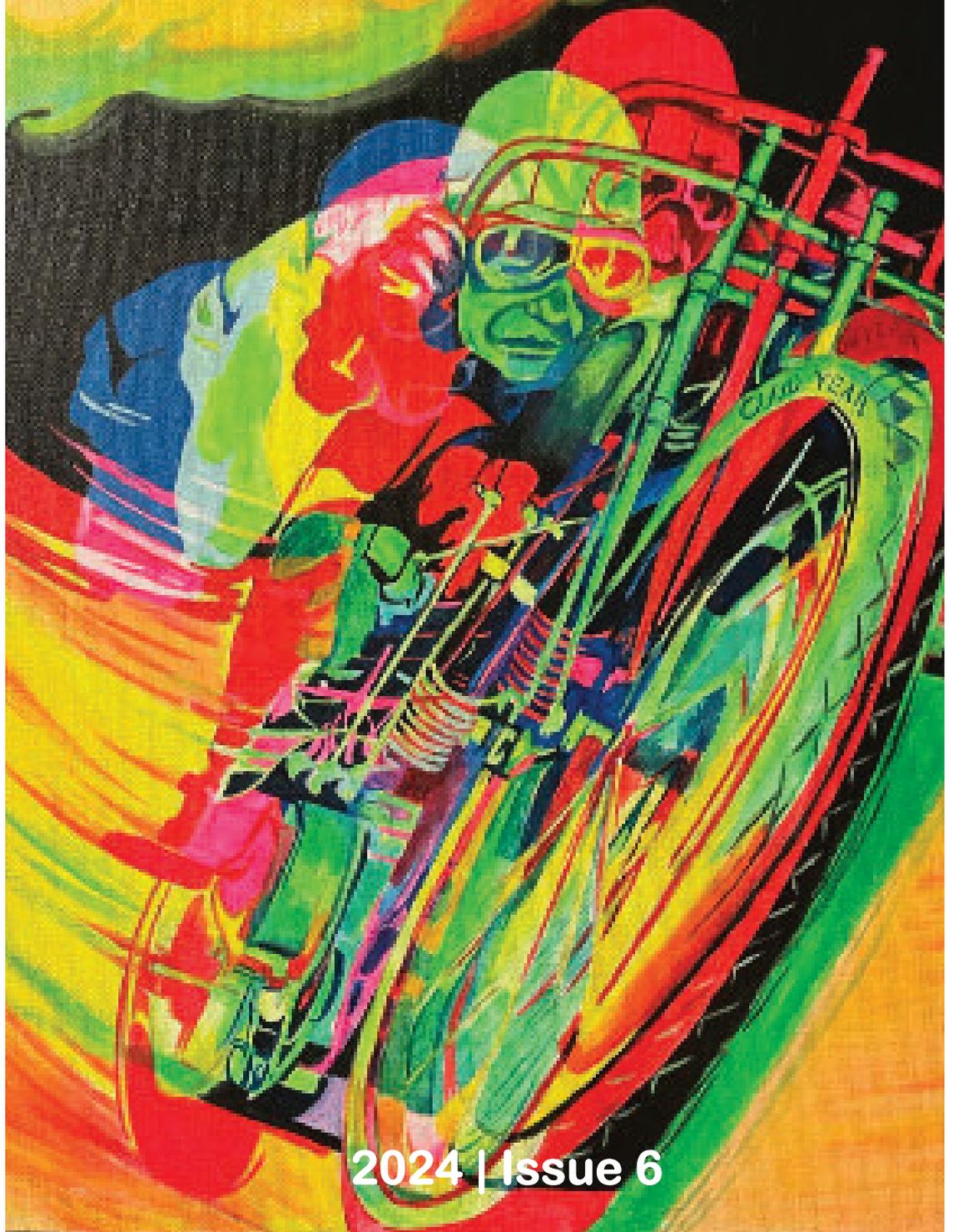


Three Peaks Review

Black Hills State University's
student-run literary magazine



2024 | Issue 6

Cover Photo:
Biker By *Alexandria Eakins*



BLACK HILLS

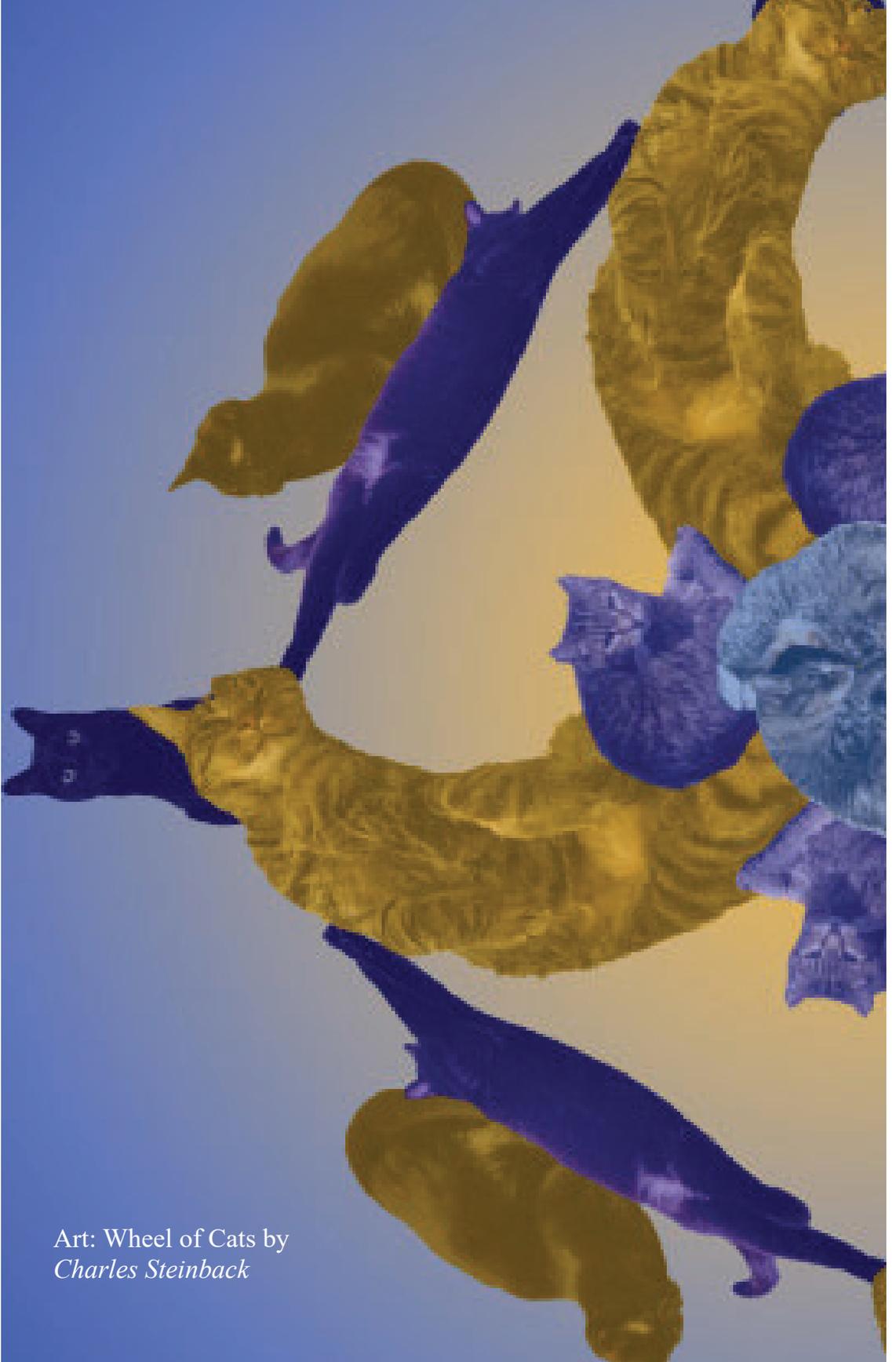
STATE UNIVERSITY



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Three Peaks Review

Black Hills State University's
undergraduate literary magazine
featuring a collection of students'
poetry, fiction, and visual art



