

crab apple literary

vol. 3, no. 1



Cover Art: Kieran Belanger, *Dogbone*

Table of Contents

THEY CAN SENSE IT COMING by Bradford Middleton.....	3
Customs by RJ Equality Ingram.....	4
60th REUNION SUMMARY by Wendy Freborg.....	5
Skin by Vianne Lafond.....	6
Sister, Sister – Kieran Belanger.....	8
Strawberry Jam by Sharon Weightman Hoffmann.....	9
The Unspoken by Lauren Paré.....	10
A Price to Stillness by Arnault Dorfner.....	11
sentry + decay by Izzy Nameth Beck.....	13
Nora’s Night Vision – Courtney Buder.....	14
Snapdragon by Allison Burris.....	15
Becoming a Honey Bee by Michael Akuchie.....	16
Morning in June – Kieran Belanger.....	17
The Book Club by Allison Burris.....	18
Bloodletting by RJ Equality Ingram.....	19
The Best Knife Juggler in Eighth Grade by Jacob Butlett.....	20
Inside – Zoë Davis.....	23
Pitting Corrosion by Silas James.....	24
Roman Twist – Anthony Acri.....	25
Sneak Thief by Damon Hubbs.....	26
Ode to the Kitchen Knife by Michael Akuchie.....	28
Gentle Bastard – Mariia Mylenka.....	29
I want something fluorescent by Izzy Nameth Beck.....	30
About the Authors.....	31
About the Artists.....	34
Masthead.....	35

THEY CAN SENSE IT COMING by Bradford Middleton

The seagulls squawk in a frenzy of panic
as if they know, as if they can sense it
& it's either getting close or already blowing
not that far off coast & all I can do is sit here
& hope—I'd pray if I was one of those believers—
that when the storm does indeed break there
are still stupid people on the beach cos that's
just the kind of miserable fucker I've become...

Customs by RJ Equality Ingram

They picked all the eyes from the maple but left a blue one that wasn't ripe enough
/ Courage could have grown up & died here / Must be pregnant or about to be / I
can't dance without annoying the middle me // She brought the wrong shoes to the
party / The foam finger you couldn't throw out was caught dancing with the broken
umbrellas in the shade / The rhythms the water makes are so catchy the horizon
starts dancing / That's how they make weightless look effortless // Uncle Henry lost
his job as night guard at the paint factory / It wasn't necessarily vandalism but
management didn't care for the illumination in the board room / He illuminated so
much shit they couldn't handle the retribution so they canned him & blamed it on
the weather changing / I'll be damned if it didn't work out in everyone's favor / He
wasn't using their product / He mixed his own light at home & smuggled it in his
soup thermos / No one had the means to snuff out the light he painted / So now the
sun never sets on the higher ups in their offices / Which means they never sleep &
are constantly calling out / No one checks in on us anymore / We call it the hot box.

Ignore your paresthesia | Go home early

Continue to ignore your paresthesia | Go home early

Continue to ignore your paresthesia | Go home early

60th REUNION SUMMARY by Wendy Freborg

Jane is still working,
Judy is too.
Peter is still skiing
but Doug is dead.
Sarah's memory is fading.
Charlie's wife is sick.
Mary Ann's husband died.
Diane can't control her bowels.
Lynette has cancer, so do I.

We are all on the same road:
same start, different paces,
different barriers,
but the same road,
to the same place.

We were all young at the same time.
We have made what we could of adulthood —
some of us have reproduced,
many of us have married,
not always successfully.

Life goes on, shedding us,
each at his own rate,
in his own way,
at his own time,
as the calendar pages flip.

Skin by Vianne Lafond

I have my grandmother's skin. Her large breasts, body rolls, sharp nose, tiny ankles; they're all there, in my hands.

I *literally* have my naked grandmother's skin in between my hands. It's hollow, though. Her features are there, but her insides are missing. Her eye sockets are empty, her mouth is uninhabited. I grab what is left of her jaw and drag it open. I put my arm in, seeing how far I can reach. Her liquid body lies on top of my shoulders as I touch the bottom of her heel. It's an odd feeling. Her skin is soft, but unfamiliar. Not cold, not hot. It looks like my grandmother and smells like her, but I can't help feeling uneasy at the thought of her naked goop sliding around without its shell.

A knock resonates from the front door. I run and slap my body on it. Has she come back to take me away for uncovering her secret? I push myself up to reach the peephole. The delivery man. He knocks again, louder this time.

"Mrs. Moss? I have your new fridge."

I squeal. The fridge!

"It's 12h15, just like we agreed on..."

I look at the clock in the kitchen. It is 12h15. Where could she be at 12h15 without her skin?

"Mrs. Moss, I'm very sorry but I will have to charge you extra fees if you made me come all this way for nothing..."

And now fees?! I try to think. I can't answer the door and tell him I don't know where she is. I look at the skin on the floor.

"It's alright, Mrs. Moss. I'll come back another time."

I open the door in a swift movement. I stand before the man, hidden in her skin.

"OhHh!" I cough, my voice still carrying my youth. "Come in, young man. So sorry... I had put my music so loud, I just couldn't hear anything!"

I move out of the delivery man's way, almost tumbling down the stairs as I trip on my grandmother's feet.

