

decades review

Issue Six



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poetry

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CAPRICIOUS

My life is the seasons.
Each day, spontaneous in its own defense.
As telling as the erratic weather skies,
that aviates above our existence.

I am the summer days.
Welcoming, I give life to my surroundings.
With rays of inspiration and warmth,
I aim to illuminate the dark corners of their souls.

But not all summer days are inspiring.
Some are filled with rain, while others scold with humidity.
I attempt to immerse myself in the day's longevity,
but odds of knowing are a speck of soil in a lawn.

I am the autumn hours.
Our leaves, they transform into a fiery hue.
They swing gently from left to right,
falling to the ground from the brown paper skies.

You are my companion,
the symmetry veins of the body of a leaf,
that connect with life,
as they cover the orchard gardens harvest.

But sometimes the chillness of night
can freeze us with disdain,
as the sycamores go bare in the desolate fields of frost,
waiting anxiously for the elder season to arrive.

I am the winter minutes.
Frozen with eternity—cold, bitter, alienated,
the snowflakes shutter to the soil in the mute absent hour.

There I blanket the differences of earth,
letting the gusts of the wind orchestrate the howling of the twilight.

But the stars— ‘oh the stars’ –
burn parallel to the shadows of the moon.
Extending shine like a night light to a babe in a crib,
the glare reflects off the mounds of snow and ice.

Here the stars reveal that everything is colorless and one.
The bare sycamore trees remain beautiful and honest,
standing tall in the algid soil of the world.

At last, I am the spring seconds.
At times I can be quarrelsome as a lion--
self-destructive and unpleasant –
pouring down my grey clouds with awkward climates,
my spring showers become floods.

But at other moments ,
I can be as peaceful as a lamb.
Calm and pleasant—warm when unexpected--
I let the seeds of my experiences sprout my life,
and let it grow into others,
let it bloom in their eyes.

My life is the seasons.
Each day, spontaneous in its own defense.
I let my heart forecast my weathering soul,
which is made of manifold climates.

- Cord Moreski

1

Exit door
circumferenced
by stories

could read them
for lifetimes

wonder why
people leave

-Nicholas Klacsanzky



Photo by Max Ingram

DELETE, DELETE

I log on to email every day.
My inbox is full of offers, appeals,
advice, updates, reminders--
I go through the list, reading
and deleting, or deleting
without reading.

My brain has reached capacity
and is starting to shrink.
I try to delete more than I add
to the heavy baggage of self.

Delete the urge to suffer
that twisted me in knots,
delete the need to be right,
to have the last word,
to have my own way.
Knowing I cannot choose
the way my life will end.

-Anne Whitehouse

MOVING

First memories are moving targets--
what the four-year old recalls,
the ten-year-old may have forgotten.

The processes of recollection
are constantly forming
deep within the brain
inside the bony ridge named for a seahorse.

Tracks lie on top of other tracks,

twisting and turning on themselves,
until we lose the reasons
why we became what we are.

-Anne Whitehouse



Photo by
Max Ingram

ELEPHANT AND CASTLE

Royal Motel. Rooms from \$38.15.

Twelve years of marriage and we had avoided hourly stays in such quarters, cum-stained floral bedspreads, rust-colored toilet water rimming the bowl. But we were “trying again,” dividing the blame for his affair in the spirit of egalitarianism, the way we approached laundry, diapering, cooking-- at least in theory. And it was my turn.

Who I was competing against, I am still not sure: Vanesa, heroin, midlife. Something other, an elephant in the room watching us pretend we still felt something. Sick with cancer, a marriage with one foot in the grave. We both knew there is no coming back from something like that.

But we fucked for a few minutes longer than usual, the act complete with foreplay, and checked out. We slid the keys across the counter like teenagers, into the hands of the Indian motel manager in the middle of evening. If we hurried, we would make it home in time to bathe the kids.

