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SPRING 2022

LEGACY REFLECTION



FICTION

•

NON-FICTION

•

POETRY

Editor's Note



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Dear reader,

Even though we often don't think about it, much of our perception of the world is shaped by reflection. I'm sure you have a basic understanding of how our vision works. Light from the sun - or artificial sources - hits objects and then reflects into our eyes, allowing us to see those objects by that very light. Beyond this very practical application, there is the idea of reflecting on - or considering the world around us.

Reflection is so powerful because it begs us to ask the big questions: Who am I? Where am I going? Was this all worth it? It asks us to look back and assess our past experiences.

My name is Cheyenne Wilson, and before I became the editor for the Legacy Magazine, I worked as Southern's Writing Club President for several years. It's been an honor and a pleasure to work with so many talented, young writers. I've also been working on transcribing past issues of the Legacy onto a more modern website - and that in itself has been an incredible

journey. I've gotten to reflect on writing as much as 57 years old. And what I've noticed is that the Southern students from that time are not all that different from the Southern students of today.

That's what really makes writing incredible isn't it? That it can stand forever - as a testament, a legacy, to our thoughts, our feelings, our emotions. And years from now, students will be able to look back and reflect on the stories and poems in this magazine to get a glimpse of what our lives were like in 2022.

Thank you to our sponsor Professor Clarise Nixon, my assistant editor Kelly Sandel, our graphic designer Ciarah Clark, and our wonderful judges Aaron Mumu, and Professor Kathy Goddard. And of course, thank you to all our students who submitted their own original pieces to this issue - we could not have made this magazine without you!

I hope you enjoy this year's issue as you take the time to reflect.

D. Cheyenne Wilson

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FICTION

FIRST PLACE

THE GHOST

BY
JAMIE HENDERSON

“Do you believe in ghosts?”

We were sitting on the roof of your house, staring at the stars as they slowly appeared over the tops of the distant evergreens. The sky was falling into darkness like coffee into a pot—one drop at a time. I looked at you, my arms wrapped around my legs and chin resting on my knees, but you kept your eyes on the stars.

“I don’t know,” I uttered then shrugged, unafraid to be wrong with you. “Do you?”

You were quiet, thinking, the way you usually were. The cicadas chirped in harmony with the reedy timbre of a nearby brook while my heart beat a solo for only me; all waiting

for what you might say. I imagine, if it had been winter, our breath would have mingled in the air in front of us, floating into the ether like wax on water.

“Maybe,” you said, only when I was ready to beg for an answer. “Maybe there’s a ghost in all of us.”

“Care to explain?” I asked.

You finally looked at me, that soft smile reclining into your dimples. “You know I’m not as philosophical as you are.”

“I think,” you said, crystal eyes shining in the moonlight, “that each of us has a ghost . . . something inside that grabs onto things and memories and moments and collects them. Keeps them safe. Makes us who we are.”

"Like a soul?" I asked, trying, always, to understand.

"Not quite," you shook your head and stood up, towering above me and the trees and the cicadas and the breeze. "A soul's too general—impersonal. A soul's par for the course, included in the packaging. The ghost is sold separately."

You paced the length of the roof; climbed to the peak above the attic window and stared out like a captain facing an inevitable tempest. I wouldn't have been surprised if the stars had turned into islands off in the deep dark distance, promising riches for you to plunder.

**The ghost is
the only thing
that's left when
you're gone.**

"I think the soul is who you are. The ghost is who you become."

"Oh?" I said, "and what happens to the ghosts when we die?"

You were so quiet then, so thoughtful. I should have never let you think so much.

"I don't know," you said. You came back and sat next to me again, braced yourself on your arms and stretched your long legs. I longed to lay my head on your shoulder; so, I held myself even closer and tried to disappear. I tried to make it feel as though I were watching you from afar: You, an actor on a rooftop stage about to say something glorious.

"I think the ghost dies, too," you said.

I should have told you that the ghost doesn't die, of course it doesn't. The ghost lives on in every piece of clothing you wore and every book you ever loved. It lives in the wind that still smells like you; in the crunch of autumn leaves. It hums with the cicadas and murmurs by the brook; it floats on the breath of someone sighing your name.

The ghost doesn't die. The ghost, the one you said collects all those moments and memories and favorite things—it haunts the people and places who love you. It kisses your mother's cheek on warm summer nights and ruffles your little brother's hair when he comes in from the softball field. The ghost lives in your house: it eats in your kitchen and brushes its teeth in your bathroom; it lounges in your favorite chair and sleeps in your empty bed. It slips into your closet and dons your unused graduation robe, your favorite shoes, your Thin Lizzy t-shirt.

The ghost is the only thing that's left when you're gone.

If I had known that I would be on your rooftop in the middle of December, gasping for breath because I miss you and I want you and I need you and you're not here—I would have told you that I love you.

But I didn't know that then. So, I just said, "Yeah. Maybe."

And it was quiet. And I didn't know that you were already so far away. And I didn't know that there was something that I could've said or done to soften the storm inside of you.

"Yeah," you said, "maybe."

And even as the invisible clock started counting down to the hour (the minute, the second), when you would leave me forever . . .

The ghost of you had already taken your place.

SECOND PLACE

ON POPCORN

BY
COLTON DAVIS

*S*eptember 21st, 2020
I've realized something important after being under quarantine for six months. I haven't discovered the meaning of life or the origins of the cosmos or anything like that, but I think I discovered something important nonetheless.

