

Fox Chase Review



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Ashley-Elizabeth Best

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The Great Hag

To the hospital I took with me the
nightgown I wrapped around my feet
the winter they told Grandma I had drowned.

Patty, my foster mum, laid into me deep.
My life was grand like an open wound.

The nurses told me about the local fair,
the places they had been. They didn't
ask about me.

I thought of the places I had called home,
the heaviness of my father's hand, breath
spurting out from broken, bleeding lips.

Grandma used to take me for the day,
out to the parks, told me I was born
in the green acres of a valley. She picked
the weeds from the edges, and I sprung up
naked as a flower-stalk.

Every night she brought me back to my
father's house, her age flecked hands
grasping tight what she could not have.
I took with me the birdsong rhythm of her brogue,
tucked it behind my ears. If she didn't live in
a home, she said she'd keep me.

The last time she dropped me off, the front door was locked.
Father peeked through tangled green curtains, pointed for me
to go to the neighbours. A packed suitcase on the stoop. It was
February, I had no socks, and wrapped a nightgown

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around my heels, between my toes. He was mad, called Grandma *The Great Hag*, said she owed him more.

Numbness set in, like blood rushing home. Snow was the only thing that happened, until they put me in foster care and he told Grandma I had drowned in the river.

I wanted her to know I saw the world flood, the sadness, and turned to stone. That way, she wouldn't have to worry about how to coffin her dead.

Ashley-Elizabeth Best is from Cobourg, Ontario, Canada. She has been published in *Anthology 529*, *Lake Effect Five*, *The Changing Image*, and *The Antigonish Review's* Poet Grow-Op. Recently she received an honourable mention at the Dorothy Shoemaker Literary Awards in Kitchener. She has a short story forthcoming with the litzine *Metazen* and poetry forthcoming in the *Red River Review* and *In/Words*. During the summer of 2011 she is blogging for The Kingston's Writersfest. Currently she is completing her BaH in History and English at Queen's University in Kingston.



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Amy Bergen

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The Children's Magical Garden

Your heart doesn't have to be safe to go in here. Climb the fence. I'm at the corner of Norfolk and Stanton on the Lower East Side, staring at the green and verdant garbage. A full-size boy rides around on a midget bicycle. The playhouse is half-built, some sticks in the yard. It's the same apologetic pink as my playhouse was, the same white trash off-white on the rims. I know I shouldn't say white trash.

I'm sitting on a skateboard somebody left. They can't arrest you. Anyways the kids who come here are sad and listless and wouldn't beat a butterfly up. A girl comes out of the tree, she's Mexican or something. She has a trembling little potbelly. Instantly I love her to death. I don't know about the boy. He's cycling around in the dirt, but he looks like he's perfectly aware that there are other things to do besides cycling around in the dirt, only they're not worth his time. He must be a little shrewd, though. It actually is a giant chain-link fence so it takes some effort to cross.

Are you homeless? the boy asks me.

Are *you* homeless? I ask back.

He looks at me like *bitch, please* and cycles over a flat hula hoop. The girl is writing her name in the dirt with a stick. I want to tell her about diseases but what do I know? I'll give you a hint: nothing. The bricks look like ninety-year-old men. Stained, tired.

At night a policeman comes by and looks for us, but we hide. It's the last locked-up green space in New York where anybody can hide, because, come on. This is a poor family's displaced, junked backyard. From, like, Staten Island. Flew away and ended up here. I shouldn't say poor.

We dig holes to pee, we eat from the trash. What kind of questions are those? Really we go to Tompkins Square Park or Starbucks to do what we need to do, and then we come back home. You can get in and out. It's a myth that you can't, just like it's a myth that vampires live in the subways. One day we felt benevolent, so we invited some rich kids over to play. We had sort of a swing set, and a few tires. No mulch, though. Without mulch we didn't have much credibility as a playground. When the rich kids came in their adorable little outfits, some of them jumped up and down. The other ones stared.

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Climb, we motioned them. Cycle boy latched onto the fence like Spiderman to demonstrate how it was done. The little ones touched the rungs. The short-haired moms, with their sunglasses and scarves, looked like aviators. What a fun place to play! they said. Isn't there a door?

The Mexican girl pressed her little cheeks into the octagons in the fence. You can do it, she said. Climb. A Star Wars Velcro sneaker landed on a rung and slipped off. No traction in those shoes.

We don't have all day, the moms said.

We really don't either, I said. So I lifted the loose end of the fence from the ground. It twisted up pretty easily, like lousy plastic. The rich kids wormed through, excited by the dirt, pulling up the grass. When they got in, they just stood around. Then they played the way kids do. Swordfights and rubber balls. Hand-clapping games. Jumping on the tire. They kept it up till the sky changed colors. It's five, said the moms. We have a yoga lesson. Come on out.

Not yet, said the rich kids.

Now, said the moms.

Please let us stay, said the kids. Please. Pleasepleasepleasepleasepleasepleasepleaseplease.

The moms reached their hands through the fence, their big eyes teary. One of them started to rattle the fence. Don't do that, I told her. It'll give you tetanus. The kids were singing, not really a song, kind of a lazy cheer. *Here we are, all of us, here we are and here we are and here we are again. Turn around and turn around and where will we be then?* It didn't make any sense. Plus the kids' hair was wrinkled all over their collars. They had grass-stains and mud clumps on their little wool coats.

We'll call the police, said the moms. They drew their cell phones like swords from their pockets.

The cops don't come here, I said. The moms wailed. It was dark and the kids hugged each other, the little girls linked arms. Some girl had found a jump rope and they swung it back and forth. The kids waved at the trees, the trees waved at the kids, everyone waving like we were at some sort of rock concert holding up our lighters.