Art: Wheel of Cats by
Charles Steinback

Letter from the Editor

“The highest purpose of art is to inspire,” Bob Dylan ambitiously said, and that is our hope for you in this sixth publication of Three Peaks Review’s literary journal. Through the carefully cultivated written work and media of Black Hills State University’s students, we present a gateway to individual interpretation. I encourage you to immerse yourselves in the art that has been thoughtfully selected for this year’s magazine. May you find comfort here and a source of inspiration to craft your own artistic stories.

This journal has come to life thanks to the writers, artists, and photographers, who leaped at the chance to share their work. And not without the steadfast staff, who were willing to sacrifice crucial time to make this whole project possible. Their insight and intellect influenced the difficult decision making and formatting of this magazine. So, thank you, my dear staff and fellow members. Not only am I truly grateful for your contributions and dedication to this endeavor, but also for helping me throughout this amazing journey as president. I have grown as a person from this experience and will look back on this year with an overabundance of happiness.

Others I would like to thank are my wonderful associates. Gavin Koch, our vice-president, for always reassuring me, being open to my ideas and tweaking them, and providing poetic entertainment to our audiences. Our lovely secretary, Megan Koftinow, for keeping track of minutes to make those monthly reports a breeze. And Alex Larson, our social media representative, for capturing our moments on campus and in the community as well as advertising our events with her wonderful Graphic Design skills. None of us would probably be here if it weren’t for our supportive Advisor, Matthew Bauman. His experience with writing and this club has made it possible for us to continue doing what we love as an established group. I cannot express enough how much I appreciate all of you.

Additional thanks go to Black Hills State University, for allowing us to have this community and share our work in this format. To the Activity Grants Committee, for funding and advertising our events and the journal. And especially to Lori Dubry from Printing Services for guiding us through the publishing process and making our dreams come true. The journal wouldn’t be here without you.

Now I welcome you all to step into this journal, find delight in it, and hopefully emerge with inspiration to create more art for the world to enjoy.

Affectionately,

Deanna

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Megan Koftinow | Secretary &
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Did You Find Everything You Were Looking For Today?

By *Annalina Scalise*

there are thirty-six kinds of salad, fifteen types of chocolate,
and four different flavors of cream cheese
shelved in rows of color coordinated branding—

each brightly packaged item is an unanswered prayer,
chamomile, peppermint, lemon, ginger
life here lives in lists

find your saints in aisle three, pushing carts
full of crying children- here is where we rest
our weary souls.

a place of worship sewed into
a tiled floor of worn-down meditative productivity
mundane necessity is an almost weekly ritual.

let me keep my faith on the shelves beside bouquets of bright flowers
and twelve kinds of discount whiskey.
take inventory of these aisles- promised prose in the pastas,
this is the church of coupons and hummus and strawberry jam.