I finally figured out why I always burn my popcorn.

~~~

When I was a kid and our mom had to work late, sometimes she dropped us off to stay at our grandparents' house in the country overnight. My sister Katie and I always stayed up late and watched old movies on VHS and ate microwave popcorn.

Our grandparents had a higher wattage microwave than we did, so whenever

we tried to make popcorn it came out a little overcooked. I can remember it as clear as anything now, the subtly charred edges of the puffs of corn like paper turned to ash, but back then I don't think we really noticed. There are so many things we have to notice now. Student loans due? Notice. The sky's on fire? Notice. The governor still refusing to unequivocally state that the virus actually exists? Notice. Forget about it. Wonder what'll happen tomorrow.

There's this strange sort of peace about watching Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade in a country ranch home, eating heavily-buttered popcorn burnt within the margins of notice, so far away in space and time from the taxes and plagues and wars and



trillionaires, a peace from which I'm so long removed I don't actually know if I have the capacity to describe it, and not just its pointed and vocal absence. I think we're all just looking for peace, really. If there is a singularly defining component of the human condition, I'm pretty sure it's that we're all searching for rest from our weariness.

My sister and I didn't ask to be in charge of putting the skyfire out, a universe ago in our Jurassic Park pajamas with a bowl of burnt popcorn between us on the shag carpet. I don't want to know the name and criminal history of the Postmaster

that's missing never feels quite as big as the space it leaves. I know, someday soon, that the world will be okay. I will be okay. Even now, peace awaits us just beyond that greenlit horizon.

But the peace of the future is not the peace of the past. The peace that awaits us is real, and important, and worth fighting for, but it is the peace of knowing that the danger has passed. It is the peace that flies above Gondor when Sauron is defeated and Aragorn becomes king. That other peace, only visible from the far side of the lens of time, is the peace of the Shire, of not seeing war for a thousand years, of not even knowing there was anything to be afraid of at all. It's watching wide-eyed, with blackened popcorn in hand, as Indy swings across a chasm on his whip to find the Holy Grail, the only thing on your mind not what the Russian government is planning or how you'll pay for a root canal, but whether a make-believe archaeologist in a hat will beat the bad guys to finding this week's golden MacGuffin.

We can't know how lucky we are to have that peace while it's here, and though the river of time branches and swirls into a thousand tributaries that feed into a thousand streams, each potentially leading to a brighter future than we could ever have imagined, none of them can sail us backward into the distant spring of never having known.

But there's still something that can.

My sister lives in Denver, now. I go to college in Pasadena. Our whole life we were inseparable, never spending more than a week apart, but this week it'll be six months since I last saw her in person. Before she left for college last year, she used to drive out to my school some days and wait for me to finish class. We'd head down to the Goodwill in town and she'd look at shoes and books and band t-shirts and I'd look at snow globes and records and VHS tapes and then we'd

**Even now,  
peace awaits us  
just beyond that  
greenlit horizon.**

General. I wish I didn't know how many parts-per-million of smog the sky can hold, or what percent ethyl alcohol it takes to disinfect groceries, or that only the top few thousand authors in the country make enough money to not have day jobs, or what a Postmaster General is.

I understand that hardship is a fundamentally temporary phenomenon, but it can be difficult to internalize that fact. Our species has an annoying tendency to ascribe greater magnitude to how bad something is than to how good it is. I'd buy a goldfish for fifty cents, sure, but once I had it I probably wouldn't sell it for anything in the world. The thing

collect our artifacts and go get McFlurries and talk about all the things we wanted to do once we were out of college. She was going to be an artist, and I some sort of novelist, and someday, we somewhat self-righteously declared, our combined creative prowess would take the world by storm.

A few weeks ago I sent her something I bought the last time we went to Goodwill. I'd been looking for it for years, but the universe must have known it would be my last chance to find it and the stars aligned on that Goodwill VHS cabinet and they actually had two copies in stock. It took longer than anticipated to mail one of them to Colorado, but she texted me today that it finally arrived at her dorm.

The greatest book ever written is about a man who tries so hard, reaches so far across that greenlit bay of time to pull the peace of the past back to him, that imagining the past becomes his entire future. Unlike *Gatsby*, though, I don't think we have to change our names, amass incredulous wealth through dubious avenues, and buy a mansion across the bay from what we cherish to grasp that peace. There is a way to rest our heads in tranquility while keeping our feet in the present and holding out our arms toward a brighter future.

My sister calls me on Skype as soon as the movie is disinfected. We each put our copy of *The Last Crusade* in our VCR's at the same time, and as the trailers roll for Tim Burton's *Batman* and ninety-nine cent pizzas at Pizza Hut, we talk about sports and movies and D&D and how great that Nintendo Direct was and we're just laughing like there's nothing wrong in the world because as much as we think we have to focus on the all the pain all the time, it is not irresponsible or naive to ignore it sometimes. The peace of not knowing is not diminished just because you choose, for a day, for a movie, for a happy conversation with someone you

love, not to know.

And while we talk about how excited we are for the next *Legend of Zelda* game, I make some popcorn.

And I burn it, just a little, as we lay down our oars in the river of time and, for a couple hours, let the current bear us how it will through the not knowing.

## THIRD PLACE

FIRST  
KISSBY  
MILE PINERO

**S**ticky. Slimy. Wet. No more butterflies, no more doe eyes; nothing but a sloppy, sloshy mess. I blinked to try to fix my focus. His mouth was, in essence devouring mine; and as I sat there letting it happen, I felt my soul leave me and hover from outside my body. I'd never fully understood what they meant when they said "out of body experience" until this very moment and as I sat there, my lips consumed by some foreign vacuum, I contemplated my existence.

*So, this is what everyone likes? How in the hell is this even appeasing to anyone?* He pulled away and smiled at me expectantly. I froze for a second, like a PC when it starts up, the little dots forming the loading circle. *He says he's kissed tons of*

*girls before... did no one ever tell him?*

When my soul had returned to me, I smiled and cleared my throat. "Wow." I said simply.

"Wow is right!" He giggled. *Did he really just giggle?* He continued, "I can't believe we just kissed. Oh my gosh. OH MY GOSH. I better go before curfew. Good night babe. Can't wait to do more of that tomorrow." He turned to leave, but I couldn't let him go. I knew that if I had to kiss him again, I would hurl into this poor boy's mouth.

"Uh actually, about that. I think we should break up. I just... I can't kiss you again. Like, dude, you should really get some help on that. No offense. It's been a good two weeks though. I hope we can still be friends. Okay,

night!” As soon as the words left my mouth, I knew this breakup would come back to bite me in the butt, but I didn’t care. I spun on my heel and was halfway up the stairs before he could respond. I knew the entire relationship was a mistake, but I had agreed to date him anyway. I had been praying for signs from God to help me make a decision on what to do next. They say God works in funny ways, and now I completely understood. As I crawled into bed that night, I smiled. I knew I never had to kiss this boy again. The next time I would kiss someone, it was gonna be a man, and I thanked God for that.

**They say God  
works in funny  
ways, and now  
I completely  
understood.**

# LOOK WHO'S HERE

BY  
LOGAN ENOH FAMUTIMI