Amy Bergen lives in New York. She studied fiction at NYU and now lives the life of a freelancer and a roustabout. Originally, she comes from Columbus, Ohio.



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Breonna Krafft

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Sonnet for Poseidon

This ocean belongs to you
like I belong to you. You hold
these waves my hair stringy
seaweed caught in your brazen horses
my heart filled with water
until you swallow me give me
life when you throw me onto land
away from coral where I am held

—Let me go.

let my gills grow over strange scars
on my clavicle let me shed
my fins molted exoskeleton
let me regurgitate seawater blood not brine
let me forget— let me forget.

Sonnet for Triton

I am lost in this desert
cannot find my way home
through these dunes valleys
The sky is the wrong shade of blue
clouds not the color of waves
air too dry for these lungs

Please— pretend I am an Argonaut
Blow your conch-shell trumpet open
this topsoil let the water seep
through Lead me
to the lake to the river to the sea

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and I will ride your dolphin tail
faster than trout we swim upstream
lay eggs on the bed of this ocean

Breonna Krafft grew up on the East Coast but followed writing West and earned a three letter degree. She has both poetry and creative nonfiction appearing or forthcoming in *Timber, Apt, Opium Magazine, BlazeVOX, Word/For Word, and others.*



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Ditta Baron Hoerber

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untitled

my father is blind.
he has always been blind in one way
now he is blind in another.

if he cannot see me
has any tree fallen in any forest?

I still love you he says.
what have I done that he should love
me in spite of?

all of my murders
have only been in my mind.

untitled

me. I
know

the body
on the bed
being

attended to by strangers
and cheerful none the less.

me.
I take his hand.

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Ditta Baron Hoeber is a Pew-nominated artist (2010) as well as a poet. Her manuscript *Without You* was a finalist for the Four Ways Books 2006 Intro Prize. Her poems have been most recently published in *Nthposition*, an online publication out of London, and in *The American Poetry Review*.



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David Harris Ebenbach

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In the Museum of Natural History

I stand in front of this fossilized man
and think:
You are the only famous Neanderthal.

All your brothers and sisters have vanished,
some presumably only babies or children when they died,
only small skeletons to be eaten away by the earth's grinding teeth,
and some who lasted long enough to build expert fires
or grunt fascinating stories of the hunt.

Your parents never made it as far as you,
up on this platform in such a busy museum,
not your cousin who always outdid you in life,
not even the wisest elder in your clan,
who marked the dirt with promising signs.
They have all gone back to the ground,
there slowly melted into our component parts
of oil and coal.

Only you stand here in front of the world,
saying *Me*.

And what brings you here, really?
One day you were chasing some hairy elephant or other
and the ground in front of you
turned out to be tar pit.

Did your relatives see you go?
Did they pause to mourn you a moment?
Most likely not;
in their impermanence
they needed desperately to catch that next meal.

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You were off to bigger things anyway,
making your bargain with the earth:
trading in your breath,
exhaling your name,
your failures and brilliances,
swallowing tar,
and pressed all around by the heavy first moments
of your enduring, if anonymous, fame.

David Harris Ebenbach's poetry has appeared in, among other places, *The Beloit Poetry Journal*, *Subtropics*, and *Mudfish*. His first book of short stories, *Between Camelots* (University of Pittsburgh Press), won the Drue Heinz Literature Prize and the GLCA New Writer's Award. Recently awarded an Individual Excellence Award from the Ohio Arts Council, fellowships to the MacDowell Colony and the Vermont Studio Center, and a nomination for a Pushcart Prize, Ebenbach has a PhD in Psychology from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and an MFA in Writing from Vermont College.



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Jose Angel Araguz

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After a Taoist proverb

For the blind man, there is no night, only a break in time, a scaling back of the noise around him, a hand pulling the sounds around him as he does a blanket as it begins to grow colder.

Ask him to describe the sun, and he says it is a fire holding conversation with everyone.

The moon is him alone with his heart.

Childhood

Only at night had he been able to imagine love. On the floor, tucked into a sleeping bag, warm and free of any sense of how big and clumsy he would become, snug and simple as a seed at the core of a fruit, pocketed away in the mouth of everything he could be capable of, he turned over on himself until he fell against the stars.

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Jose Angel Araguz was raised in Corpus Christi, Texas, and now lives in Eugene, Oregon. His work has been published in such journals as *The Acentos Review*, *Tiger's Eye Journal*, and *Hanging Loose* as well as featured in Ted Kooser's *American Life in Poetry*. New work is forthcoming in *Crab Creek Review*.





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Untitled

Fire between stone
warms sleeping others,
the tent
and we talk our mouths
over the night,
the laughing
trees of mockingbirds.

Red light in the corners,
covered we
(quietly)
make the night,
finding space
for hand tongue pelvis
stars flying above pines
night all around us
and the earth in motion;
under the roof of the tent
we lie still and breathe.

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Jim Cronin is a poet and editor living in Boston. He has been published in *The Somerville Journal* and has a poem forthcoming in *Amethyst Arsenic*. He was the founding poetry editor of *White Whale Review*, an online literary journal, a position he recently left to focus on his own writing.





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Mariella

She always wears skyscraper high heels and blouses revealing cleavage, even on bitter bone biting days. She never does her overcoat up to the top. There is muscle in her voice. She is an opera singer.