He brings in the fridge, looking at me to indicate where it should be put.

"Oh, sorry. Yes, come with me, my dear. This way..." He follows me to the kitchen. I move the skin on my face around, the eye sockets allowing me only a partial view. I put my fingers in the holes and stretch them as wide as I can, seeing the oncoming fridge only at the last second. I bump into it and fall to the ground. The delivery man runs to me.

"Mrs. Moss, are you okay?!" I groan in pain. I try to rub the bump on my forehead with my skin gloves. Soft footsteps come from behind me.

"What is all of that noise?" asks my grandmother.

She looks at me, her face reddened by the rough fabric of her pillow. I look at her; her own face, pale and flaky, stares back into her eyes. The delivery man looks at me, then at her. I look at him. He screams. I scream. She screams. The man tries to stand, but faints before reaching his goal. His body, not cold, not hot, falls onto the kitchen floor of my skin-wearing grandmother.



Sister, Sister – Kieran Belanger

Strawberry Jam by Sharon Weightman Hoffmann

Years ago, I got divorced
& moved to a different county
& didn't leave a forwarding address
& bounced a check at the grocery store
& when I finally tried to pay it,
I got arrested.

I had to go to court
& the judge joked that my fine should have been bigger
& all the lawyers laughed
& I came close to crying in front of everybody
& I was terrified I might go to the prison farm, but
they let me pay the clerk, and I was free to go.

The sky was dark when I got outside
& a thunderstorm was about to break
& I shouldn't have stopped at that roadside stand
& spent my grocery money on two flats of strawberries
& fantasized about making jam
while loading them into the back seat of the car.

Then it started raining really hard
& my old car had no air-conditioning
& I had to roll the windows up
& I was surrounded by the hot, intoxicating scent of strawberries
& Aretha came on the radio, so
I drove home rejoicing wildly in my freedom and my lucky life.

The Unspoken by Lauren Paré

After “To an Old Philosopher in Rome” by Wallace Stevens

Speak to your pillow as if to yourself.
Speak to faces on the shelf.

Climb into attics of never again.
Time your breath from one to ten.

Cradle moonlight, wring the washcloth.
Ladle tears for tomorrow's broth.

Float through stages with unreal props.
Cookie crumbs on countertops.

Drive to flea markets in abandoned towns.
Arrive bejeweled in broken crowns.

Speak to clouds in forest fire skies.
See the dawn pluck out her eyes.

A Price to Stillness by Arnault Dorfner

There was a time, not long ago,
when my nights were battlegrounds I reveled in.
Creaking floorboards;
bleeding knuckles on drywall;
ink-stained fingers,
like I'd dipped them in death itself.
Ranting, panting,
pacing as if on a tight deadline,
chain-smoking myself into oblivion's arms.
I was alive
most when I wanted to die.
Now my time is booked with nothing.
My calendar is a black hole
that never calls back;
a silent emptiness.
I don't cry in theaters.
I don't scream in the shower.
I don't stare at the ceiling when I've just woken up.
I am well.
God help me, I am well –
so much so that I could chew my own face off.
I don't miss the pain,
let's be clear.
But I miss what it granted me:
a black, bitter plum
I squeezed into poems
with both hands,
letting it drip down my wrists
onto the page
like holy ink.
Those days,
the words came easy,
sliding through my veins
like jazz riffs in a backroom bar –
smooth, bitter and true.
Now I sit in this quiet temple

with no entity to confess to.
And I wonder –
if the words only come
when I unravel...
do I dare stay intact?
Will they return
only when I collapse again –
a glorious, awful wreck
full of verses
and venom?
What a price it is,
just to sit still.