The next weekend, Elephant and Castle restaurant and hotel. A couple of glasses of wine at the bar before I could summon the passion married people pretend they still have. After all these years. Years of fucking the same person, the same smell of the same body you know like the back of his hand. Your palms have memorized the tight sinews of buttocks, the love-handled lower torso, the shoulders thick and hard like a set of vows taken at the district magistrate's office the day before college graduation. The body that has been your castle ever since.

The one you were supposed to inhabit till death
undid the cement foundation. The body you had
no intention of sharing. Yet there you are
in a hotel room trying to make up
for something that wasn't really your fault,
for lost time that will never be found again.

-April Salzano

THE STONE PEACOCKS

mock me from their misting
perch. Expressions of content-
ment, stoically ingrained. In my mind,
I wander the uneven paths of their garden
world, each step amplifying my discomfort.
I am the foreign
creature gathering their glares, like petals
in a basket. I sprinkle
them behind me. They settle over my tracks.
My childish attempt at a breadcrumbing
distraction from my past. Path
after path, I repeat this process until I am
swallowed by their imaginary scent.
Everything is solid
ly set in uniform
misdirection. I breathe
for the first time, relieved in the echoing
resonance of the idea of being
lost.

-A.J. Huffman

MONDAY

Monday. I'm on my bed
it's 11.30 in the morning and humid
and I'm going through the astrological forecast
for the this week which says
things are going to look up

pretty soon...

I smile
to myself
finish the beer
pick up the cellphone
and start
dialing
your number...

-Kanchan Chatterjee

A MOTHER'S LOVE

Since the sun's first peek over the horizon to the beginning of the sunset
ten hours of labor, long and dreary.

Riding a green truck scarred with streaks of black.
It is old. older than her eighteen-year-old child,

Lunch packed with leftover dinner,
Sometimes even a grain of rice is all that's eaten.

Clothes worn since the king's screams of Billie Jean

Colors faded blue, the jeans scream for a needy patchwork

Returns home from work and her child's wants are eagerly pressuring
Dinner must be cooked, chicken washed and seasoned with garlic and pepper powder

Her children watches the television and she lectures
No tv until your homework is done!

How tired must she feel?

Since the beginning of the sunset to the midnight hoot of an owl
ten hours of family, long and dreary.

But at the end of the day
her baby child walks up and gives her the warmest smile.

-Jeanne Moua



Photo by Max Ingram

HE HAS NO REAL STYLE

The man walking across the path
looked like Jesus Christ: his dark skin,
a ten-day beard, oily hair Picasso might
not want to sketch

some would assume his role might be
starring in a film where rivers look like streams,
mountains like mounds of flesh, and the moon
like that of a single, sad eye

he mouthed only “beautiful”
and when he disappeared from sight,
you imagined the sun was creeping up
before its time

It stays with you, when you see a man
like that, maybe only once in a lifetime

-Tim J Brennan

AN UGLY WOMAN PUTTING ON MAKEUP

She touches brush
to a palette of flesh tones,
applies powder to cheeks
blending light and dark shades,

selects a finer tool,
and outlines with the skill of an engraver.
Then after a half hour of concentration
in front of a magnifying mirror
she wields an eyelash curler
with steadier hand than a Japanese archer.

None of this does any good.
The flabby flesh under her arms
still resembles candle wax
that has dripped and hardened
and her two-hundred-pound body
looks more like a dump truck
than a fashion model's graceful form.

How far we go
to maintain equilibrium with despair.
A woman in an electric wheelchair
travels to China to look for a cure.
Hands trembling from Parkinson's
the aikido master still gets on the mat.
I write this poem
hoping it will outlive me.

I want to shout,
"Put down that lipstick
and go to the gym,"
but I hold my tongue.
I hold my tongue

-Jon Wesick



"Catch of the Day" - Kelsey Pisciotta



"Water Work" - Kelsey Pisciotta

THE REASON IS YOU

Through the thunder and the lightning;
the birds will always be singing for you,
as your hair turns into a wet mess in the downpour.