“**M**on fils... avec une fille?? Est-ce que je t'ai bien entendu?”

Pierre asked his wife. “*Oui, mon chère*, Lucas is coming back with a girl! Can you believe it??” Chloë responded from the master bedroom restroom as she was putting on her makeup. “With a girl?” Juliette asked from down the hall. “I always thought he was a *PD*.” “Juliette, *ferme ta bouche!*” yelled Pierre as he walked past Juliette’s room. “Yes, honey,” Chloë affirmed as she entered Juliette’s room. “We don’t use the ‘F-word’ anymore.

Remember, we *français* are a new and modernized people who respect people’s differences no matter what. Unlike those... *américains*. The proper way to refer to those kind of people is ‘homosexual.’” Chloë Château, a young, proud, wealthy French woman, was delighted by France’s newfound openness to different cultures and languages. She had made it her duty to ensure her family was also with the times, making bilingualism a must in the household. She was also so thrilled when Lucas went on a missionary



trip to *Sénégal français* in Africa. The trip would be such an eye-opening experience for Lucas and she couldn't wait to see him after three whole years.

For the past three years, Chloë always bragged to her *amies* about Lucas' visit to the French colony. Whenever they would have some tea at the local *Café Marron* or go to the *boulangerie* to get some croissants and tarts, she would always let them know what her son was doing. "Oh, did you know that my son is in Africa helping feed all those poor children?" "Oh, you probably didn't know this, but my son is actually building huts

had bought the day before. In fact, she had bought everyone new clothes and expected everyone to wear it tonight.

Unfortunately, as always, her expectations were too high. "Juliette," Chloë said as she took a deep breath, trying to calm down. "Juliette, what on earth are you wearing?" "Oh? *Mais c'est quoi le problème?* What happened to 'new and modernized people'? This is how modern people dress nowadays, you know..." Juliette said with a smile as she twirled around, showing off her outfit. "Juliette, what I am about to say, I say it with love and respect for you as my 16 year old daughter. You know the pictures of those poor African girls in rags we saw earlier this week in the newspaper, *Le Journal Parisian*? Well that's what you look like. So go change. Now!"

"*Oui, oui*, I'm coming!" Chloë sang out as she went to open the front door. "*Bonjour, maman! Ça va?*" Lucas asked as he hugged his mother. "Ah, *mon précieux fils*, look how you've grown! Have you been eating enough food over there? You look so skinny! I mean, I know they're all poor but surely they gave you food!" Chloë said as she caressed her son's face. He had facial hair now and his skin was darker than normal. Nothing a little make-up couldn't fix. "Well, don't just stand there, please, come in!" She turned around and instructed the servant to pick up Lucas' luggage and take it to his pre-prepared room upstairs. Lucas entered the estate as the servant did as he was commanded. "Oh, and mom, I'd like you to meet the girl I met in Senegal." Chloë turned around, expecting to meet a nice elegant French lady, only to be met with a tall, slender, cocoa-colored-skinned Senegalese lady. Once again, her expectations were slightly too high.

"Oh Lucas, my sweet, precious, most adored grandson in the whole world," Grandma Claire cooed sweetly, batting her eyes. Grandma Claire was the owner

“Once again, her expectations were slightly too high.”

for people in Africa." "Oh *mon dieu*, you should really go visit Africa and help around like my son is doing. Thanks to him, those Africans now have fresh water to drink!"

Everything had to be perfect for her son's arrival. "*Et toi? Tu fais quoi là?* Don't you see that you've burned the *crème brûlée*?? It's supposed to be burnt, not incinerated! Do it again!!!" "*Oui, madame*, right away," the maid said as she ran out of the dining room and into the kitchen. Suddenly there was a knock on the door. "Ahhh, *il est là!* Lucas is here! Everyone to your places now!" Chloë yelled as she straightened out her new dress that she

of the estate and the official head of the family. She was stubborn, old-fashioned, and commanded total respect and submission at all times, basically the average grandma. "Please tell me why there's a monkey sitting with us at the dining table," she said, still flashing her sweet smile. A silence fell upon the room. "Mamie!," cried Chloë. "You can't say that! The correct term is 'ape;' monkeys have tails, this one does not." Chloë said as she stared the stranger down. "Mom, Grandma Claire, please, don't be rude," Lucas begged. "This is my girlfriend; I met her while I was working at a hospital in Dakar. *Bonjour mesdames, je m'appelle Sylvie.*" Sylvie said, standing up and stretching out her hand for a handshake. "C'est un vrai honne-"

"Oh, it speaks!" gasped Grandma Claire. "French too," chimed in Chloë as she shifted her gaze to the yet again incinerated *crème brûlée*. "Grandma! Mom!" shouted Lucas as he stood up, bumping the table and knocking down his glass of red wine. "We're in the 20th century, not the 18th century! What happened to modernizing and being more open-minded? What happened to not being like the Americans? What happened to accepting everyone as they are? When will you and Grandma Claire finally grow up and realize that we're no longer in the slavery days. You guys always want to be *'au courant,'* or in the times. The newest technologies, the newest fashion, the newest whatever, but when it comes to things like this, you all are stuck in the past!"

"Lucas Château, *ça suffit!!* You will NOT speak to your mother and me in such a fashion. I will not have it in my house!" boomed Grandma Claire's voice as she pointed her finger at Lucas, daring him to say another word. "Viens, Sylvie. Let's leave from here. *Elles sont toutes folles,*" Lucas says as he and Sylvie both get up and walk out the door. Everyone

stays quiet and watches the couple leave, hearing the front door open and then close. "*Oh mon dieu, vous avez vu tout ça?*" asked Grandma Claire exasperated. "These children nowadays have absolutely no manners whatsoever! I mean, how dare he come here with that uncouth village ape and just-" "*Mamie, ferme ta bouche, s'il te plaît,*" Chloë said quietly. "*Mais non!* I will not shut up! What that child has just done is an embarrassment to all of our ancestors who have built up everything you see around you!" "*Mamie! Ferme-la! Mon dieu,*" Chloë yelled as she put her head into her hands. "Maybe Lucas is right. I mean, maybe we really are stuck in the past. We look at the Americans and talk about how they're racist against black people, but look at what we've just done now?"

"He's still not back yet..." Chloë said as she sighed and looked out the window. "*Et c'est pour ça que tu es triste?* Maybe it's good he's not back. Wouldn't want him to disgrace this family anymore than he has," retorted Grandma Claire as she continued knitting the blue, white, and red blanket. "*Mamie, this is serious. What if he's hurt? What if he's lying in some gutter? Or even worse, what if he's been killed!?*" Chloë said, her voice shaking. "*Oh mon dieu, tu aimes bien t'inquiéter.* Stop worrying so much! It's only been three hours. Typically you wait until 24 hours before worrying and panicking. *Alors on fait ça, ok?*" replied Grandma Claire, not even taking a second to look up from her blanket. Chloë, ignoring her mother, proceeded to go downstairs. The clock's hands struck midnight, causing a chime to echo throughout the house. Four hours had passed now; it had felt like an eternity. Chloë walked to the front door and paused for a couple of seconds before finally opening it. She looked outside into the dark, starry night, welcoming in the outside noises and smells. Could it be? Could it really be that maybe, just maybe,

she wasn't as modern as she claimed to be? "*Non, pas possible,*" she said as she chuckled to herself, closing and locking the door.

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# THE WORLD ENDS TOMORROW

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BY  
MICHAELA HOUNSLOW

---

**W**e'd known for exactly a month that the world was going to end tomorrow.

The scientists figured it out first, then told the government, and somehow the media found out from there. Some people said it was the asteroid hurtling toward us, some said Earth would just implode, and anyone religious had yet another theory. I didn't know what the truth was.

