb of a sprawling oak.

My older sister is here
with her high school friends

and my voice calling, *Wait for me*,
as everyone runs barefoot

to the ancient tree, its branches
arching high over moving water.

If I am afraid to grab the thick knot
and leap, I can watch my sister do it first.

She might brush back her red hair
before swinging off into brown water,

and her friends might clap, but I will bite
my lip until her head pops up.

If she waves her arms to beckon me in,
I might not forgive myself

for stepping back from the edge,
for not sailing into the exact moment

of release, not letting my body fall
on purpose into danger

because I can't help imagining
myself clawed downstream, my cries

mauled by the growling current,
my sister's screams of happiness

too distant to supply my breath
as I slip under and away from shore.

People with Cats

Consider people who live easily with cats. Their homes offer double greetings: a glass of iced tea (or wine) and a nose silently extended, sniffing. Pat

your lap and the tabby or flute-slender Siamese sways into the living room to ascend the couch, to slink back and forth on the cushions behind

your head. People who love cats and also read the news have second, separate hearts that live beyond its furor. These people laugh at your jokes

and worry about democracy, but later they will go upstairs to bed and wait for the gallup of their cats' feet on the stairs. They'll fall asleep, one hand

on a sleek, furry flank, waiting for the purr to grow underneath their fingers, waiting for its song to slow their breath: right now, right now, right now.

Food Chain as Correction for Logistical Nightmare(s)

When I call for heads, I try to think platter
-wise more than turned ear. My soft not softness. I'm excited
by the puma's fur around her mouth after her kill, guanaco torn
like red bread. But I am more excited by how she breaks
the meat for her injured sister: limping, one eye gone.
I will put this panic attack about biodiversity into a panda
so it has the drive to fuck its species back to viable.
I will put my finger in the barrel, turn my hand into a rose,
break ledgers like loaves, limp to you
with a noose in my mouth: so good at sharing.
Eat this extinction with me. I'm not asking.
I am pumping tail pipes into bottled oxygen.
I am pissing in Evian. I was not born to re-educate.
I mean to fix the rotten heart & die. I mean to kill & share it,
to dig trenches against Big Fire like we can beat back death with death.

Wave

When I was twelve I walked to junior high
across a wooden bridge;
it spanned the morning mist
and the still grey lake we lived on.
I would hurry to the other side,
where the commuter bus swished by,
my father in a window waving
every time.

Lord you make things so tender
we must love them.
Then you crush them.
The day the missiles rained
on the children of Minab at school,
little girls and boys at school,
it was the psychopaths who did it.
Admit it—
you speak through them
as through the saints, alike.

Fatima. Zeinab. Hamed. Liana.
Zahra. Athena. Parsa.
Arad. Saman. Mandana.
Hananeh. Reza.
Ali.
Maryam.
Amir.

I always waved—*Mommy sees you*—
to my daughter on the slide, the swing, good-bye,
I'll see you soon.
I waved the first morning
of first grade as, a mile away,
the first plane ripped the first tower open,
disemboweled it like an animal.
I don't remember much. Flames.
A man who faced a wall
to pray.

Now that she's grown, it's marathons.
Floods of confident young bodies
course through Brooklyn, Central Park.
How much older I've become.
I wave a homemade sign:
I love you. Run.

About the Contributors

Aardhra Chandran is a postgraduate student and poet from Kerala, India. Her work has appeared in *Eunoia Review*, *Active Muse*, and various anthologies, with forthcoming work in *Borderless Journal*, *Zhagaram Literary Magazine*, and *The Limacine Magazine*. Her poetry explores landscape, labour, weather, and traces of time.

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Alorah Welti (she/her) is an anti-AI feminist, synesthete, poet, and prize-winning artist. Her words have appeared in *Anti-Heroine Chic*, *The Hyacinth Review*, *Rejection Letters*, and elsewhere. She lives on Dakota homeland in Eagle Lake, Minnesota, with her wonderful husband.

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Eleanor Wehrman lives with her wife on the Oregon coast. Poet, painter, and earth-centered practitioner, she writes at the intersections of nature, healing, and transformation. Her work reflects a commitment to living in right relationship with the land and imagining more just, life-affirming ways of being. Her poetry has previously appeared in the *Tule Review*.