sentry + decay by Izzy Nameth Beck

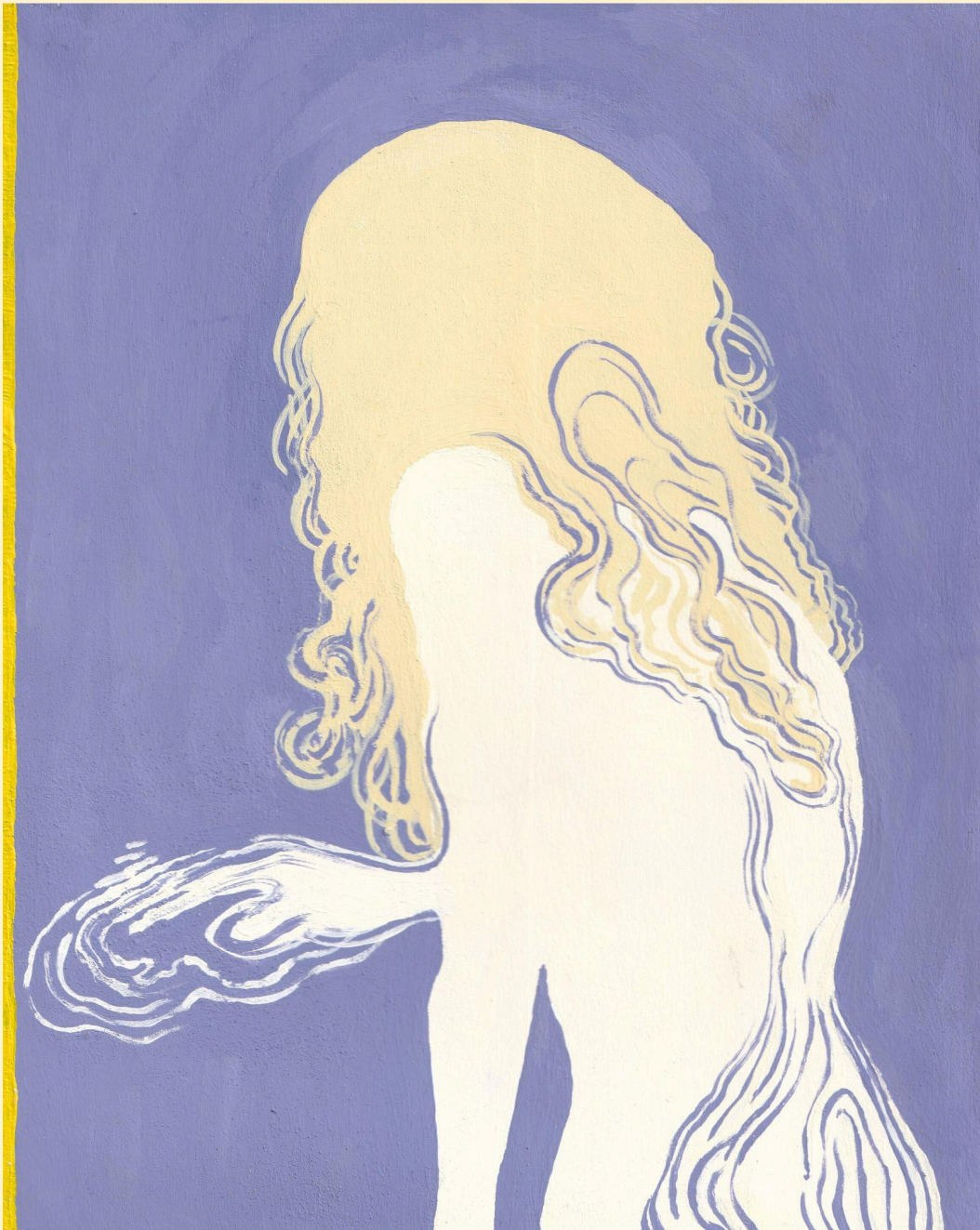
I am protecting the wild space worm winding
between my vertebrae and down through the gaps
in my pelvis when I press my eyes closed

granite cradling me over the waves crumbs in wine
I can't drink on Oxcarbazepine makes me sick

the wild space floats me in a greenish tide pool
rippling and clear my bones hover separate
suspended in lines that make up women and gods
and dogs

when I race on all fours no kneepads threads of
muscle thrum instead of hold tight, twitch, shiver

my shadow grows long wildness pouring from
poring from freckle and scrape. A corpse feeds
soil memory of little freedoms from before.