At first, everyone panicked. Screaming, crying, frantically trying to find ways to survive. All the filthy rich people rushed to

get ready for space travel, but there simply wasn't enough time. Humanity was ending in less than 24 hours. Some would spend those hours with family, some would spend it living their dreams, some would spend it in prayer, and some would just wait for it to be over.

I live in a small town near the mountains. We don't see much here. Everyone is used to the same old same old, and when the world was ending most of the residents moved out as fast as they could. They just wanted to see something new.

I woke late on that fateful

morning to the sound of the news, a reporter screeching about how we only had 14 hours left. Clips of people dancing, partying, and maxing out their credit cards played on a loop. Everyone looked exhausted. It was as if they were out partying simply because they would never be able to do it again. I climbed out of bed, pushed my obese cat off the covers, and muted the TV.

To be perfectly honest, I had no idea what I should do with my last day, but I did know that I just wanted it to be a good one, one that you can't think about without smiling. I wanted it to be the kind of day that goes by slowly enough for you to realize just how good it is.

The sky was beautiful and the air was fresh, so I opened up every single window in the house, then set to work making breakfast. I had thought about what my last breakfast should be, but nothing came to mind at the time. I had thought maybe my grandmother's waffles would be a good last breakfast, but I was actually in the mood for bacon and eggs and jelly toast.

So with my morbidly overweight cat watching my every move and waiting for a piece of bacon to drop, I began on what might be my last breakfast ever. It didn't feel like a last breakfast. I thought I would dread it, that I would be scared of the fact that I would never eat breakfast again, but I wasn't. I just felt hungry.

At long last I finished, so I took a plate out on the porch and sat in a rocking chair, watching as the neighbor prepared for his massive family reunion. He and his wife were arguing over the placement of the lawn chairs in regard to the grill, and the kids were about to get in trouble for kicking a soccer ball into the flowers.

I fed my unreasonably fat feline and my dog, keeping an eye on the unruly neighbors and the small army of extended family on their front lawn. Nobody at the reunion looked happy to see anybody.

They joked and played football and talked and ate, but the more I watched, the more unhappy they seemed.

I migrated back into the house to find refuge from the noise, and when I glanced at the TV, I noticed a clip of a woman carrying bags full of designer clothes out of a mall. I snorted. Who bought ten thousand bucks worth of clothes to wear for the end of the world? For the first time in weeks, I hit the power button off.

The mountains behind our house had never looked so inviting, and a plan began to form in my head. I had always wanted to camp at the top of them, but the Rangers wouldn't allow it. Well, no one would care if I camped at the top of the mountain on the last day of Earth's history.

I scrounged up whatever camping equipment I could find, cramming it all in a backpack with a picnic dinner. My dog expectantly wagged her tail at my feet.

"You want to come?" I asked, holding up her leash.

She barked excitedly. I clipped it onto her collar, and headed out across the field toward the mountain, pausing only once to wave to my ugly, useless, 25-pound blob of a tabby, who didn't even notice I was leaving.

My dog and I headed up an easy mountain trail, taking our time and stopping to smell every flower, watch every bird, and listen to every stream. No one had told the birds that Earth was ending tomorrow, because they chirped and sang just as loudly as any other day. Squirrels spiraled around the tree trunks, leaping from branch to branch. Deer munched softly on the undergrowth, their ears swiveling around as they looked up to watch us pass.

The sky was slowly transitioning from a bright blue to a sea of pastels as I reached the end of the trail. The view was beautiful. Before me was an ocean of trees and hills with a river carving its way



between them all, behind me, a quaint little town nestled in the middle of nowhere. I set my pack down. It was so quiet up here—nothing like the chaotic scenes I'd seen on the news.

I unhooked my dog's leash and began assembling a crude campfire in a safe crevasse in the rocks. I rolled out the sleeping bag, fluffed up my pillow, and leaned against a nearby tree with a cup of water to watch the sunset.

The sun glowed like a great ball of orange fire, and the clouds distinctly faded from yellow to red, to magenta, to lavender. The entire sky was a painting,

They were unusually bright and seemed so much closer than normal. Maybe the atmosphere really was disappearing.

I wonder if anyone else is going to sleep, or if they'll just use up the last few hours they have. Part of me thinks that I wasted today, that I should have spent it doing something I would regret not having done in my life.

But looking up at these beautiful stars, I truly can't think of any place I'd rather be. Watching them fall, even though soon they'll probably be falling on Earth, I can only think of how beautiful they are. My campfire is crackling, I'm warm in my sleeping bag, and my dog is curled up next to me. Nothing bad happened today, nothing great happened today, it was relatively ordinary—and it's the ordinary things we have to say goodbye to.

Everyone is living like they're dying tomorrow, but they seem to have forgotten that Earth is the one that's dying. If we live through the apocalypse, nothing will be ordinary ever again. We will be able to find thrill and action and live it up no matter what happens, and we can rebuild cities and develop new technology, but we might never get to see a sunset for the rest of eternity. We might never hear birds chirp again; it might never rain again.

Sure, I never got out of my tiny little town—according to some people, I've never really lived. I don't care. If living means frantically making up for lost time and wasting it on things that barely matter, I'm glad I never really lived.

I'm a little surprised with myself, if I'm being honest. I thought this would be harder. I thought that I'd cry or be afraid of what was coming, but I'm not. There isn't a single thing in this world that I'll regret not doing, because I know I'm happy without it.

There's nothing to be sad about. Today was good, and I'm happy, because I left time to think about how good it was. I can fall asleep and never wake up and I'm

**It's the ordinary things we have to say goodbye to.**

almost as if it knew it had one last chance to impress us all and it was giving us the greatest, most magical sunset it could possibly muster. I wondered if the view was just as beautiful for everyone on the ground, assuming they were looking.

The light show finally drew to a close. A bit sad, now that I thought about it. The sun had gone down, and it wasn't necessarily coming back up in the morning. I couldn't quite get my head around that.

My dog returned from her little wander as I lit the fire, wagging her tail and stretching out on my sleeping bag. I smiled and scratched her head.

The stars were just becoming visible.

okay with that. The world ends tomorrow,  
and I'm ready.

# MIRROR, MIRROR

BY  
AIMEE HUNT

“I wish I were kinder to myself,” she said, looking at the ceiling. The bathroom fan all but drowned out her soft voice.

“And why can’t you be?” He replied. He turned toward her, the sheets shifting beneath him. He rested his head on his hand, the other reached out to her cheek touching it gently.

“I don’t know.”

She sat up, looking in the mirror opposite the bed. Her hair was a dull blonde, a mousey color. The eyes appeared to sit uneven on her pale face, hazel irises peering out from stress-sunken eyelids. She didn’t think herself ugly, but hardly ever beautiful. Sometimes, on a good morning, when she’d slept well and put on mascara she felt pretty.

She’d always been called “pretty.” But. . . he called her “beautiful girl.” She loved the way he said it, but she hardly believed it. How desperately she wanted to! . . . but fell prey to her own judgement of the face which stared back at her in the mirror.

Her nails were chewed, thighs too muscular, stomach too pudgy, too stout, too round a face, too big a head, too sharp a nose, too, too, too. Too much.

He saw in the way her eyes were reading her body that she was doing it again.