As we trudge through the puddles
and your makeup smears with every drop that assaults it,
we grasp our hands in a cold, wet embrace.

If only my dreams could actually be reality;
My mind conjures up these situations that
I can transfer using a pen and paper;
but the loneliness overcomes reality and
quickly becomes true,

If only my dreams of you could actually come true,
and every little fantasy played out in my head wasn't worthless.

If only I could actually hold you,
and breathe you in,
perhaps then I could finally feel complete.

If only I could actually stare into your eyes,
and feel your hurt;
could I start to fix you.

If only our thunderstorm was real;
and we could watch the rain drip down the window screen.

Maybe, just maybe, if you were here you'd feel it too;
how i'm supposed to be with you.

How when you smile, I smile,
and when you cry, I cry as well.
How the dark may be involved,
but my soul is strong enough to take it,
when the reason is you.

How when i'm miles upon miles away;
I can still smell the sweet scent of your hair,
and the soft tone of your beautiful voice;
How I can feel your love radiate off of you to very far away.

How you're my shelter,
my safe place;
the one thing in this world I can count on to kill my anxiousness.
How you're my everything,
my world,
and I wouldn't trade that for anything.

How when it's impossible to be joyful and you speak joy into me,
The times when I can't even verbalize anything while in the presence of you,
when the reason is you.

-Stephen Hovious

STOP FREE

Wake up... wake up.
I am not asleep anymore
counting the innumerable
signs of endless grief,
gaping hills soaring to the bottom,
and green escapes going through infinite lights.
I am a moment and a breath taken away
only to be held onto as tight as misfortune.
This moment I am intrigued by all of the falling stars
hitting the earth as debris would.
I am not anticipating the next page
already knowing it was ripped out of my eternity.

The eternity that looks for more of a steady pace.
The counting and remembering that only holds time.
I am every kamikaze fire bird
that bolts head first into the earth
but returns ascending
reaching that indigo extension like a boomerang.
Boundless dreaming turns into something impossible.
I am, stop free, my eyes are open.

-Joshua Burton

SPRING

01

His gaze escaped the sky
That the baker had carefully
Painted on the cake
A kid's sky with roses
On a cute birthday cake

02

The doctor nimbly
Pulled out the needle
From her eyes
Her eyes seemed sadder
Now, that they were free from pain

03

He arrived at the hi-tea
Immaculately dressed in dust
He refused the shining sugar cubes
And drank his tea with dreams instead

04

“Are you back from the Fields?”
Mother smiled at her naked child

“Yes!” she said,
And added with a twinkle
“I’m on my way to your womb again!”

05

The afternoon grime was telling on him
When he looked out
And saw a jazz tune walking by
Love he wrote
And an epic was born

06

White spit covered my lens
She was Angry

Because, I had tried
To capture her Innocent Angst

07

He hugged tombstones for a living
He was thrilled by epitaphs
Only when it came to him
A white withered flower
Was all he got

08

They hated him for his smile
A grown up great baby!
A smile carrying empires lost
A smile you couldn’t meet

09

He was Speed running by
A Race racing against
A field of ripe Poppies snoring
A gust of Wind unkempt

Brida had run away
The day he came for her
A Man she did not Love
A Life she could not Hate

TRI 1

“Don’t look away!”
The sorcerer warned
For Spring was about to set

TRI 2

Hope is a thing that
Lovers carry in their hearts
And the rich buy off the streets

TRI 3

The house was haunted
By things friendlier than Ghosts
By memories sweeter than Riches

TRI 4

Come, play in the sun!
Come, get undone!
Come, spring is here!

-Sreemanti Sengupta

prose



JUNKYARD DOG

My high school electronics teacher, Mr. Cromwell, had us sitting in class one Friday repairing old televisions and radios. After the exam from the day before, we were sure he'd give us a break. A kind man with white sideburns and harmless Jerry Lewis smile, he was known for getting his point across without resorting to abrasive language or undercover threats.