Mariella has two teenage sons, David and Adam, and a husband, Edward. He is also an opera singer. Sometimes we meet for lunch; she has the large size porridge with honey and camomile tea, and I have carrot and coriander soup and still water. A while ago she told me that 'Edward had been a naughty boy'. They'd decided, she announced, that she would now accompany him on his travels, so that he would not be tempted.

She has confirmed since that they 'are making a go of it'. But just yesterday she reported that the 'go is no go, no go'.

'Who is the lady?' I ask with ums and ers stuck between my words.

'There's no lady,' she responds, and I think of the play *Sylvia the Goat*, about a married man who falls in love with a goat. I tilt my head to signal confusion.

'No, no,' she continues, looking at her empty porridge bowl, scraping up the nearly invisible bits, 'he has a boyfriend' and then I understood why she doesn't do up her coat.

The Light

When I think back to the blackout in New York City when I was a little girl I see how the dark can help you see the light. As you fumble about in the coal black for some sense of physical reality, your consciousness enters a different sphere; revelations emerge which might have lain dormant, but for the peculiarity of almost unimaginable circumstances, like people from outer space appearing.

On November 9, 1965 at 5.27 pm the lights went out all over the northeast area of the United States and a large part of Canada. Our housekeeper, Margie, had just left for her evening off and our nurse, Paddy, was expected any minute. She would heat up the stew Margie had prepared for our supper, and

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read us a bedtime story after we had our bath. My little brother Francis was five years old and I was six and a half. I think I can remember what I felt at the time, how I felt at the time. I think I can make sense of it; with a grown up's logical lens make the past appear as clear and distinct as what you see through a magnifying glass. Such is the gift of time.

My mother was very busy preparing for a black tie fundraising dinner at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. I had perched myself on the edge of her silky chaise lounge so that I could watch her apply her makeup and arrange her hair as she sat at her dressing table. Francis was playing in his bedroom with his wooden blocks. He was obsessed with determining how big a skyscraper he could build before it tumbled down.

My mother looked very beautiful dressed in a long black chiffon gown that revealed a bare shoulder. She was wearing diamond drop earrings and a double strand of pearls around her neck. People used to say that she looked like Jackie Kennedy. She was putting her false eyelashes on when the bedroom lights flickered and then I could barely see her.

"My goodness," she sighed, with a puff of irritation. "A fuse must have blown. We'll have to change it ourselves, won't we Emily? Daddy won't be home for a little while; I think he's interviewing someone for the show." Daddy was a television producer for a chat show and sometimes he went to interview famous people before they appeared on the programme. It was Daddy's job to change the fuses.

But when I looked out the window, I noticed that not only were there no lights on in the buildings across Central Park on Fifth Avenue, but that none of the lanterns lighting the park paths shone. We lived on the tenth floor of our apartment block, and I never took the panorama for granted. Many fuses must have blown at the same time, I reckoned.

"Mommy, the whole world's black; look at the park."

Mommy stood up very straight. "You're so right, Emily. How odd. Oh, I won't be ready for Daddy. We'll change the fuse, and hopefully I can finish with my lashes, and dear Paddy will arrive."

"Francis will be crying, Mommy; he's scared of the dark. He never finds it fun."

"Well, we'll hold each other's hands and collect Francis and change a fuse or two and everything will be all right, bright, and in sight, and once again we'll have light."

"But what if it's not the fuses and it's something bigger, bigger, and you can't go out and..."

"Well, Daddy and I have to go out. This is a very important dinner," Mommy snapped.

I could see a full moon in the deep blue sky, a sky dotted with tiny diamonds, stars with secret lives of their own. I felt guilty because I wished that the blackout was something to do with something bigger, something we could not fix ourselves, something that would mean that Mommy would have to stay home and sit with us while we ate dinner and read to us while we lay in bed and sing to us while our eyes were shutting for the night. She had a voice that a concert hall audience would have applauded, shouting lots of "bravos"; that's more or less what guests said when my parents had dinner parties and after dinner Mommy would play Broadway songs on the piano and sing.

Mommy could not spend very much time with Francis and me, as she was so busy, with all her many activities. Maybe tonight for once she could relax and be a Mommy. This would be a very special evening. So often I was lonely for her friendship. I wanted to know what it would be like to share cosy, silly times with Mommy, like my friends did with their Mommies. We had special times with Daddy, like when he took us to the carousel or to the zoo or sleigh riding on Saturday mornings when Mommy was at her exercise studio, Karnovsky's, the one which Jackie Kennedy frequented.

Slowly, slowly we groped our way to Francis's bedroom. Mommy held my right hand and we each



patted the hallway walls with our other hand. There were no windows in the hall. The pictures were too high up on the walls for me to knock them.

Francis was sniffing and whimpering when we entered his room. Like tightrope walkers, we trod across his floor. I worried that Mommy might fall if one of her high heels stumbled on a building block. It took a long while for her to reach the window to raise the blind so that we could see the moon light. Mommy asked me to go and fetch some lavatory paper from the bathroom; she didn't want Francis's nose dribbles to ruin her gown. I was so scared feeling my way, and was so proud of myself when I reached the lavatory paper holder and could tear off a great wad of paper. Mommy would be impressed.

But the lights did not come on when we changed a fuse, and I wondered why Mommy did not realise that by changing a fuse, all the dark might not disappear into light. It was clear to me that something funny was happening in the world.

It took the three of us a long while to reach the telephone in the kitchen when it rang and fortunately the caller didn't hang up. I could tell by what Mommy was saying that it was Paddy.