“Stop it. You’re perfect.”

She let out a soft huff of air in protest.

He turned her around so she faced him, and spoke.

“I love the way your hair is a little mess of waves, how

in the sun it turns soft strawberry. You have the loveliest skin. It's so soft. And those eyes. Like a forest floor, the green and brown marry in your eyes, and in the sun? They turn to honey. Beautiful girl. . ."

Her face fell before he could continue. He lifted it, their eyes meeting.

"The mirror is not the only one who sees you," he said.

"I know." She played with his dark curls, a half-hearted smile on her face. "I just wish it was kinder to me."

**The mirror is not  
the only one who  
sees you.**

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# MINNIE MOUSE ME

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BY  
VIOLET PETRIKAS

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**W**hen I was four years old, I had a Minnie Mouse dress that I refused to take off. The dress was black and red, with bright white polka dots and a graphic of a grinning Minnie Mouse on the chest. My mother thought very little of the dress when she first purchased it from the Gift Shop during one of our regular visits to Disneyland, but this simple pajama-like dress soon became the staple of my wardrobe and an eyesore for both of my parents.

I wore the dress

everywhere: biking outside, playing in the dirt with my sister, to the mall. About six months into my sartorial marathon, the stark white polka dots were stained with mud and the material was awkwardly stretched. And it may have had a few small rips. But these blemishes did not stop me from wearing the dress to the beach, to relatives' homes, or to Disneyland—where I got to meet Minnie while wearing Minnie.

Sick of looking at the thing, my mother often tried to coax me out of it. Tempting me with adorable



strawberry-print shirts and cute yellow dresses, she hoped I would abandon the tatty, cartoonish dress long enough to wash out the watermelon and dirt stains or to make a respectable trip to the mall. But her efforts to go anywhere sans Minnie were in vain. I refused to take the dress off.

What was it about that dress that made me adore it so much? It wasn't particularly pretty. The skirt was simple, not flouncy or full, but light and short and remained hopelessly flat whenever I tried to twirl. It wasn't sparkly or shiny, either. Being a native of Southern California

wear anything else, and we got so tired of looking at it."

My Minnie Mouse dress eventually ended up in one of those big white trash bags that gets stuffed into the garbage minutes before the trash truck comes barreling down the street. But something about the dress still charms me.

My dad has a picture of me sitting at the kitchen table in our old house in California. In the photo, my arms are resting on a stainless-steel tabletop and are covered in white alfredo sauce. My curly hair is tucked behind my ears, and breadcrumbs and sauce are smeared on my forehead and chin. I am wearing the Minnie Mouse dress, which is covered in sauce and crumbs, and the most enormous grin. I look completely happy.

Maybe it was the polka dots, or the puffed sleeves; maybe it was the way it made me feel? I don't know, but I loved that dress, and looking back on that time in my life, I love that I didn't care what other people thought of me for wearing the same thing almost every day for a year. I didn't care how messy and muddled the dress was, or how I looked in it. The dress made me happy.

I am no longer obsessed with Minnie Mouse, but I love to look back on that time when I did not care what people thought. And sometimes, I like to throw on a Minnie Mouse shirt to relive those moments. And when I look in the mirror, I see the same four-year-old girl: happy, carefree, someone who is completely herself.

I see little Minnie Mouse me.

**But something  
about the dress  
still charms me.**

and a frequenter of Disneyland, I had the dresses of many other Disney characters whom I adored: a yellow dress with a full, twill skirt to match Belle, a baby blue Cinderella dress, and a pink dress like Aurora. I loved these Disney characters just as much as I loved Minnie Mouse, but for some reason their dresses never tempted me to abandon my polka dots.

My mother believes the dress was a comfort blanket; it made me feel secure and reminded me of things that I loved, Disneyland and Minnie Mouse. When I ask my dad about it, he sighs and stares off into the distance and says anxiously, "You never took it off. You simply refused to

# GRANDPA'S SECRET

BY  
MADISON WILCOX

When I was twelve years old I asked my grandpa: "How did you get to where you are now?"

I asked him because he was beautiful. Not just his face, but him, his heart. I figured he must have traveled long and hard through life to get here, wherever here was.

So I got the courage to ask him one day, as we took a walk around a lake in the city park, "How did you get so beautiful?"

He smiled.

Then he told me a story.

"While I was young I walked through the future for a long time, looking for something to make me beautiful," he said. "But I couldn't find anything in the future. Then, years

later, I walked through the past for a long time, too. Both journeys took most my life. But in both places, whenever I looked inside my heart it was still ugly. Nothing I found could make me beautiful, at least not beautiful inside. But now I am here."

"Where's here?" I asked.

"Here is wherever I am," he said.

"But what about the future? Tell me more about what it was like in the future," I said.

"Wasn't much there," he said. "I was there, but no one else was. In the future all you can talk to is yourself; all you hear are your hopes and fears clambering for attention. It's a lonely place, the future, when the rest of the world hasn't caught up

yet.”

“What about the past?” I said.

“Oh, the past was much better,” he said. “But not good enough. There were memories; yes, there were many of those. There were even places and things there, dates and timelines, conversations you can replay in your mind. But one thing was missing. Can you think of it?”

“Me?” I said.

Grandpa laughed. “Yes, you weren’t there, were you. And you guessed right. It was people that were missing. When I explored the past it was like I was walking through a ghost town. No one lived there

looked up into his face. He knew what I was thinking. He took my hand and we bent over the water.

“See that?” he said.

“Me?” I said.

“Yeah,” he said. “You. That’s the best kind of reflection I know. Not forward, not backward, but right now.”

I looked over at his face in the water as he looked at mine. He was smiling.

“I think you just found what you were looking for all those years.” I said. “You’re beautiful because you’re here, not somewhere else.”

“That’s right,” he said. “And so are you.”

**All that feeling  
sad about what  
wasn’t— it made  
me miss out on  
what was.**

anymore. It wasn’t good for me. All that feeling sad about what wasn’t— it made me miss out on what was.”

“Yeah that’s right,” I said. “You missed me when you just sat there looking through all those picture albums after Grandma died.”

Grandpa paused.

Then he whispered: “But look at that, now I’m here.” He pointed around him. “Though it did take a few years.”

I followed his finger to where he was pointing and remembered where we were. We had reached the shore of the lake.

Grandpa stopped. I stopped too, and

NON-FICTION

## FIRST PLACE

# MORE THAN ENOUGH

BY  
JAMIE HENDERSON

**T**he first and last love letter I ever sent was returned to me with a prompt, if not exactly courteous, reply: “I’m flattered, but Christian guys like me don’t like girls who are so forward.”

I. was. mortified.

I had agonized over the email (yes, email) for days before I sent it, praying that I would get the wording just right so that my meaning would not be misconstrued: “Hi, you seem really cool and I’d like to get to know you!” Apparently, he had mistaken what I intended to be Southern charm for

an indecent proposal and, while I obviously know my own heart better than he did, I have spent the years since then replaying his rejection in my mind.

It was the way he said “*Christian guys like me*” that made me feel sick to my stomach—Is he implying that I’m not a Christian because I reached out to him? Is he lumping me in with the likes of Delilah and Jezebel? I might as well change my Instagram bio to Proverbs 11:22 and accept my fate.

Growing up, I’d often had boys in school tell me that