Most of us would have preferred being outside drinking sodas or ogling the fairer species even if it was on the school's dollar. Instead, Mr. Cromwell walked from bench to bench, arms behind his back, glasses dangling from the tip of his nose, making mental notes of our progress. Was Timmy holding the solder iron to the flux right? Was Henry able to calculate a resistor's ohms by reading its color bands? Did Joseph or Chang know the difference between the transistors in the chart before them? To say the least, Mr. Cromwell was a bit intimidating, but at least we didn't get flogged like I used to back in Catholic school.

Our preparation for the test on Thursday included finding creative uses for our ever burgeoning electronic skills. We had, at our disposal, old tubes, capacitors, printed circuit boards, shielded wire and other items. I know what I'd wanted to make, but was challenged by the dearth of parts. We were allowed to purchase additional items from Radio Shack, but that was the problem. My father had been out of the picture for as long as I could remember. My mother worked two jobs but was never home. And when she was, there were always six mouths to feed and bills to take care of. That meant nary an additional penny was flicked my way, especially for some inconsequential school project.

I'm glad old man Hammett over at B&H Junk Shop knew me well. To make extra cash, I went riding around town on my bike and picked up old toasters, suitcases, hubcaps, lamps, cable boxes or anything I could find to sell to him. Sometimes he didn't want them, but out of the kindness of his soul, purchased them anyway. It was usually for a pittance, but one dollar was better than no dollars at all.

I went to his shop after school this past Monday and told him about my electronics assignment and the upcoming test. He said to me, “Tony, I know nothing about that stuff, but if you want, you could salvage parts from old transistor and tube radios lying around here.” I spent a good three hours removing a treasure trove of components and took them back to my house.

For the next few days, I spent most of my time after school working on my project in my room. My brothers and sisters didn't pay attention to me so I was never interrupted. I was an ultra-nerd, so the prospect of me being a party pooper somewhere never happened. I did knock out all the power in the house on Wednesday plugging in my newly built contraption, but other than that, I designed and soldered away in privacy and to my heart's content.

Thursday, test day, came quickly. We finally had to turn in our project. Most of us grumbled as we felt we weren't given enough time. Mr. Cromwell stated that, in the real world, speed was of the essence and that's just how businesses worked. We suspected he was getting old and time was of the essence with him.

Consequently, a few of the students' crude attempts at robotics backfired. Motors either failed to energize or parts flew off because they weren't attached right. One student's prototype of an electronic-assisted gasoline engine, though clever in design and workmanship, failed when gasoline spilled from a blown gasket and the electronics portion simply fizzled and died. Heartbroken was not the word to describe the student's feelings. His tears spoke volumes more.

Then, it was my turn. Like a peacock at a petting zoo, I strutted to the front of the class with an electric guitar and my invention, a battery-powered guitar amplifier created from the junkyard parts. With everyone's eyes scanning me like a metal detector, I strapped my guitar around my neck and plugged it into my crude amp. I turned to Mr. Cromwell and he nodded. Taking a deep breath, I put my machine on. It emitted a thin hissy white noise as if a rattlesnake was caught between two stones. I was so sure of my creation's success that, instead of simply playing notes on my guitar, I wanted to begin my demonstration by doing a windmill into my trusty axe the way Pete Townshend from The Who played. With a pick held high in my right hand, I swung my arm down towards the strings. Brrnngg! A thick chord shot out of the amp. I grinned. Then as soon as I was about to play another chord, the amp sputtered. Sparks and smoke flew from it and then simply petered out.

A few of the students laughed. Mr. Cromwell just shook his head. “Maybe next time,” he

encouraged me. That was fine. I could deal with the misfire. My amp, I admitted, was a dog. Since all of our projects failed, Mr. Cromwell kept us grinding away even on a mighty fine Friday. I might revisit that amp one day, but at least we students were brave enough to present our ideas, strong enough to admit they needed work, and smart enough to move on to something else entirely.

-Robin Ray

visual artwork

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"Buzzards" - Drew Collins



"Scary House" - Drew Collins

END