"This is extraordinary, beyond comprehension. Of course, I see why you can't come back. Well, go to one of our wonderful hotels and hope that they feed you and you can stay warm. The car traffic lights will guide you if not all the saintly people like the firemen and police. We'll be fine. They'll have cold stew or cereal, even if the stove works. Be careful...yes, well, Mr. Adam will have to climb a lot stairs!" Mommy chuckled as she put the telephone back on the receiver.

"Fortunately, Daddy's so fit. He'll run up the stairs."

"You're fit Mommy," I blurted, desperate to flatter her so she would be more likely to enjoy our company.

"You are sweet. But I wouldn't try to prove it tonight by running down the stairs in the dark and then flying upwards!" she exclaimed.

"Now, listen, I have some big, big news for you, children. There's a gigantic power failure, all over the north east of America, so I may not be able to go to our dinner, after all." I was so happy inside when she said this, though I thought we would probably have cereal for supper, even if the stove did work.

We ventured to the dining room as if we were walking on a ridge with a very steep drop on either side. We fumbled in the sideboard for small boxes of matches and long white candles. We put one candle in each of two silver candlesticks and lit them. Fortunately, the candles did not wobble. Margie always put a little scrap of Kleenex in the holders so the candles would stand up straight. Mommy carried two into the kitchen and we followed behind as if we were in a wedding procession.

Mommy didn't want any wax to fall on her dress, so after she seated us at the breakfast table with a candlestick, holding the other she went to her bedroom to find her dressing gown. She would wear it over her clothes. She said she felt cold too. On the way back she fetched two more candlesticks and more candles. She carried one while she slowly fetched bowls and glasses and spoons and the corn flakes and the jug of milk and a carton of orange juice. Normally she didn't approve of cartons on the table, but this evening obviously allowed an exception. When she sat down she said she was worried about the food in the fridge going off, and of course the ice cream would probably melt.

"We could have it now," Francis suggested. Mommy thought that was very funny and promised that we could have big bowls after our cereal. She would wait for Daddy to come home and eat supper with him. They would have cold jellied madrilène or crabmeat, if she could find the can opener, and melba toast and Mrs. Grimble's blueberry cheesecake. I wished that she would have corn flakes and ice cream with us.

"There's certainly no television tonight, children."

"This is more exciting," piped Francis.

"What would it be like if we'd been ice skating, Mommy?"

"The rink would shine under the moonlight."

"Will the animals be cold and lonely in the zoo?" I asked.

"I'm sure all the zookeepers will know what to do. The animals are used to harsh conditions, after all. And frankly they probably are living in luxury, given where their brothers and sisters live and the way their ancestors existed."

Francis squinted his eyes and looked at Mommy, puzzled. Maybe he thought his expression would invite her to be more explicit about her comment. But she merely smiled broadly and sighed. I thought how pretty her face looked in the candlelight. Francis's face looked very white in the candlelight. Mommy went to fetch the transistor radio from its place next to the toaster.

Mommy stood the little black rectangle box on the breakfast table and after fumbling with a knob found a station with a man's voice. Despite the radio's tinny tones, it sounded quite deep and calming and friendly, like Daddy's voice.

We stopped eating to listen.

"Close your mouth, Francis," Mommy said sternly. When my brother was steeped in puzzlement he always struck some sort of catatonic pose.

There were people trapped in elevators trying to escape through elevator shafts, people stranded in the subways and railway cars heading nowhere, people singing Christmas carols and playing charades under battery powered emergency lights on the pavements, and many were sheltering at Radio City Music Hall. Lawyers and bankers were helping the police and firemen direct traffic. Civilisation, at the mercy of darkness, was conducting itself in a most exemplary way, though President Johnson and Mayor Wagner were very, very worried.

Mommy stood up quickly from her chair when the telephone rang.

"Frank, Frank, is that you?" But the caller wasn't Daddy.

"Yes, I am, Mrs. Adam. Who is calling? Oh, of course I know you." Mommy was blushing. "And I do so love your films...Yes, he did say he was going to stop by and see you. Oh, what a coincidence and you were going there, too. Such a good cause. Well, it might happen, it could, but I'm stuck, I mean at home with the children; our nurse is trapped somewhere downtown." My chest felt as if it had been socked when she said "stuck".

"Well, that's so kind of you...Yes, well, we are..."

"Who's it, Mommy, a famous movie star?" called Francis.

"Just a moment, Miss Crawford, one of the children has a problem."

She covered the receiver with her hand and glared at Francis. "Shush, Francis, I am speaking," she scolded, in a harsh whisper, shaking her head from side to side.

"I am sorry, Miss Crawford...Oh, I would like to speak with him..."

"Frank, I'm so glad to hear your voice. Are you all right? I've been worrying and worrying about you. Is she as frightful as they say? A dragon in a woman's clothing? Come on, Frank, you know she can't hear me; and she can't be on another line, as she's probably right next to you. I miss you. Yes, they're being very good, perfect, and of course Paddy, poor thing, is caught down... and I love you too."

"Mommy, did you talk to a very famous person?" Francis asked her the instant she had put the telephone back in its proper place.

"Very, very famous, indeed."

"Tell us, please, please, please." I was excited.

"Well," Mommy began, "you won't have seen her in any of her movies, but she is called Joan Crawford, and she has quite an illustrious history."

"A what history?"

"Don't talk with your mouth full, Francis. She has appeared in many successful films and the most famous was *What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?* She, the character she plays, has to stay in bed all day because she's crippled, can't walk, and her cruel ugly sister looks after her, but not very nicely. For one lunch she serves her a dead rat and for another a dead bird, and this wasn't roast turkey," Mommy revealed with a weak cackle.

"Disgusting," winced Francis, his face then crumpling up. "So what was it, Mommy?"