that I was intimidating; I never felt like it was an insult until this particular boy implied that it might be. I'd always thought that being a leader was a good thing, something to aspire to, so I grew up without fear of taking charge:

The teacher needs a volunteer? I'm your girl. Someone needs to make a group text for the project? Give me your phone numbers. No one's signed up to run for student council? Vote for me!

I was raised on Sacagawea, Jane Austen, and Princess Diana—I looked up to women who spoke with confidence, wrote with passion, and lead with dignity. I wanted to be like my sister, beautiful and

but I couldn't. I constantly overanalyzed myself even on good days; I couldn't stop then, not when his words seemed to be eating me from the heart out.

*"You're too much,"* a voice inside me said. *"You're too opinionated. Too loud. Too commanding."*

*Excessive, exorbitant, extreme, superfluous, unbridled, over the top, imprudent...*

Never before had I felt so embarrassed of who I thought God had ordained me to be. I thought I'd ruined His plan somehow, lost sight of the coveted ideal of the Proverbs 31 woman: "A wife of noble character who can find?"

Then, just when I thought all hope was lost and I needed to find my way back to *yielding, amenable, submissive...* I decided to actually sit down and read Proverbs 31.

This noble wife to whom all Christian women are meant to aspire is the very definition of "too much." She works with eager hands and provides for her family. She sets about her work with strong arms; she gives to the poor and helps the needy. She is clothed in strength and dignity; she laughs and speaks with wisdom. Her husband and children honor her for all that she does: "Many women do noble things, but [she surpasses] them all."

This woman encompasses everything I already admire about so many women in my life—my too muchness falls perfectly in line with her steadfast and confident ways. She is the perfect Christian woman and, while I have quite a while to go before I can say the same for myself, it's unbelievably good to know that it's okay to be the way that I am.

And yes, maybe Christian guys *like him* aren't going to like that. There will always be Christian men who think I'm intimidating because I'm "too much"... but I'm not willing to make myself small to suit someone else's idea of what I should be ever again. God created me to be superfluous—more than enough—and

**It's unbelievably good to know that it's okay to be the way that I am.**

smart and fun; or like my grandmother, quick-witted and wise beyond her years. I wanted to take all of the biggest and best parts of these women and make them my own—to sew their stories onto my skin and carry them around with me like an anaphylactic carries an EpiPen, ready to inject myself with their wisdom at a moment's notice.

Then I read those words—*Christian guys like me don't like girls who are so forward*—and I started to question all of that.

My friends assured me that the guy was a jerk and that I should let it go...

that's exactly what I'm going to be.

## SECOND PLACE

# LIFE LESSONS IN THE MEADOW

BY  
JAMIE HENDERSON

**A**uguste Renoir once said that “art is about emotion; if art needs to be explained it is no longer art.”

If you ask me, Renoir really gets it. As an impressionist, he obviously knows how to make a good one. His brushstrokes are so careful and so wild, his details are so sharp and so soft . . . His art captures something so elusive yet so familiar; I am genuinely in awe of his talent.

The first time I saw *In the Meadow* by Renoir, it was a chilly March morning in New York City, and I was

exploring the Metropolitan Museum of Art with my best friend Emily. It was her eighteenth birthday, and we had skipped out on school that Thursday and Friday to take the cheapest flight to Newark, New Jersey, followed by the cheapest train into the city.

It was one of the best trips I’ve ever taken, and the funny thing is that I wasn’t even supposed to be there. The second tickets to all the places we visited were originally reserved for Emily’s boyfriend, who had broken up with her only a week before the big birthday

trip she'd been planning with him for months. She was heartbroken and frustrated and so upset that she wasn't going to get to show him everything she loved about the city. When she asked me if I would take his place, I was more than willing to leave behind my senior year stressors and hop on a flight with my best friend if it meant I could help her stave off the sadness for a little while.

The two of us had been to New York together three years prior when her older sister spent the summer dancing at Alvin Ailey, so we already knew all of the important things about the city (such as how to catch the subway and where to

*The Phantom of the Opera*, and of course, spent hours and hours roaming around the MET.

On this particular venture, she and I discovered *In the Meadow*. The painting is part of a small collection of works by Renoir that feature two young girls, a blonde in a white dress and a brunette wearing pink. It's a pretty innocuous image—the girls sit side by side in a grove of trees on a spring or summer afternoon; the blonde holds a small bouquet of wildflowers while the brunette looks on, resting her hand against the rolling, grassy hill behind them. I doubt I would have looked twice at the painting if it weren't for the fact that Emily and I happen to be blonde and brunette respectively. It's such a small detail, but as we sat and stared at those two girls, I know that we were both seeing our reflections.

For that moment, we weren't thinking about her crappy ex-boyfriend or my upcoming college application deadlines . . . the work of art seized us, wrapped us up in itself, and carried us away (Renoir). *In the Meadow* is meant to be a celebration of the innocence of youth, but there we were, seeing ourselves, and wondering where our innocence had gone. Looking back, I can see that we were still young and foolish . . . we just didn't realize it at the time. In that moment, we were the oldest we'd ever been. We were filled with the typical high-school ennui that so often accompanies girls our age—girls who feel like high school is the end of the world and every minor inconvenience is a personal attack from the universe. We were so used to making mountains out of molehills that we never realized we were really digging our own graves. Renoir once said that "there are quite enough unpleasant things in life without the need to manufacture more." While we usually would have waved this idea away, something in that painting held us captive . . . And maybe, for just a moment

**In that moment, we were the oldest we'd ever been.**

find the best empanadas). I wasn't worried about finding things for us to do, but I did worry that, no matter what we did, her heart would still be heavy. I promised myself that, even if I couldn't make up for the anguish of losing her boyfriend, I could at least try to make this trip bigger and better without him than it ever could have been with him.

We spent the weekend exploring all of our favorite places and discovering new ones. We ate leisurely lunches at P.J. Clarke's, dipped onion rings in dark chocolate ranch dressing at Max Brenner's, cried our hearts out watching

on that chilly March morning in New York City, we understood what he meant.

We walked away from our reflections and the feelings faded. We ate \$12 PB&Js in the cafeteria and giggled about strange street signs on the way back to our hotel. We saw a new Broadway show and fell in love with a story we'd never heard before. We took the wrong subway. A homeless man called me "Miss America."

We tried to hold onto everything beautiful.

We tried to live as many lives as we could in one weekend.

We tried to forget about everything that hurt.

That night, minutes before midnight, Emily's ex sent her a simple "Happy Birthday" text, and she blew out the candle on a pink frosted cupcake. In two days, we would board a plane and return to Tennessee with post-card replicas of Renoir's meadow in our pockets, hers with a handwritten note explaining just how much I love her—how I'll love her forever no matter what happens, because she is more deserving of love than anyone I know. Because here's the good thing about being a dramatic teenage girl—even though our heightened emotions made it seem as though the world were always seconds away from ending, they also told us when we'd found the person who made it all feel okay. We have a message written on our hearts that we didn't recognize then but has since come to make a world of difference: "the pain passes, but the beauty remains."