Cattle Car
Annalina Scalise

Silly Woman

By *Grace Boe*

I don't understand astrology
I don't get daylight savings
How do stocks work?
I give up on myself with the blowing of the wind
Books no longer serve me purpose unless I'm rehashing a childhood dream.
A silly woman.
An uneducated girl.
Weak and weak-minded are words they use to cut me, but
The only thing they do is confirm my faults.
At twelve I taught myself my first instrument
At thirteen I had an A+ in advanced math
And at fourteen years old I sat and cried as I realized the world is
Crueler than I once knew.
At fourteen when divorce and assault snuck into my vocabulary,
I became more than an uneducated girl, than a silly woman.
I became a rock, I became a shoulder,
I became a vessel for others to pour into, in order to go on.
At nineteen I balanced realistic expectations, because
I can't fix them all.
But at twenty-one I now find that the very markers
That make up who I am are the ones
That I deem less important than theirs.
Time and space seem so out of touch,
But the hugs of the suicidal,
The tears of the broken,
And the confessions of the guilty have brought me back to remember that naivety
That naivety only children possess.
I know the darkness of this world and I choose light.
I choose to be this woman
Whose heart is sometimes heavy and
Whose brain is sometimes empty -
So, call me a silly woman, maybe I am a stupid girl.
But who I am makes me joy and it produces so much love -
I would rather be there for you than understand taxes anyway.



Uterine
Alex Larson

It's About The Little Things

By *Isabella Dietrich*

You might think sadness is the worst part:
the hiccupping, peristaltic sobs
pushing velvet lumps of lung
through the rungs of the ribcage,
the convulsions trying to climb out,
throwing up nothing on the shower floor,
but there's a level of solemnity there
because no matter how much it hurts,
eventually you'll have to turn the water off.

The worst part is when the tears don't fall:
when you pull a tray out of the oven and
wonder where the blisters came from.
It's paralyzing silence, racing thoughts,
white noise grey matter buzzing behind your eyeballs.
It's living purgatory in this place,
like a ghost inside you and your zombie-corpse,
who won't stop smashing their head against the wall,
digging in the cracks of its skull
slurping lobes like udon.

My wife told me to think about the little things:
fuzzy socks,
snuggling the cat,
waking up early enough to get breakfast at McDonald's.
She said it's easy to find those little hits of joy
but it took me an hour to find three:
 crab rangoons,
 drinking beer with no pants on,
the way the cat pigeon coos when she knocks shit over.

It's times like these when my face is dry
that I wish I had the courage to end it
before we rescued a South Dakota tabby,
because now I have this thing
that relies on me completely
when most of the time
I want my heart to stop beating.
And it doesn't matter how cute she looks
when she crunches the corners off my goons
or licks the condensation off my beer bottles
or makes biscuits on my thighs because
I'm still stuck wondering

who's gonna feed her and my wife when I'm gone?

Doing The Dishes

By *Kate Kenton*

It's the most grueling time of the week,
the stainless-steel basin fills with sudsy water.
It's scalding. Rubber gloves snap over
fingers to avoid the sensory nightmare at hand.

Wet noodles, soaked rice, dried sauce;
in my thoughts, it's time to get lost.
Doing the dishes is best paired with distraction,
a playlist, a podcast, an ear to talk to.
So when you do the dishes all alone,
there are fields of thought you should not roam.
Scalding water invades the glove,
so take it off and continue on – clear the grime,
muck and stains, though you'll have to do
it all again. Scrub the ceramic, iron, and
glass and don't think about the past.

Don't touch that piece of wet ground beef,
it's the cause of your misery.
Never let the water get cold, after soaking
the stained, neglected pots and pans,
and plates and bowls, because that's the worst.
Ultimately it defeats the goal.

Bonding With Mom

By *Alexandria Eakins*

My mom brushes my hair with quick strokes, my chin tilting back as she pulls the brush from the crown of my ruler length brown hair. The brush comes free and my head bobs back to place. As she starts a new stroke, I glance away from our scruffy reflections in her bathroom mirror to the narrow doorway into the hall. Hayden and Ethan run past still in their superhero jammies, they bumper car against the walls yelling about a video game they don't have time to play. This catches mom's attention too.

"You better be getting dressed!" She hollers stretching out the door with the brush still in my hair. My little sister Hatya wanders sleepy eyed in the other direction to put on the school clothes mom set out. Mom's brush snags, tears well immediately blurring the view of my younger sibling's morning. I can't blink them away before my mom starts to yank the brush from the rat's nest she has discovered, one tug, two, three it rips from my hair like the Velcro on my brothers' shoes, tears fall with that and my mom raises the brush, outraged at the nerve.