"What was what, Francis?"

"The bird, what was the bird?"

"Oh, a dead parakeet. Her pet parakeet, in fact. What an atrocious tale that was."

I was rather taken aback by the story; I would never have expected Mommy to talk about something so awful, so easily, as if she were ordering the groceries.

"So Daddy's coming home now? Goody," I said.

"Yes, Miss Crawford is sending Daddy home with her chauffeur. So he'll be safe and sound."

"Can he kiss us goodnight?"

"Can he?" echoed Francis. He was still young enough for Daddy kisses.

"Well, you might be asleep. We'll skip a bath tonight, just this once. Now that's a treat."

"But maybe you could give us a ba..." and then I stopped talking as I saw her crestfallen face; it looked as if it was going to ooze down into the lap of her dressing gown.

After we finished our cereal, I was still hungry, very hungry, but I felt shy about asking for more food. She'd forgotten about the ice cream and I was afraid she'd be irritated if I reminded her about it.

"Now, you'll be very good and slowly we'll make our way with the candles to your bedrooms and you can put on your pyjamas and then brush your teeth and go to bed."

Francis slept in my room, in the other bed, the guest bed for sleepovers. The room was cold and I wished that Paddy were home sitting on my bed, beside me, kissing me goodnight and hugging me, squeezing me. It would be my job to comfort Francis if he woke up with one of his nightmares. He might just do that after hearing about the movie.

I would never have told my children this story on a night like this one, and their Daddy, my husband, would never have been with a famous movie star. He would have been almost running home, impatient for the sight of us at the front door. He would have helped us eat the melting ice cream; maybe we'd have enjoyed it straight from the carton, laughing and laughing in between each spoonful, and the candles would be standing in jam jars, the light flickering to and fro. Yes, it's funny how we can be blinded by the light of the every day, but when we're forced to live in the dark how clearly we see the ray of truth.

Jenny Kingsley is a short story writer, poet and journalist living in London. Her work has appeared in American and British publications, including *The Art Book*, *The Berkshire Eagle*, *The Blackmore Vale*, *Cassone*, *The Cinnamon Press*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *Decanto*, *Petits Propos Culinaires* and *South Bank Poetry*. Jenny used to be a politician—but she finds the literary world so much more enriching!



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Jennifer Wong

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Praia do Titan

Your vowels stroke a chord in me:
look at the kids running,
that plane in the air.

I said next time I'm in Porto
I'd order breakfast like a local,
"Un galão, s'il vous plaît."

Remember the day we drove
all the way from Maia to Praia do Titan?
A slate-blue sky. Bone-biting chill.
You, a sea-child, left much behind
in Matosinhos.
Seagulls gathered and cried on the shingles.
"Those from Porto are leaving Porto,"
you spoke, philosophical,
a warm cloud of air.

I stood there beside you—
two people in long coats
or two small dots on a beach.
The bottle-green waves ran towards us.

Words you taught me
still lolloped in my mouth:
Boa noite boa tarde bom dia

Kwan Yin

In one hand she holds

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A willow branch, in the other
A jug of water.

Her thousand arms unfold
A thousand miracles.
Rising from the sea of strife,
Protector of sailors and fishermen,
Women and children,
She cannot rest

From compassion
For her heart
Is pure and firm as jade.

In lotus position
She listens,
Eyes closed, for the faintest sounds.

Jennifer Wong is a Hong Kong-born poet, artist and translator now living in London. Her poems have appeared in journals including *Frogmore Papers*, *Warwick Review*, *Orbis*, *TATE ETC*, *ucity review*, *Cha*, *Iota*, and *New Writer*. Her poetry collection, *Summer Cicadas*, was published by Chameleon Press and her second collection is due to be out in 2013. She studied English at Oxford and took an MA in creative writing at the University of East Anglia, UK. She doesn't like cats.



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Kirsten Kaschock

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Shrew/Wisher

A girl was not among the many
gifts I received that year or
in the years following.

Too bad really, less likely
to be put in a home that way.

The whistle blows, arms lower.

I am first in line.

The car counts cars. Loses count.
I will be late for the day, the air of the cubicle
laced with recycling:

little packages, mail cart, break
room, four types of sugar not sugar.

But none of them anthrax.

Things are inspected, gone through too
many times, purse for the keys.

Before the train came, this wanted
to be a new day. But the coal cars are the same
coal cars. Thirty years ago, the exact models
my sons set black around the silver tree.

Further, I roll down
the window to stunt the fog.

The cold smells like train and pine. I will be raped
in the nursing home, by someone covering my face.

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Plight/Tulip

Mine
is to take what is handed down.

The thought that I could, am
expected to, loosen my corset
and expel my useless breath to
—God—is unsavory.

Prayer is for tulips.

Don't know how to pray. My own
inexperience vast, unshepherded. No
denying current desire though.

Tulips are prayer.

Imagine: the bulb is placed in a foreign bed
by hands—who knows whose hands.

A shoot then unfurls
upwards, a great bobbing
of its single head—and still
the tulip bud is tighter, and
angrier, than a clitoris.

Here is where prayer
happens. What else turns transplant, alien,
infant—so closed there's no way in, no inside
were there way—
 into a cup of sun?

Prayer is like
the disembowelment of faith.
I am a small small woman, here
there—small as fists.

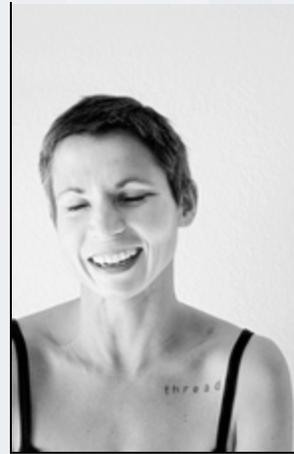
I dismiss blessings, and flowers.