*THIRD PLACE*

# SUCK IT, KID!

BY  
PAULA MACENA

**P**ursuing a creative career means your college advisor asking you if you're really sure. Three times in a row. And then asking if you have a backup plan. And when you say no, they sigh, and tell you again how hard it is to break into whatever industry it is. And you say you know, because you do. You're not dumb, you're just in your 20s still planning on being the thing that you said in first grade in response to being asked for the tenth time what you want to be when you grow up. Look at you, you're so cool and smart, trying to do something some seven-year-old dreams about for one night and then changes their mind about in the morning. But you haven't changed your mind, have you? You're not going to wake up tomorrow morning wanting to be an astronaut, are you? Look at you, being more decisive than a seven-year-old. Suck it, kid.

You can tell off your younger self all you want. You can pretend you're better than them and pretend that their hopes aren't higher than yours currently are. Go ahead,

tell them how hard it is. Tell them how most days you want to give up and how if you could be someone else, you would be. Tell them the pitiful nod your advisor does, or the look your mother and sister share, when you say you'll make a living from a field that one in a billion thrive in. Tell them how you're only still in this because there's no way out but through, how you know you'll probably never make it but at the same time you know you can't fail either because there's no other way out of this and you've gotta get out of this. You've gotta get out of this. Do you want to get out of this?

Pursuing a creative career means

of me. Tell your friends about it. Look at me, being everything and nothing you've always wanted to be. Suck it, kid.

**None of it  
matters unless  
someone else  
says it does.**

knowing it relies on outside validation. I can write as many songs or poems as I would like. I can make paintings and sculptures in a deity's image for the rest of my life. I can be proud of my art and critique other works relentlessly, say what could be done better as if I know better, and none of it will matter. None of it will matter. None of it matters unless someone else says it does. So, look at this. Analyze it. Tell me you like the way it sounds, or tell me you don't, you can write a bad review if you want because any publicity is good publicity, right? Look, seven-year-old me, and tell me this is good. That you're proud



# FORGOTTEN STORIES

BY  
KELLY SANDEL

The sight of an old graveyard lures me in. Ancient graveyard cedars shade the irregular rows of limestone tombstone, and the grass ripples in a faint breeze. The rusty iron gate creaks slowly on its hinge. A lone bird chirps in the trees; even it is reverent of the resting silence. Down the chip-and-seal road is the little country church, brick with a steeple. In the gravel parking lot is an ancient, sprawling oak.

How many years ago did the meandering crack in the bricking appear? Shortly after they built it? How did they pay for the bell in the steeple?

Those people in the graveyard. What was life like all those years ago?

John Madden, 1809-1871. The road is named Madden—was the road named for this fellow? Was he an original settler?

Mary Peterson, age 15. “For Me to Live is Christ.” Sounds like a religious girl. How did she die? Did a diphtheria epidemic sweep through? Did she drown? Her schoolmates must have been heartbroken.

Charles Lee, died November 12, 1867, aged 65 yrs, 5 mos, 14 days. Wife, Lavinia Harper. Wife, Laura Starr. Wife, Hepzibah Peabody. Goodness, he had a lot of wives. And they all died, too?

Matthew Cotton, born January 21, 1846. Death

unknown, lost at sea on the *Abbott*. Wife, Ezmeralda Gonzalez, 1852-1905. A Mexican wife. Unusual for the times. It sounds as if he was a sailor. Did he pick up his wife at a Mexican port? That must have been challenging for her, living amongst a different people.

Lucinda Starr, 1824-1926. One hundred two years old! And never married, from what it appears here. "My heart is sair for somebody." God? A lost lover? Perhaps he went off to war and never returned?

My mind wanders, begins to create lives for these names on the stone. A town springs up, the old town before the one there now. People inhabit it: babies are born, children have adventures, romances are made and lost, people die and come to this place. And a new generation emerges. My mind is alive with these images.

But they can never be exactly who these people were. I can never know. I can never do them justice.

I shiver in the bright sunlight.

**Their lives, their stories, are lost to mankind forever.**

All these people, where are their descendants? Do they still live here, close by? Or have they scattered? Do they even know their ancestors are buried here, in this unkempt, out-of-the-way graveyard? So many stories these people had, who rest here. Nothing necessarily extraordinary. But it doesn't need to be. Just everyday life of a farm family. A story of six rambunctious children who grew up and married who? And went where?

The ghosts of these simple folk seemingly haunt the graveyard, even in broad daylight. Their lives, their stories, are lost to mankind forever. It is a way of life never to return, a society buried here beneath the sweet-smelling grass. Gone.

POETRY

*FIRST PLACE*

# REFLECTION ON THE WORD ALMOST

BY  
MADISON WILCOX

The word *almost*.  
It makes all the difference.

My dad *almost* died.  
My dad died.

A huge difference. One word.

What weight hangs on that word.  
What emptiness, what great void  
When it is not there.

—

The ring he hung on with one finger was his almost:  
the way he didn't sit down on the rope  
when he could have,  
the way he held on with one hand  
and heard the pop  
as the rope slid from his harness.

He could have let go of the ring.  
He could have sat down on the rope.  
He could have not heard the pop  
of the rope falling from his harness.

But he did.

The way he clipped himself back in,  
was safe.  
Repelled down those 800 ft  
instead of falling down them.

That was his almost. That was his grace.

He said the red Nalgene water bottle broke  
at the cap and tumbled down the face during the repel.  
He said he watched it fall,  
knowing it should have been him.

But it was not.  
It was him— almost  
But it was not.

Oh, praise God for the almosTs.  
Praise Him for the falling water bottles  
and the bodies that do not fall  
but live  
and breathe  
and the hands that hang on to almost rings,  
that hold on  
when they could have let go.

Praise God for the almost days  
when you hang onto that word  
and feel its weight under you,  
pressing back against the void—  
when you watch it save your life.

Thank You.  
I still have a dad.

*SECOND PLACE*

# IF HE WERE NOT A BOY

BY  
AIMEE HUNT

If he were not a boy  
He'd be a raven  
The kind who sits on your window sill and  
You swear  
Sings you lullabies  
His feather-dark curls  
Those deeply dark eyes  
The color of earth

If he were not a boy  
He'd be the sea  
Blue-hearted he crashes into  
Your soul  
Kisses you as violently  
And gently as the waves  
Kiss the sand

If he were not a boy  
He'd be a novel  
The book you can't put down  
You want to be the ending  
As his chapters turn on  
His words lovely  
Honeysuckle or daffodils  
A melancholy sweetness

If he were not a boy  
He'd be the wind  
The stubborn and untamable  
How badly you wish  
To catch him in the trees  
Through your hair  
Any wisp of him ungraspable

Oh, but if he were not a boy  
I'd be a branch for the raven  
The sand of the sea  
The bindings of the novel  
I'd be the kite flown by the wind  
If he were not a boy



*THIRD PLACE*

# PEACH FARMS AND PROMISES

BY  
PAULA MACENA

Call the witness to the stand;  
the jury wants to know  
how you hold peaches like a heartbeat,  
how it always tastes better  
when it's been plucked by your hands.  
(Truth: you didn't always know how to pick  
the ripest of the bunch.)

Tell them how you grow your own peach trees  
outside of Georgia's borders,  
how you could compare the sweetness to manna,  
how you never get sick of its taste.  
(Truth: it's only ever godsent  
when your lover plants the seeds.)

Can you spill your secrets the same way  
the juice overflows in your cupped palms?  
Can you share how you hold white wine  
in the back of your throat like you're saving up ammo?  
(Truth: you weren't made with a soldier's heart,  