"I'll give you something to cry about." I'm quickly convinced. Swallowing hard I hold my breath to dry the tears up. Sniffing, I sneak a peek at the reflection of my mom. Her hair looks freshly lifted from the pillow, she white knuckles the brush flexing her fingers as she inhales deliberately, I glance away before she looks up. Looking to the counter I scan her brimming collection of bronze toned make up and hair products. She brings the brush back to the top of my head with a slow pressure that causes a whistling exhale from the brush as the bristles mould around my head and the rubber holding them together sucks in, the brush travels down the curve of my head slowly pressed to my skull until she pulls back at the nape of my neck dragging it from my long hair. She breaths out. There is a long pause before the next stroke. I silently wipe my face with the back of my hand. When the brush meets my head again it is softer. I chance another look at my mom; her gaze is fixed on the back of my head at the spot where she always told me gives her trouble due to the extreme cowlick I inherited. Her red rimmed eyes are soft and vacant, her lips just broken from the firm line they were holding. Mom looks up blinking a shine away

and meets my reflection and I dart my eyes away. She lets out a huff, quickly resuming her pace she expertly finishes my hair. I stand to leave as soon as her hands fall away from me. Surely, I must have said thank you.

“Send in your sister.” My mom tells me as I walk out of the bathroom. I find Hatya in our room spinning to test a skirt she has fashioned as a shirt. I glance past her at the clothes mom set out untouched on her bed.

“Mom says it’s your turn.” I tell her with a roll of my eyes. Her spins come to a swaying stop. Taking note of my hair she runs off to ask mom for the same style. I cross the room to our white dresser with its hand painted daisy and look in the mirror on top. My hair is styled in two perfect buns like Princess Leia. I admire them, gently touching the silky soft cinnamon rolls. Then I look to my bed and worry how I’ll get my shirt on. I carefully stretch the neck of my yellow shirt to its limit, hands spread like I’m playing cat in the cradle to avoid my hair. But it always catches something. I smooth out my shirt as a cold bobby pin slides down following the curve of my spine. I turn my head to see a ribbon of hair is already escaping. Crap.

Once the others are ready with Hatya in the outfit of moms choosing. Mom corrals us into the mini van, she suddenly catches a look at me, “Great we’re late again and you already look like the village idiot.”

The most important rule is to always watch the knife. My muscles strain to move but I hold myself in place and I watch William slice the knife through the bell pepper in a sawing motion. He’s still adjusting to the upgrade from the serrated butter knife to the slick ninja sharp paring knife. He cuts with six-year-old precision.

“Real good baby, but just cut down.” I try to act out with my empty hand slicing through the air. My fingers curl at my sides as I move to the stove to check on the baby potatoes cooking in the pan. It’s Wednesday and somehow already five thirty. We need to do bath by six thirty or else we will miss the last chance for it before the boys go to their dad’s for the weekend. I look back to William as he carefully cuts a new slice of the same pepper.

The potatoes start sizzling in the oil not yet crisping. I pull out the sausage for dinner and set it next to the cutting board.

Will looks at it excitedly waving his knife at it, "I will cut that next!" He announces. He goes back to his hard work, while I compulsively check the time on my phone. I stir the potatoes for a bit, with one eye on William's knife. Slowly he makes it through the first of three peppers. I notice Foster coloring in the living room, his little body casting a shadow over his paper. I cross to the living room avoiding toys littered across the floor. I turn on the lights and shutter the blinds. The new light reveals Foster's monochromatic coloring. When I return to William, I see he has an eye on the tv instead of his knife. I feel my body take heavier step towards him. Foster notices my change of pace as well and runs to the kitchen blue crayon in hand. I come to a hard stop in front of Will.

"William! You have to watch what you're doing. Not the TV." I say in a voice I don't want to claim as my own. Foster wraps his arms around my leg and pulls. I look down at his small face as he rubs his belly to sign "hungry".