I try to summon a prayer: what is utmost in me—

*If right asking is bloom, I am sullen, bud.
Impossibly close to birth as God you know death
can be. Open me, if you can forgive my proud
vulgar refusals...*

I must be pried.

Unfathoms. Her first novel, *Sleight*, is scheduled to be published by Coffee House Press in October. She has earned a Ph.D. in English from the University of Georgia and is currently a doctoral fellow in dance at Temple University. Kirsten lives with her three sons and their father in Philadelphia, where she works with words, bodies, and when she is lucky—other people.



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Lester Mobley

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I Fall in Love Too Easily

Miles Davis stands
At the edge of the crevasse.
Flashes upon splashes
Upon... Jackson Pollock drippings
Holiday lyrics
Bukowski's Chinaski
Picasso abstracts
Points of departure and of no return.

I... Fall in Love Too Easily
Begins to become indistinguishable
Through the calloused lip
Of "The Trumpeter"
His statement has been made.

He walks away... seemingly
Swallowed whole into the folds
Of an embroidered tapestry
Like... unto a modern-day Jonah
Leaving Love to hang in the balance
In the hands and at the whim
Of what remained.

Love's now... irreconcilable
What's left is driven
Only to impress.
Tones of harmony have morphed
Into tones of dissonance
Upon a bed of multiple frenzied rhythms
No longer held accountable.

The remainder of "The Quintet"

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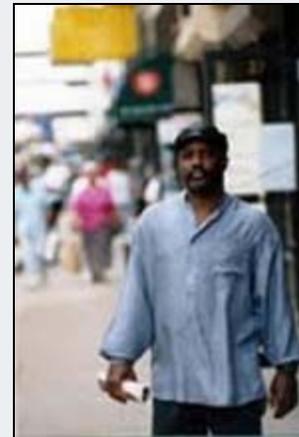
Has taken Love by surprise
And "The Trumpeter's" smile is of that
Of unmitigated satisfaction.

Prince of Darkness... he steps
From beyond the pleated curtain
Reclaims center-stage
In order to romp
Once again... with Love
As though he's never left.

I... Fall in Love Too Easily
Someone now must remind me
As Miles gives
As Miles smiles
As Miles take'eth away.
A final stamp of approval
On an nine minute excursion
That has now come to its conclusion.

And Love...
At least for me
Cannot be seen
And never will be
The same... again.

Lester Mobley has been a proud "blue collar" construction worker for over 30 years. A native of New York, he has lived in Philadelphia for most of his life. He draws inspiration for his writing from a passion for jazz, jazz culture, justice, nature and appreciation of human spirituality and God. He can be found reading his poetry at open mics in the Philadelphia, Pennsylvania area.



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Philip Dacey

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Shower: A Triolet

When did I stop singing in the shower?
Did something of mine run down the drain?
I soap myself just as I did before,
but, still, I've stopped singing in the shower.
Did my songs weaken slowly hour by hour
or burst like bubbles in all this soapy rain?
When did I stop? Singing in the shower,
I must have not seen what ran down the drain.

"E" is for Eakins

In 1886, Thomas Eakins was forced to resign from
the Pennsylvania Academy for introducing nude
male models into classes with female students.

Martin A. Berger

Like a modern hero, they put him on their caps—
the students, his followers—proud to display
a big black E. He was their man, for keeps.

How dare anyone fire him! Hadn't he proven Europe
had met its match in their Academy?
So they put him, their martyr-hero, on their caps,

stitched him on and wore him, singly or in groups,
in protest, their paint-stained fists held high.
They called him "The Boss." Tom was their man, for keeps.

Whoever would bury the body under wraps
feared him. He said the world was made for the eye.

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It was like going naked, wearing those caps,

a prod to wake up citizens who sleep-walk through their day. That flashed letter, E, spelled a prophecy: “Now, the time is ripe!”

But, of course, it wasn’t. Honesty had to reap its dose of punishment—doses, in Philadelphia! Still, they put him, heroic, on their caps.

E for Eakins. He was their man. For keeps.

Philip Dacey’s latest of eleven books is *Mosquito Operas: New and Selected Short Poems* (Rain Mountain Press, 2010). The winner of three Pushcart Prizes, two NEA grants, and a Fulbright to Yugoslavia, he co-edited with David Jauss *Strong Measures* (Harper & Row, 1986), an anthology of contemporary American formalist poems. He received First Prize in The Ledge 2009 Poetry Awards.



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Peter Tieryas Liu

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A Beijing Feast

I was wrestling with this monument of a menu when Pang Nan, our host for the night, entered the room. He was a big man even among 'big' men, corpulent with a ruddy face and a restless nose that sought smells the way a libertine might chase after women.

Our restaurant, a seven-story tribute to gustatory provocation here in Beijing, had menus that could best be described as tomes. Pang was a Chinese film producer who'd instigated a movement of subculture in cinema that vacillated between exploitative flesh flicks and efficiently brilliant drama's of the soul, the final verdict depending on which critic you asked.

"Welcome my friends," he said in Mandarin as he reached the head of the table. "I'll make this short. My doctors told me I have a bad heart condition that basically boils down to this; cut back on my eating habits or, I die... So I choose death."

There was a general gasp, a few friends about to protest.