Nora's Night Vision – Courtney Buder

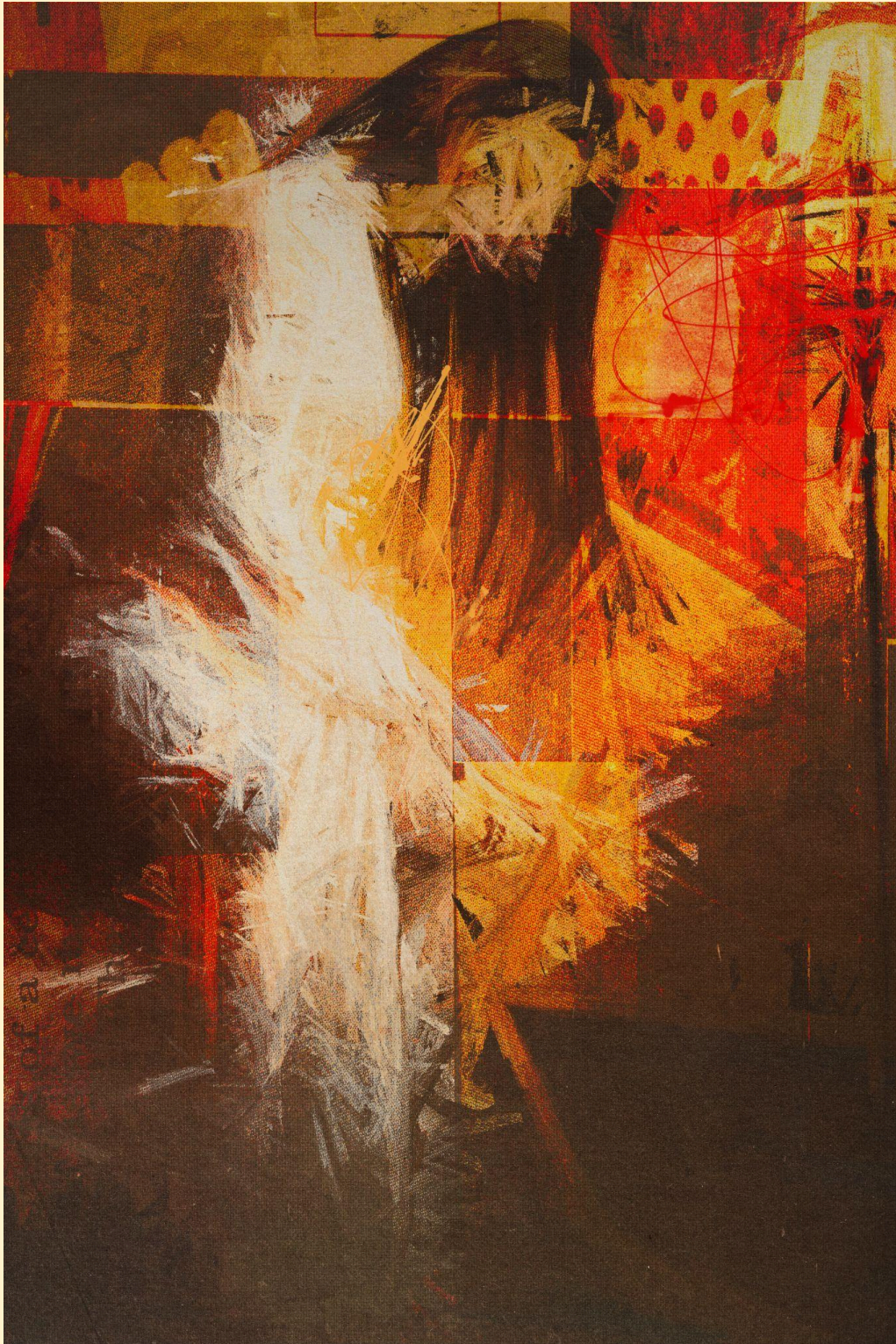
Snapdragon by Allison Burris

a few hundred years ago, they sprinkled raisins across a shallow bowl of brandy in a game of fruit & fire. with a match, raisins become little wicks. quick! pop them in your mouth & gulp the flame. faster. faster, little wanton ones, the game is to swallow sweet light. be bold. snatch the most & you'll surely find your one true love over the plum pudding or spinning into blind man's bluff. such a treat for the children. imagine all these parents convinced their sons' & daughters' sleeves would never catch fire. they double dare us, set the bowl in the middle of the table for all to reach—

Becoming a Honey Bee by Michael Akuchie

My current life is wayward,
a repeated annoyance.
So I ask to be teleported
into a honey bee's body after
the current body stiffens
like a tree branch in demise.
I find flying interesting though
I am untested.

Scientists say I will spend this life toiling
for a hive, reaching flowers
to gather nectar again and again.
Purpose is pleasurable like a cup
of morning coffee, or a long drive
across state lines with Coldplay on repeat.



Morning in June – Kieran Belanger

The Book Club by Allison Burris

She'd read the book, of course, like any self-respecting host. She'd purchased wine, white and red blends. She bought everything the internet told her was necessary for a cheese plate. Consequently, it overflowed the board she'd prepared. The nuts spilled over the counter—artfully. She poured herself the first glass of wine. Just to steady the nerves. Toyed with a caprese skewer. The questions came flowing out. She read passages at length and responded to them. She was the wittiest, best-read person in the room. She could handle both sides of the argument since no one else was there to get in her way. In the morning, all the labels had been ripped from the bottles. The book's spine was cracked open on the coffee table, littered with pistachio shells.

Bloodletting by RJ Equality Ingram

You don't have to cut yourself to be open to receive change from the almighty rabbit warrens in the sky / Say you've nicked yourself shaving without a mirror & although you can't see the exact source of the blood you still know that it's happening fast somewhere south of the chin / You're about to be so vulnerable to the world even your skin betrays you / The blood leaves tracks around the drain / This is the moment you've been waiting for the one that usually gets away from you before you realize you have an important question to ask / Will mother forgive us for not burying her in the minivan? Where is she now? / Was happiness there when she left us? / The Chariot returns for your questions every time you ask like that one unlicensed cab gig she never legitimized even though we all begged / Never happier than ordering fast food from behind the wheel of whichever van she was currently wearing down before abandoning completely / But don't forget traditionally the card depicts a palanquin carried by sphinxes gossiping in riddles to the powerful woman holding the happy meals so I'm sure whatever she's up to she's getting something out of it / Like a mother who seems to be spending eternity doing what she's always done / Ferrying demigods & their children around in the saloons of the afterlife trafficking in folktales about rabbits who leap from the beginning of time right into the middle of the road nearly causing an accident / No not another one / Of course blame the rabbit not the drinking.

Blame the rabbit not the drinking | Turn to page 37

Blame the rabbit not the drinking | Turn to page 38

The Best Knife Juggler in Eighth Grade by Jacob Butlett

When Marie stumbled onto the talent show stage, she couldn't see her father in the auditorium. *Dad promised he'd be here*, she thought with eyes full of tears. The other knife jugglers in eighth grade had already performed. Hoping to win over the crowd, Marie brought her longest knives.

Months after her mother's funeral, her father taught her how to juggle. She started with scarves, then golf balls, then bowling pins. She mastered her craft in mere weeks, moving on to pineapples and daggers. Her father didn't want Marie to practice with heavy or sharp objects, but she reassured him she would be careful. Now she would flaunt her talent in front of her snotty classmates. Joey and the other boys from P.E. always made fun of her buck teeth while Trina and the girls from math class laughed at her freckles—bright orange constellations on the milky sky of her face.