"We're making dinner baby." I tell him instead of "no". The potatoes sizzle louder in agreement. I look back to William who is still trying to watch tv and cut peppers as if my words didn't meet his ears at all. The gate opens.

"If you can't pay attention we can just stop." He looks up at me knife in hand, moving to cut another pepper. "Put that down now." I say sternly. He sets it down and pleads his case with rushed words about his abilities and a reminder of my promises of his participation in making dinner, but he glances back over his shoulder at the tv. That's it.

"You can't even look at me. No more. I'll cut the rest of dinner." His face breaks instantly. The smooth surface is replaced by one with broken hard lines. When he was a baby, the sudden change used to make me laugh, but that was when he was crying over things that could be fixed by me instantly. Now it's in protest of what's best for him and has the new addition of an angry war cry. He suddenly grabs the knife while insisting he will cut the food. Without thought I slap his hand. Will drops the knife back to the cutting board and we look hard at each other, his face's hard

lines soften before his mouth drops in shock and his eyebrows knit together as he starts crying.

“You hurt me!” He cries clutching his hand.

“And I’d do it again” I say looking down at him on the step stool. My heart softens for him, but I can’t show hesitation or regret in this fight of wills. The sound of the potatoes popping wildly in the pan breaks our stand off. William storms away to yell cry in the living room from his navy miniature recliner that we like to call the relax-a-chair. I say nothing as I go back to stirring the slightly scorched potatoes. Slowly I turn back picking up the knife to cut vegetables. As if reading the room Foster gives up on snack and goes back to his coloring. Will works out his last bellows of injustice settling into the sniffles. From the corner of my eyes, I see him peeking over his relax-a-chair to watch me. I make slow and deliberate cuts of the peppers. Like a chain slipping over the edge of a table Will slides out of his chair and lays in a heap still watching. It amazes me still how small he can make his body with his long and skinny six-year-old legs. I don’t look right at him as he gathers himself up and pitter patters to the kitchen.

“I’m upset because you hit me.” He says gently stroking with grain of the island’s butcher-top across from me.

Inhaling deeply, I look him in the eyes and say “I’m sorry I had to. I wish I didn’t, but I really would again.” He starts to cry at the idea. “You can’t hold this when you’re upset.” I say waving the knife in the air. “You could have hurt me or you or even your baby brother.” He stays quiet, his tears soak into the wood of the island. I set the knife down on the cutting board with the handle towards him. He bright eyes shine at me. And I nod. “You have to follow the rules.” I remind him.

“Oh, I will!”

Even The Postman Frowns At Me

By *Emma Meeks*

as he hands the package over, torn a bit at the edges.
he knows tragedy—
expired stamps on envelopes of unread, unanticipated love letters,
packages marked return to sender,
much like the one between us now.
my gift didn't fit in the box;
it was too large—a sculpture,
i found it at the gallery and thought of you,
and your eyes are lovely when surprised.
a sculpture
whose edges were soft but too expansive and
i considered shaving them down,
filing the parts that stuck out just
a little too far
but to minimize is to mangle;
it was too large either way,
and i overestimated, undercalculated,
so now the postman frowns at me.

Sonder \ \ noun

By *Paige Knabel*

/'sɑndər/

1. When you realize everybody else in the world has a life just as complex and varied as your own.

// You notice it in heavy traffic, cars huffing on overcrowded free-ways, wondering how everyone had the same idea.

// In the supermarket where you see a woman holding a basket of frozen meals and cheap wine with a sunk face, just like you did a week ago. The kids who run in front of your cart and the mother who mutters an apology.

To see the bartender eye the cocktail he made you with wrinkled eyes and ask him what went wrong?

// When babies stare at you over their parent's back and smile at you // when teenagers in sweatsuits glare at you, and you sneer back.