Pang Nan cut them off by saying, "Anyone who tries to change my mind will be escorted out by my bodyguards." He pointed at the ten staunch figures behind us. "I don't want that. I asked you here to enjoy one last feast together and because I have a favor to ask of all of you." He took a sip of his wine. "I love food because the food a man eats defines his very existence. This restaurant has chefs from all over the world. Tonight, I want you to pick the one dish that represents best what our relationship meant to you." His wife suddenly burst into tears. "There, there," he assured her. "Don't cry- we both lose face this way. We have to accept death the same way we do life- with joy and dignity... Now, who'd like to go first?"

My mind crept back to when we first met two years ago. He hired me to photograph digital stills for one of the movies he was producing. The first thing he said was, "I want to make a movie where nothing happens for two hours and in the last minute, everyone dies."

I knew he made unusual films. The title of the movie for his current production translated into *Kung-Fu Babes Rescue the World From Existential Oblivion*. It was about a handful of beautiful Chinese women in bikini's discoursing with villains about Heidegger and Mozi as they perpetrated thought crimes against thought police, enforced tedium their secret weapon. "All day, I get aspiring screen-writers pitching me

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their next 'great epic' movie. I wish these guys would stop focusing on trying to tell a 'great' story and focus on just telling a 'story.' You hungry?"

"I brought lunch," I answered.

"What you got?"

It was a hamburger from McDonald's.

An outraged snarl crossed his lips. "What's wrong with you? Never let me catch you with a hamburger in my sight. I'll take you out for a real lunch."

He took me to a local restaurant and ordered fried duck with dasheen, braised turtle in brown sauce, wutong tea smoked chicken, jelly fish head with mixed vegetables, and duck blood with chili sauce.

"Is that enough?" he asked worriedly.

"More than enough."

During our lunch, he plied me with questions. Like what would a world without pornography be like; if we got rid of walls (hence privacy), would people be more honest; and how much kinder would friends be if everyone was required to spend one month a year in complete isolation? Suddenly, he snapped, "*Fuwuyuan!*" meaning waitress.

When she came, he barked that the duck was not tender enough, demanded the chef come out, gave him a tongue lashing, and instructed him on how to do it properly.

"Was it that bad?" I asked.

"The difference between good and great food can lie in a single spice," he said. "Did you know I got my start filming restaurants for TV shows?"

"I didn't."

"I was an assistant researching the best restaurants and I learned everything about food then." His parents, like so many others, had lost all their wealth during the Cultural Revolution. At school, his teachers beat him for being a delinquent as he hated studying. He'd gotten this job because the producer was an old friend of his father. "For five years, I did everything my boss wanted. I knew it was my only chance to get somewhere. I finally got my break doing a show about celebrities. The producer asked me to help out with a film that was over-budget, a biopic about a general in the era of the Warring States. It bombed. The critics panned it, the action was terrible, the acting was unbearable. Everything about the movie sucked," he declared with a sense of satisfaction.

"You seem proud that it failed," I said.

"Not just failed, catastrophically failed," he clarified, laughing. "I like things in extremes."

In the present, a close friend selected shrimp hot pot they'd devoured on a birthday years ago. His younger sister picked a bean curd soup they'd shared in their childhood. His fourth uncle chose duck liver fried rice since Pang Nan sent him a dish of it every year. Each of them took a minute to explain their reasons.

I'd come to China because of ice cream. Three years ago, I engaged in a big argument with my then girlfriend. I wanted a sundae, she wanted to go home. We fought for thirty minutes in the parking lot. Suddenly, an Asian guy with long braided hair and a pale lanky face approached. "Can you both shut up and hand over your wallets?"



"Excuse me?"

He took out a gun and pointed it straight at my face. The blood drained from my face and fear incited revulsion along my flesh. As the boils popped along my arm, I realized, *I'm going to die for an argument over ice cream with a girl I don't even love.*

We both surrendered our wallets. He took out a five dollar bill and threw it at me. "Stop arguing and just get your goddamn ice cream."

Afterwards, my girlfriend screamed at me, blamed me for what happened.

I was speechless, couldn't sleep the whole night. On the news, they reported yet another mass shooting. That whole week, anytime anyone acted suspicious in a public setting, I became nervous, apprehension sapping my energy. I bought a bulletproof vest online and wore it everywhere I went. I was going to have a nervous breakdown if I didn't change something soon. I asked everyone, where's a place without guns? Where's it safe and I don't have to worry about getting shot? My girlfriend angrily replied, China.

I bought a ticket, broke up with her, and left two weeks later.

In the present, they were getting closer and closer. Everyone had a clever anecdote, a witty insight into Pang's character. I was still clueless and flipped through photographs of exotic dishes, trying to read the Mandarin characters I could. What to select, what would have meaning?

"You know why I decided to re-hire you for every shoot?" he asked me during our third film together.

"Why?"

"Cause on our first production, you took photos of the janitor, the PA's, even the caterer. All the photographers I've hired only shoot the talent and key staff." Pang Nan grinned. "My father was a latrine cleaner and everyone thought it was a disgrace. No one would marry him except my mother, and that was only because she was paralyzed in her left leg. No one cared about their story. That's why I'm balancing things out now and making movies about regular people."

'Regular,' was a relative term for Pang. His last few protagonists included the elevator boy pontificating on the commercialization of love, a waiter who led a revolution against television, a taxi driver who decided to take people where they needed to go rather than where they asked to be taken. As a connoisseur of eccentricities, he harvested eclectic quandaries, sowing and reaping them into seeds of habit. The mundane gleamed uncannily in the juxtaposition of light on filth, junk baptized in a sheath of virgin wool.

"So you worked your way up, eh?" he asked me.