and your father's farmhand dreams  
continue to elude you.)

They don't know that the promised land  
grows its fruits in your backyard,  
that Eden was the blueprint  
for the garden planted behind your fence.  
(Truth: you used to sleep amongst its flowers.  
It was the only place that ever felt like home.)

Swear on the Bible that your soil-tinged hands  
will protect the harvest in your hometown  
for as long as your peaches are sweet,  
for as long as the wine spills from your mouth.  
(Truth: you didn't mean to find the fountain of youth,  
but the prophecy had been foretold  
and there was no way to disentangle your fate from these roots.)

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# LET ME SEE MY FACE

BY  
CHRISTINA CANNON

---

Let me see my face.  
Hold up the mirror.

I said hold it up.  
Higher, a little higher.  
There.  
And would you please turn up  
the volume on the  
headphones  
attached to the machine  
that's attached to the  
microphone  
in front of my mouth.

Thank you, that is all.  
But wait, you  
set the mirror on  
the shelf. How  
am I supposed to see it  
when I walk around  
the room,  
headphone cord  
wrapping around  
microphone cord  
wrapping around my body?

Wait. Don't  
go, I need you here  
to hold up  
the mirror  
as I move through  
the light by the window  
through the dark corner  
by the bathroom door.

Wait, I look different here, by  
the window, see?  
Let me see, can I see?  
And here, with the light bouncing off  
the hard metal floor and  
shining on my face  
from the bottom  
like a flashlight under  
a chin in the woods  
in the past.

If you go, how will  
I see myself?  
Who will keep  
the microphone plugged in  
to the machine plugged in  
to my headphones?

You. You dropped the mirror.  
Anger, jealousy, why?  
No one ever  
holds up the mirror for as long  
as you did  
keeps the microphone  
plugged in  
as long.

Now, all I see  
is your angry, pleading face  
lit from the bottom  
like from a flashlight  
in the woods  
when all I saw was  
your face, heard you  
laughing and moaning like a ghost  
instead of the  
almost silent rush of noise-cancelling  
white noise  
in my ears,  
in my head between my ears,  
down my spine.

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# THE DAFFODILS CAME UP TOO SOON

BY  
AIMEE HUNT

---

They tasted sun  
Were met with snow

I do love that little narcissus flower  
She is tattooed on my ribs  
Carved in my skin

I remember the needle  
I cannot remember much of him

I gripped the table in pain  
I could not cry when his soul slipped away with a

“thank you”

Trust me I tried  
Wanted to  
Listened to a sad song  
Tears wouldn't come

The daffodils came up too soon

---

He was kind  
I remember  
Never yelled never ridiculed never never

What a voice he had though  
It remained when his memories did not

Deep Thoughtful Graceful  
Patient  
The way it lingered on every word  
Syllable

Bright and golden like  
His daffodils

Too young to remember much  
We both lost our memories

The daffodils came up too soon



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# HER GUIDE

---

BY  
JAMIE JANSEN

---

A glint of steely starlight  
The thrust of falling hail on ice  
Shattering into a thousand tiny echoes  
On the River of January

Mist rolls and breaks  
Atoms, splinters of the earthbound sea  
Reaching down in tendrils to its reflection  
On the River of January

A lonely figure stands on the bank  
Staring at her reflection  
Pockmarked from hail on the water  
Stained by the shadows of starlight  
Choked by the mists  
Written on the River of January

All at once the figure is crossing;  
Crossing the deep River of Winter  
The mists slowly recede  
The punch of hail on ice weakens  
The steel gaze of fate flickers  
And dies  
For our traveler is over, and no longer at their mercy  
And in the River of January  
Just where it fades into the warm blue sky  
The wayfaring stranger sees a smooth and lovely reflection  
Of herself  
And her Guide

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# SNOWING STARS

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BY  
JAMIE JANSEN

---

Twisted yellow fingers fork and clutch  
Like tongues of fire  
Burning with the slightest touch  
There is a stately mirror  
In a golden museum room  
Full of golden remnants  
Of a fallen empire  
The drowning ghost of its past gasping for air  
Struggling to touch these present times  
Through the writhing reflection

The viewer turns away  
Burned by the touch of gold  
And steps into the street

A soft amber moon  
Lies amid a sea of stars  
Like a woman on a bed of roses  
Letting them flow over and past her  
Down to touch herself again  
Like the touch of a mermaid on her glassy sky  
But the amber moon is only the reflection of a lamp in a puddle  
And the stars are snowflakes  
Preserved for us in reflection  
Still as ice  
Snowing stars  
Until it become silver in the cold sunshine of morning

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# AUTUMN LEAVES

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BY  
KELLY SANDEL

---

The falling leaves of Autumn's days,  
The orange and gold and flaming red,  
Recall to mind the perished days  
Of long ago, 'fore old were dead.  
But most distinctly in the fall  
Are when the echoes come again.  
Around the crackling fire we'd sit,  
For swiftly came the twilight then.  
So plainly can I hear it now,  
The timeless tunes so often played  
By Father on his fiddle there  
Beside the fire in evening shade.  
The fiddle laughed and danced with us  
When Father played the jig and reel,  
And then the shadows of the dark  
Would so much more inviting feel.  
Sometimes there'd be a ballad long;  
We children listened quite enthralled,  
Like we were with that chieftain's host  
When enemy vict'ry was forestalled.  
And other times there'd be a tune  
That with the wind would sob and wail  
And send a shiver up the spine;  
A feeling that would aft prevail.  
Those cheerful nights are only memories,  
The fiddle sings no more on eves;  
But those long gone arise again  
So clear—when fall the Autumn leaves.

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# THE FORGOTTEN GRAVEYARD

BY  
KELLY SANDEL

---

In deep a woods where no one goes  
And by a road that no one knows,  
Near remnants of a church of yore  
Does sprawl a graveyard, slighted poor.

The once-great iron gates now lay  
All twisted, rusted in decay.  
The fence that kept a silent watch  
Is crushed beneath a spreading larch.

Ten gnarly oaks surround the place,  
Their branches cov'ring all the space;  
Which makes the graveyard dark and weird  
A site that's quiet, awed—and feared.

The mossy gravestones seem to ail  
As nothing's left back in detail.  
How cock-eyed 'tis it would amaze—  
But shadows of the olden days.

Weeds grow so high they hide it all;  
Surrounds the region like a wall.  
No humans come to cause defect,  
And so's a graveyard of neglect.

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The epitaphs are worn away;  
The names are gone with yesterday.  
Do none remember these good souls?  
Aye; only yellowed census scrolls.

This old, forgotten plot will turn  
To only shady oak and fern.  
The people go, within a flash,  
To “dust to dust, and ash to ash.”

On Judgment Day they'll rise and soar  
And be forgotten nevermore.  
In heaven they'll meet their fam'ly then  
Rejoicing with all fellow men.

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# ON MATH AND MOUNTAINS

BY  
MADISON WILCOX

---

What is the solution to the system of equations  
where God is one line  
and the world is another?

I think it is the top of Forester Pass in the Sierra Nevadas.  
Surely this should have been the place where Jacob saw the ladder come down from heaven,  
Surely also the place where Christ went up—

God is here,  
here with the pikas and the skipilot  
here with the old stones and the Clark's Nutcrackers

And surely He is here with me  
as I stand on the crest of the pass,  
the sun reflecting my shadow back across the y-axis of the Sierra Nevadas,  
and God, the great mathematician himself, standing above me  
graphite pencil in hand  
whispering, "Here,"  
as he stencils in my shadow on the great graph of the world.



**Thanks for reading!**

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A photograph of a tree with bright yellow autumn leaves growing from a mossy rock in a calm, teal-colored lake. The tree and rock are reflected in the water. The background is a soft-focus view of a forest with tall, thin trees.

LEGACY

2021-2022