// The barista who remembers your name and your coffee order
// the pharmacist who asks you about your mom // the gas station clerk with the eyebrow piercing who complements your bracelets
// and the woman in the doctors office who you offered a tissue who couldn't stop crying.



Dryer
Tia Epley

Sink

By *Alex Larson*

This place is not mine. And the sink
is detached from the wall
as I am from myself.
And the bugs from the drains,
they crawl on my skin
in the dead of night,
waking me when I never sleep.
And I tear at my skin
to get them off
to get myself off.
Prodding, tearing the pustules that will scar my face,
just as the scars that litter my thighs. Self-destruction
that hurts better when it's voluntary.
Forever unclean
just like the sink
the sink that is detached from the wall
as I am from myself.

Thunderstorm Tears

By *Deanna Twedt*

Leaves brush in dance
to the whipping of the wind
as gray fluff rolls in the sky
with the trembling of its heartbeat.

A drop hits the roof
followed by another until
red dust turns into clay
and diamonds plunge off the eaves.

Now in shelter on the porch
the dog shakes his fur,
sprinkling the floorboards
while smelling of wet hair and mud.

Branches twist, twirl, and bend
in time to the sag and droop of the lilacs
whose violet trumpets pour water from their bells,
forming streams in the forest of the grasses.

White light cuts patterns
that illuminate the mildewy sky
as the angels knock their strikes
and tip over buckets of tears.



Dairy
Sydney Robinson

Sacrifice

By *Oliver Johnson*

“To be a woman is to perform”
To be trans is to sacrifice
Give up things you enjoy
Dysphoria takes them
Give up your safety
Your sense of security
Give up your rights
Your kind doesn’t deserve them
Give up your sense of belonging
You only exist between the two worlds
Your kind doesn’t belong in either
Give up your worth
You hold no value in the eyes of God
Or the eyes of the alt-right
And therefore those in power
You’re lucky to hold value in the eyes of those who love you
Foolish as they are to do so
Your kind doesn’t deserve love
Your kind doesn’t deserve life
To be trans is to sacrifice
To be trans is to be the sacrifice

The Helpless, Inadequate, and Incapable God

By *Jack Wenger*

And then in a moment, as if it never happened. The universe collapsed. In a split second, the borders of the universe snapped back at a million times the speed of light, like a rubber band pulled too far. The end came barreling towards the beginning. The Event Horizon was upon them. With no warning, with no alarms, sirens, or panic, everything went to nothing. No sorrow, no war, no pain. In a single moment, they were there and in the next, they were not. The end crept up on death, caught him while he was asleep, and stole the whole universe from him. Was it for the best? Was it best for the mother who held her newborn child for the first time on her breast and whispered in his ear quiet and low, *“I love you, and I will take care of you”*? Was it better for the man who after months of voices beating into his head decided he had enough, and just as he made the decision to pull the trigger, the universe staked claim to his ending before him, and his guilt did? I ask again, was it best for the couple who were at the altar, with hope and love and joy running over their hearts as they rehearse to themselves *“I do, I do, I do.”* Was it right for the universe to silence their hearts? As much as I may cry and wail at this moment, they are no longer aware they had ever existed. They know not my tears filling the void. Nor are they aware they had a mother and a father who perhaps thought the world of them. They know nothing now. They know not their name, their face, and their heart. They know not that I loved them—each and every last one of them with all their hopes and dreams, nightmares, and regrets. I knew them all by name. I knew each individual atom, each spec of stardust I formed them with. In my very hands, I held their soul before sending them before the world. To love, to hate, to fight, and to thrive through my boundless love. Forgive me, please, I wish I could have warned you or stopped it from happening. I saw as the stars grew dark and the galaxies sunk behind the veil. I watched how in a fraction of a millisecond, each and every one of my creations, my passion, my children, vanished. Now I am left alone in a void of nothingness where the only thing is grief. I am alone and I miss my friends. Who does God go to to cry?



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