Her father was always there to comfort her, but he wasn't in the auditorium to watch her dazzle the crowd. Reserved for him, the empty chair in the front row reminded Marie of her mother. They used to bake pineapple upside-down cake every Saturday, taking turns whisking the ingredients. They used to eat their cakes in forts they'd build out of pillows and bed sheets in the living room. At the wake, Marie wept by her mother's open casket, tasting bitter pineapples on her tongue. Then she felt her father's tender hand on her shoulder and felt less alone in the world.

He's running behind, she thought as the music started. She twirled the knives, aglitter under the lights. The crowd fell silent, watching her intently, as if waiting for her to drop a knife onto the shoe-scuffed stage. She juggled with ease, throwing knife after knife into the air as if she were tossing metallic sparks, bright as the iridescent paillettes stitched haphazardly across her frilly skirt. Her father, an adequate seamster, had made her performance outfit. Working two jobs to pay the bills, her father couldn't afford fancier clothes.

“I’ll try my best to get off work early,” he said as he handed her the skirt. At first, Marie scowled at the crude creation, but she loved her father so much that she accepted it.

The music—a recording of violins, snare drums, and cellos—grew faster and faster over the auditorium’s sound system. She lifted a leg behind her head, and while hopping on the other foot, she juggled the knives higher and higher. The crowd gasped in amazement. Even Joey and Trina, who looked on from the wings, gazed at Marie with awe. Marie was proud to be the best knife juggler in eighth grade, but she found herself trying not to cry when she realized her father’s chair was still empty, shadowy like a dusky gravestone.

Eyeing that chair, Marie thought more about her mother—her curly black hair, her gossamer voice, her wide smile. Things long gone. Buried, though shallow, in Marie’s memory. Thinking about her mother made her lose her concentration. A wayward knife threatened to come crashing down. Her eyes bulged in panic. She jumped out of its way, setting down her raised foot. Before the knife could reach the floor, she bent forward and grabbed it by the handle, barely missing the knife’s heel. No one in the auditorium seemed to notice the mistake. She improvised the next thirty seconds of her routine, kicking like a chorus line to the beat of the music while she flung the knives over her head, up and over, again and again and again.

Sweat streamed down her temples. Her lungs ached with exhaustion. She considered ending the routine early, but she feared her classmates would judge her. She almost dropped three more knives. Everyone’s eyes trained on her like arrows. She felt like a failure.

The music transformed into a drumroll. The big finale. She tossed all the knives she had. A dozen glinting blades somersaulted upward through stage-lit dust motes. She thought about her father and forgot the final part of the routine. Frozen, looking out into the crowd, she stood under the knives as they grazed the raised auditorium curtain. Then like shot birds in flight, the knives careened

toward the stage. Several people in the crowd shot up in horror. The knives were less than ten feet from the top of Marie's head.

Her mind went blank. Impossibly blank.

Then she heard her name.

She glanced to the back of the auditorium. Dressed in his crinkled work suit and tie, her father stood in the crowded doorway, waving at her. She smiled back at him as he forced his way through the crowd. She wanted to wave, but a panic-stricken gasp from the kids in the front row filled the auditorium. She looked up and saw the knives. Without hesitation, she jumped backward into a crash-landing split. The knives missed her, striking the floor tip-first in quick succession.

The music ended. The crowd went dead silent.

When she stood up, her father, now sitting in his chair, clapped and whooped. Then the crowd followed suit, clapping and shouting *bravo* with gusto. Even the snotty kids from her grade shouted her name with appreciation. But she ignored them as she blew a kiss to her father.

He shed tears of joy. "Your mother would be so proud!"