Carla Panciera's most recent collection, *One Trail of Longing, Another of String* (Bordighera), is longlisted for the 2027 Massachusetts Book Award. She has received funding from the Massachusetts Cultural Council, the Provincetown Fine Arts Work Center, and the Bread Loaf Writers Conference, and she is Assistant Poetry Editor for *Mom Egg Review*.

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Yishak Yohannes Yebio is an Eritrean writer and DC Youth Poet Laureate. A National YoungArts winner and a Pushcart nominee, his poetry has been recognized by the Library of Congress, the Kennedy Center, and *The New York Times*. His work appears in *The Penn Review*, *Diode Poetry Journal*, and elsewhere.

Birch Wiley is a transsexual writer living in New York. Their work can be found or is forthcoming in *Pleiades*, *Arcturus*, and *The Commuter* from *Electric Literature*, among others. Their debut collection, *Mythweaver*, was published by new words {press}.

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Aaren Hilus Riveter works in Texas as a community college instructor, teaching freshman composition and world lit. He studies medieval philosophy and literature. He enjoys *Frasier* memes, art galleries, browsing old bookstores on road trips, long hikes, and strong dark coffee.

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Patrick G. Roland is a writer and educator living with cystic fibrosis. His work has been nominated several times for the Pushcart Prize, as well as for Best Small Fictions and Best Microfiction. His writing appears in *Rattle*, *South Florida Poetry Journal*, *HAD*, *Sky Island*, *A-minor*, and elsewhere.

Aisling Cruz is a Midwest-based poet and artist. Her work has recently appeared in *Viridine Literary*, *Vessels of Light*, *Gotham Literature*, and *Oyster River Pages*.

Melanie Perish is a gender fluid crone. Her work has appeared in *Sequestrum*, *The Meadow*, *Bicoastal Review*, *Caesura*, and other small press publications. Collections include *Passions & Gratitudes* (Black Rock Press, 2011), *The Fishing Poems* (Meridian Press, 2017), and *Foreign Voices, Native Tongues*. She believes reading makes you beautiful.

Mitchell Nobis is a writer and K-12 public school teacher in Metro Detroit, where he lives with his family and dog. He is the author of *The Size of the Horizon, or, I Explained Everything to the Trees* (Match Factory Editions, 2025) and the forthcoming collection *Beginning to Sense* (Match Factory Editions, 2027).

Joseph Geskey lives in Dublin, Ohio. His second book of poems, *Vigil*, was published by Broken Tribe Press in 2026. Individual poems are forthcoming or have appeared in *Prairie Schooner*, *Versé Daily*, *Tar River Poetry*, *The Dodge Poetry East*, and many others.

David Rosenthal is a public school teacher in Berkeley, California. He has contributed to *Rattle*, *Birmingham Poetry Review*, *Rust & Moth*, *HAD*, *Teachers & Writers Magazine*, and others. He's been a Nemerov Sonnet Award Finalist and Pushcart Nominee. He's the author of *The Wild Geography of Misplaced Things* (Kelsay Books).

Amy Riddell is author of a full-length poetry collection, *Bullets in the Jewelry Box* (FutureCycle) and two chapbooks, *Prayer of Scalpel & Ash* (Rockwood Press) and *Narcissistic Injury* (Pudding House). A Pushcart nominee, Amy's poems have appeared in various journals, including *SoFloPoJo*, *The Inflectionist Review*, *Quartet Journal*, *ONE ART*, *RockPaperPoem*, *Philly Chapbook Review*, and *Rust & Moth*.

Christine Potter is the poetry editor of *Eclectica Magazine*. Her poems have been curated by *Rattle*, *ONE ART*, *The McNeese Review*, *After Happy Hour*, *Nine Mile*, *Glimpse*, and many other publications. Her two latest collections are *Why I Don't Take Xanax* (Kelsay) and *Before the World Was on Fire* (Bottlecap).

David Eileen is a lesbian poet living in the mountains of Virginia. You can hear from them via e-pistle by signing up at their website, david-eileen.com, which also links their work published in *The Atlantic*, *Black Warrior Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, and more.

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