"Yeah. Four years before I got to be a full-fledged photographer. And that was for a video game magazine."

"Do you like videogames?"

I nodded. "When I was a kid, I'd play them till 3, 4 in the morning. I loved their stories."

"Stories?"

"Yeah, I loved how heroic the main characters were. I wanted to be like them. But when I grew up, I realized- I realized maybe, maybe I couldn't be as courageous as those heroes... That actually, I was kind of the opposite..."



"Courage isn't just about shooting guns and flashing swords," he said.

"What is it then?" I'd asked.

"It can be as simple as making the choice no one else would."

And now, it was finally my turn. Everyone looked to me. I flipped through the menu one last time. Made my decision. Approached him. Turned to the Western food section and pointed.

Pang stared gravely at me. "You sure about that?" he asked.

I'd picked a hamburger and fries. "Yeah."

"They say irony is the only true sincerity left in this world." He broke into laughter. "Take a seat and enjoy."

I exhaled in relief.

The feast was grand and I ate until I couldn't feel my stomach. I felt a baby of digested food growing in my belly, but it was okay. Pang had understood my gesture.

He didn't die that night. Nor the next two nights I joined him. When I greeted him farewell, we barely exchanged words. My choice had said everything that needed to be said.

I had to leave for a shoot down in Guangzhou, but I heard he lasted another three weeks before his gut burst. I imagined him dying in bliss, surrounded by a gormandizing nirvana. But from what I gathered, his death was excruciatingly painful. His last meal was both his best and worst. I don't think he would have wanted it any other way.

Peter Tieryas Liu likes to wander the world with his wife and eat foods that have never been eaten before. Some of his musings can (or will) be found in the *Bitter Oleander*, *decomp*, the *Indiana Review*, and Pank's *This Modern Writer*. His blog is tieryas.wordpress.com where he invites recipes of exotic cuisines.



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Rebecca Schumejda

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Why Flowers

I never understood why my father,
a hulking hunter and fisherman,
a roofer with meaty paws
that could wrap around my head
twice and still hold a hammer,
would take such pride in his flowers.

The garden—I got, but the flowers threw me

until this moment, kneeling
between the gladiolas and lilies,
weeding out the background noise.
I see, for the first time, how
each leaf curves into a theory, how
stems support the chins of flowers like
the way parents observe a newborn's neck,
how their mouths never open,
how they never disturb your thoughts.

Memory's Flowers

I dried out memories

The white carnations on my first prom corsage,
given to me by the boy I lost my virginity to.

A black eyed Susan pressed between Whitman's Leaves of Grass
picked while traveling across the country with a lover.

My Wedding bouquet still hangs upside down

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in the attic, my daughter's middle name Rose respectfully.

It wasn't until after I turned thirty,
that I grew my own flowers from seed, waited impatiently

for the first kick, for the earth to part, for her to emerge
and bend toward me as if I were a source of light.

Dear Georgia,

On a coloring book, my daughter serves me a plastic sunny side-up egg and a dandelion. She climbs into bed with me and asks why I can't stop shaking. I don't tell her my skin is falling off my bones, instead I close my eyes and pretend my body's submerged in white desert sand, below a sun-bleached ram skull. Georgia, sometimes I think I should have

known better. The doctors are onto me. I thought of you when I bought Dutch Iris bulbs yesterday, to replace all of the ones that did not grow. They are of the slim variety, not ostentatious and voluptuous like yours. Obsessed with how I will teach my daughter about

womanhood, how to wear horns like a bonnet, how to paint flowers as if after wilting a skeleton will survive them, how to kneel into decisions as if fertile soil, I summon up your vision and hope I can translate how, "sun-bleached bones were most wonderful against the blue that blue that will always be there as it is now after all man's destruction is finished."

Rebecca Schumejda is the author of *Falling Forward*, a full-length collection of poems (sunnyoutside, 2009); *The Map of Our Garden* (verve bath, 2009); *Dream Big Work Harder* (sunnyoutside press 2006); *The Tear Duct of the Storm* (Green Bean Press, 2001); and the poem "Logic" on a postcard (sunnyoutside). She received her MA in Poetics and Creative Writing from San Francisco State University and her BA in English and Creative Writing from SUNY New Paltz. She lives with her husband and daughter in New York 's Hudson Valley.



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Travis Jeppesen

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Berlin VIb

I am thinking
I am thunk.
Time to leave,
in a group dimension.
Can never be happy?
Let up it.
Murphy and his children.
Oh,
a division,
an entire
chapter.
We have let
most of our children
swallow us up
it seems,
it is never
the same
narrator,
always
a multiplicity
of voices. Divorce
this illusion.
My throat
for the whole world
to gag on.
An imaginary fireplace,
this world
an illusion.
It does
taste much better
when you

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get the fuck away
from my throat.
Choke on
the chocolate
depth.
I am visiting someone
who works
in a soup kitchen.
Ain't no solitude.
How lonely,
the desperate illusion.
When I
am alone
with myself
I am never
truly alone,
tell me
what freedom
is.
Sometimes
I sit at that table,
sometimes
at that one.
The need
to develop
a male ego
in times
of satisfaction.
But when
we are touching,
I protested,
we don't need
to speak any
language.
That is true,
he replied;
certain breaths
attain a rhythm
of their own.

Travis Jeppesen is the author of five books, including *Victims*, the novel chosen by Dennis Cooper to debut his "Little House on the Bowery" imprint for Akashic Books, and *Disorientations: Art on the Margins of the "Contemporary"*. His most recent book is *Dicklung & Others*, a collection of poetry. He lives in Berlin.



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