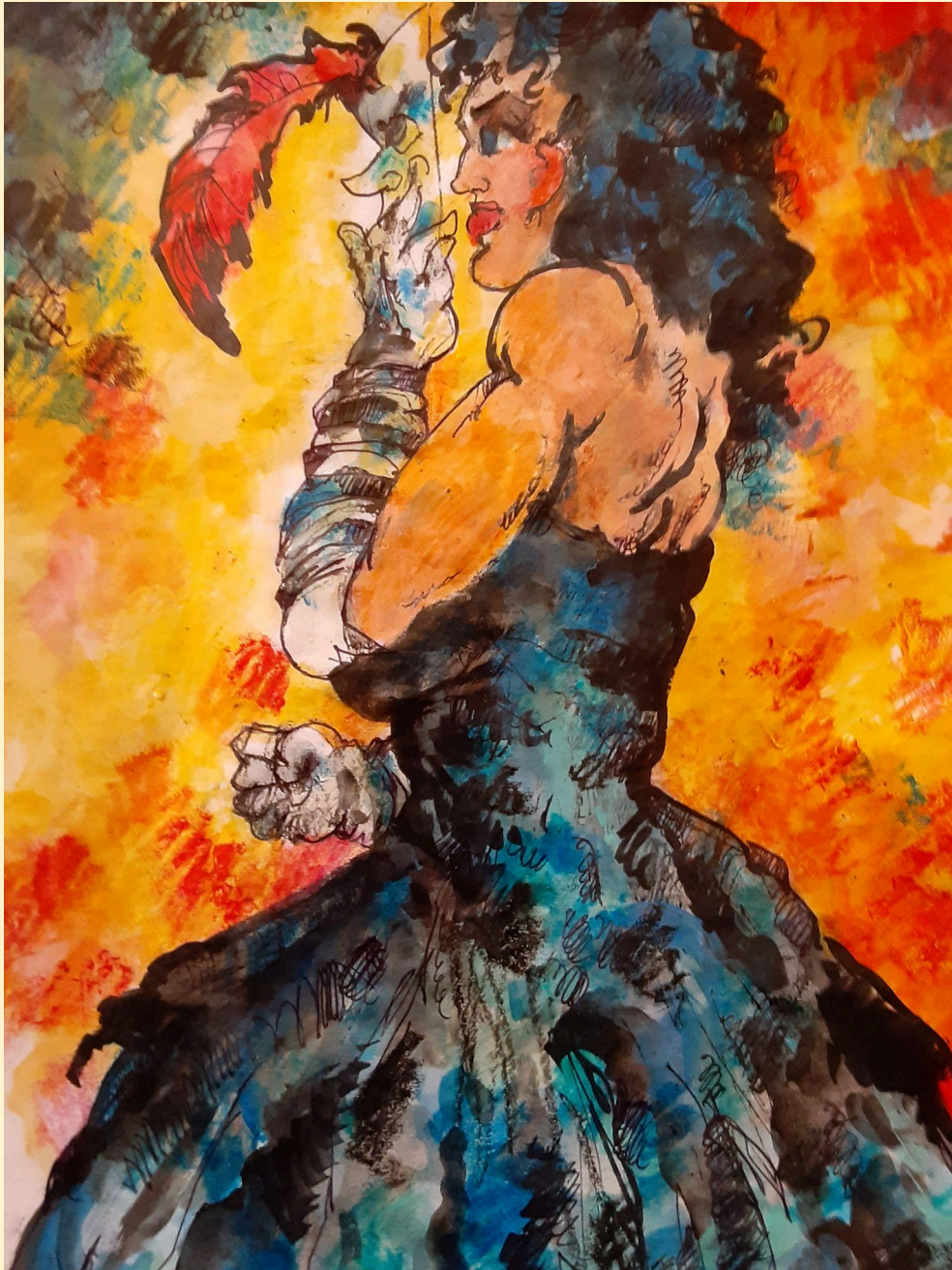
She bowed to her father. Behind her, the knives still stood upright on the stage. Their handles faced skyward like adoring fans waiting to shake the hand of the best knife juggler in eighth grade.



Inside – Zoë Davis

Pitting Corrosion by Silas James

The blown out building in front of my window is watching carefully
4 shots of Jameson and a beer later I still know when I'm almost home.
Fresh laundry scents waft from the commercial uniform cleaning factory, tendrils twisting
through all my pores.
The bell screeches at 9 every morning.
Loud noises are my reminders of the limits of the living
I am alone in this city and no one is allowed to see me.
My neighbour keeps asking if I'll blow him for thirty bucks
I just might. Starbucks pays like shit.
A crumbling concrete erection is waiting for me
The stars turn their heads away respectfully.
Sharply permission granted, I enter
A sizable rat runs over my foot. But I think I imagined that actually.
I'm always paranoid about rats running over my feet.
I repeat this line to everyone I know but they never listen
And I'm always seeing things that aren't there
A thousand pairs of eyes beg for my gaze, asking to finally please let us meet.
I liquify my senses.
This sickness has my home address, apparently
I am bloated with gravel, dust and water.
The structure's woven belly contains at least a few hyperactive microcosms and miserable
squalls
I nurse its kisses and viruses from my illusory breast
Washing all my nexuses, degreasing my vapours.
I envy the ocean scum and flames licking at each persistent fever like hail through my
hands.
My apartment is the inside of a tinned can of sardines.
The yellowed walls fucking hate me, they judge my tearing open of plastic packages
enclosing frozen pastries.
I eat them raw. Teeth dull with pain. It's not right to be at the dentist in this political
climate.
God thinks of me often, or perhaps not at all.
Mucous stains take the shapes of the maggots squirming all over my stovetop.
The creamy slackness of the plaster, soft bellied, trails down over the edge of the laminate
Reaching like a fissure.
Soft maw envelops, enzymes chewing my flesh and my ikea bed frame
Resting a throat upon the coils softly whispering through straight gums
That it loves the way my skeleton moves underneath my skin.



Roman Twist – Anthony Acri

Sneak Thief by Damon Hubbs

This is the one where I fall in love with the iFIT trainer.
I want a girlfriend face,
a body like Madonna. Any Madonna.
My iFIT trainer is the GOAT at getting laid.
I want nails like stolen pearls.
I want to climb him like Mount Everest
but we're in the Lake District
of a suburban ranch house in Essex County, MA.
Scaffel Pike will have to do.
And you thought *your* ass was sore
on Monday morning, Laura—
I throw my head back with a giggle,
pretend my tits are the Seven of Cups.
He quotes Wordsworth.
Says the world's my oyster.
Says the key to success is commitment and endurance.
Says "go get the butter"
like Brando
in *Last Tango in Paris*.
O —I bend over backwards to please people.

He says his marriage has been going south
for a while, maybe since Covid, maybe since his father died,
maybe since the second kid or when he threw rocks
into the wind, maybe since the Harvest moon,
maybe when the fish stopped running
and Lehman crashed, maybe when he got bursitis
and couldn't walk to Cat Bells or Buttermere Lake,
maybe when he started forgetting
that other people are human, maybe it was before that,
or after that, when the lollipop was licked and the party scrubbed,
when horses stopped dancing and hell was blue.
Shit sneaks up.
Picks your pockets.
Picks your soul.
Maybe it was when the bird struck the window.
But no, that wasn't a bird.
It was me
hitting the touchscreen
of a NordicTrack, in the Lake District
of a suburban ranch house

in Essex County, MA
step after step after step and getting nowhere.

Ode to the Kitchen Knife by Michael Akuchie

Who else can I ask to split
the apple into two neat halves?
You separate bone
from chicken with splendor. You slice
through yam tubers like they
did not nearly sink my shoulder
as I hauled them home.

Whether it's a clump of greens
that needs trimming, or tomatoes
aching to be lacerated,
I trust you not to refuse.

Last week at the market, a seller waved
a set of new knives he swore
could reach an orange's center
quicker than any other.
I smirked because you were home, patient
like the snow leopard, waiting
for fresh prey to spring up.



Gentle Bastard – Mariia Mylenka

I want something fluorescent by Izzy Nameth Beck

but I worry that it makes me a pervert because instead I masturbate in bed, cotton nightgown hiked up around my hips and stomach. I deleted the last of my dating apps when I realized I couldn't coax a whirlwind from the LEDs that burn my phone screen bright like white strawberry flesh.

He told me I'd need to tell him if his breath stunk that he doesn't go to therapy for his bipolar disorder isn't medicated goes for weeks without scooping his cat's litter doesn't really know his sister. I'm planning my out, what I'll tell him to avoid admitting that I don't want to live like a girlfriend.

I want a pink glow reflecting through plate glass, Hello Kitty candy on pastel shelves, ice cream in the humming freezer, a crushed pack of cigarettes in the front pocket of ~~you~~ my overalls, rain pattering through the dusk outside. I want something fluorescent, tetra fish burbling through false coral in a wide blue tank.

About the Authors

Bradford Middleton lives in Brighton, England where he works part-time in a budget book/art-supply shop. His debut collection of poetry is currently doing the rounds of several small presses whilst recent poems have featured in *In The Veins*, *Fixator Press*, *Broken Teacup*, *Dear Booze*, *Horror Sleaze Trash*, *Mad Swirl* and *Underbelly Press*. His latest chapbook was published by the mighty fine *Alien Buddha Press*.

RJ Equality Ingram lives next to a cemetery in Portland, Oregon & works as a necromancer for Goodwill Industries of the Columbia Willamette. RJ's second collection of poetry *Peacock Lane* is forthcoming from *White Stag* & RJ's debut collection *The Autobiography of Nancy Drew* was published in 2024 also by *White Stag*. More work can be found in *Voicemail Poems*, *Deep Overstock*, *Luna Luna* & *Phoebe Journal* among others. Follow @RJ_Equality for pictures of their cats Twyla & Senator Padme Amidala.

Wendy Freborg is a retired social worker and former editor whose poetry has been published by *Misfit*, *Rat's Ass Review*, *Right Hand Pointing*, *The Orchards Poetry Journal*, and *WestWard Quarterly*. She is a frequent contributor to *Scalar Comedy* and *Little Old Lady Comedy*. Her pleasures are her family, learning new things, and remembering old times. She writes poetry to learn what she is thinking.

Vianne Lafond is a second year student at Concordia University in the program of Creative Writing. She writes plays, short pieces of comedic fiction, and is starting to touch more and more on poetry! When she's not travelling back and forth to school, she loves to make collages, read, and hike!

Sharon Weightman Hoffmann is a writer based in Atlantic Beach, Florida. Publications include *The Hooghly Review*, *New York Quarterly*, *Beloit Poetry Journal*, *Alice Walker: Critical Perspectives* (Harvard University Press), *Isle of Flowers* (Anhinga Press), *South Florida Poetry Journal*, *Letters*, *Poetica*, *Wild Roof*, *Sho*, *Qu* and other magazines. Awards include fellowships from Atlantic Center for the Arts and Florida's Division of Cultural Affairs, and three Pushcart nominations.

Lauren Paré is a poet, non-practising lawyer, and trademark examiner for the Government of Canada. She completed her creative writing certificate at the University of Toronto School of Continuing Studies, specializing in poetry. Her

work appears in journals including *Pinhole Poetry*, *flo.*, and *Paddler Press*. She lives in Tkaronto (Toronto). Instagram: @lauren.pare

Arno (he/him) is an English Literature student and emerging writer exploring themes of existential disaffection, navigating sex and queerness in early adulthood, and the creative edges of personal turmoil. His work most often leans into stream-of-consciousness, though he also experiments across forms.

Izzy Nameth Beck is an MFA student at Northern Michigan University. She is a Norton Writers Prize recipient and her other work can be found in the *Long River Review* and *Discretionary Love*. She loves her cat and Lake Superior.

Allison Burris writes whimsical poems exploring memory and magic from Oakland, CA. Her most recent publications are in *Masque & Spectacle* and *Last Stanza Journal*. You can find her at the library looking for a magic portal. If you find one first, let her know: <https://linktr.ee/allisonburris>.

Michael Akuchie is the author of *Wreck* (The Hellebore Press, 2020), a debut chapbook of poems selected by José Olivarez to win the 2020 Hellebore Poetry Scholarship Award. His poems have appeared in *Poet Lore*, *The Rumpus*, *Gordon Square Review*, *Lost Balloon*, and other places. He reads poetry submissions for *Iron Horse Literary Review* and *Poetry Sango* as Associate Editor and Editor respectively. Akuchie is an MFA Poetry student at SIU, Carbondale.

Jacob Butlett is a Pushcart Prize-nominated author with an MFA in Poetry. He has been published in many journals, including the *Colorado Review*, *The Hollins Critic*, and *Into the Void*. In 2023 he received an Honorable Mention for the Academy of American Poets Prize (Graduate Prize).

Silas James is an emerging queer and trans writer based in Tiohtià:ke/Montreal. You might've seen him trailing around town, aperol spritz in hand, or even looking distracted while serving you an aperol spritz at his beloved Cooperative Bar Milton Parc. He enjoys crosswords and Jesus.

Damon Hubbs is the poetry editor at *Blood+Honey* and *The Argyle Magazine*. He's the author of the full-length collection *Venus at the Arms Fair* (Alien Buddha Press, 2024). Recent publications include *The Gorko Gazette*, *Horror Sleaze Trash*, *Synchronized Chaos*, *Hobart*, *Revolution John*, *The Literary Underground*, and

others. His next book, *Bullet Pudding*, is forthcoming from Roadside Press in 2026. He lives in New England.

About the Artists

Kieran Belanger (aka mew.psd) is a digital artist, photographer, and graphic designer based out of London, Ontario. Using digital and analog mediums, he aims to depict the human form through abstractions, colour and shapes. His work pays homage to the organic, impulsive, and natural human form while also recognizing the increasingly digital age we live in today.

Courtney Buder (she/they) is a writer and visual artist living in Fredericton, New Brunswick, on unceded Wolastoqey land. Her work is published or forthcoming in *Geist*, *Arc*, *ROOM*, *The Common*, and elsewhere. She co-edits *HOT SOUP* magazine, which can be found at hotsoupmagazine.ca. Find her online at courtneybuder.ca or on Instagram @courtneybuder.

Zoë Davis is an emerging artist and writer from Sheffield, England. She's a stubborn FND sufferer and fights what her body says she can't do by playing wheelchair rugby league. She loves exploring the fantastical and the mundane in her writing, and urban decay with her photography. You can find her words in publications such as: *Ink Sweat & Tears*, *Strix*, *Roi Fainéant*, *Dust* and *Red Ogre Review*. You can also follow her on X @MeanerHarker where she's always happy to have a virtual coffee and a chat.

Anthony Acri is a cartoonist, illustrator and a social critic, in the terms of Croce or Vidal, who lives in the suburbia of Pittsburgh Pa, with his sister and brother and are all that is left of a family of Italians who had coddled and both warned him of the quagmire that he was going to be dealing in and with as a boy. Since he was a boy and had epilepsy, he saw things differently than the over fed pigs of various curia's.

Mariia Mylenka (b. 1998, Kyiv) is a Montreal-based Ukrainian artist working primarily in ink drawing. With an architectural background and a self-taught artistic practice, she balances intuitive fluidity with a sharp compositional and spatial sensibility. Working mainly on paper, but experimenting with alternative processes, Maria treats art as both ritual and reflection. Themes of body, intuition, the supernatural run through her works, manifesting in cryptic, dreamlike imagery - functioning as visual poetry & symbolic artifacts.

Masthead

Cassandra Sarah Pegg (she/her) is in her second year of an MA in English Literature at Concordia University, writing a thesis on fairies and escapism. She is working on a novel, writes weird stories about creatures, and is a serial hobbyist. Cass' work can be found in *Soliloquies Anthology*, *pixie literary magazine*, *Anti-Heroine Chic*, *Dollar Store Magazine*, Metatron Press' #MicroMeta Instagram series, and *All Worlds Wayfarer*, among others. She occasionally exists on Instagram @cassxtle.

Katie Cossette (she/her) is a Montreal artist working on her debut novel and various clay pieces. Her work has been featured in *Alien Buddha Press*, *Soliloquies Anthology*, *pixie literary magazine*, *Timber Ghost Press*, and elsewhere. Her interests include horror movies/books (always open to recommendations), stickers, and walking outside until her legs give out beneath her. You can find her on Instagram (nerd.i.am).

Hanifah Sinon is an East Coaster turned part-time Montrealer. You can usually find her concocting cozy drinks, watching so-bad-it's-good TV or diving into some sort of creative project (currently obsessed with pottery). She is excited to add some extra crunchiness to the Crab Apple feed as social media manager.

