

THE MOVING FORCE JOURNAL



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HONEYBEE IN CACTUS FLOWER, SEAL BEACH, CA
ROGER CAMP



HOTEL POOL

VIRGINIA LAURIE

I'm watching the girls in the pool play a game where
they count to three then drop into the water
at the same time.

I assume they are striking poses or miming something,
Charades style. I can't tell, but we used to do that.

We always came up early, oxygen used up laughing,
too excited to think of a reason to laugh yet, just doing
it. We came up to scold each other.

I didn't see anything!

No! That was so good! You saw it!

Do it again!

Fine!

They're pinching their noses while taking their dramatic
diver gulps. I'd forgotten about that.

They do it before their flips too. I want to tell them to practice
blowing out through their nose so they can use both arms
for momentum.

Noah keeps bothering them, taunting them. They are angry but

confused. He wants attention and they don't know why but
he's being mean.

They say so. I am proud. I nod along as they shoo him away.
I want to know if they can do a backflip too.

Have they done
a mermaid swim?

I am 21, and I really want to join those little girls and
show them my own underwater handstand.

I really want to show those girls
I am still a girl too.

HATCHLING

REBECCA L. JENSEN

Christine was my mother's closest friend. They were like twins. They had known each other since their early teenage years, and my mom kept pictures of them together in a shoebox that she tucked into her bedside cabinet. Sometimes, I could persuade her to let me look at them. We would sit on her bed and spread the pictures across the comforter, a whole life laid out there like a movie or a distant dream. There were shots of the two women from when they had dyed each other's hair in Christine's mother's bathroom and stained the tile around the tub with a ring of blue. There were pictures of them smoking cigarettes, leaning against a wall outside a 7-Eleven in denim cutoffs and halter-neck tops. In other pictures, later pictures, both women wore matching pantsuits and tan-colored high heels as they stepped out of their shared apartment in East Boca and tried to get jobs at the mall, at the bank, as receptionists at local businesses. They did everything together; joined at the hip. There were pictures of Christine holding me as a newborn—my body swaddled in a blanket, so tiny in her arms.

Each Christmas Eve, Christine came over for dinner. She and my mom would drink pink Moscato until they both fell asleep on the big couch in the living room. Eventually my dad would nudge my mom to wake her up and coax her to come to bed. The next morning, it was as if the previous night had never happened. The two women nursed their hangovers quickly with

strong black coffee, and I would play with my new toys, my dad getting down on the floor to play Barbies and dress-up with me. Meanwhile, Christine and my mom would cook. The smells from the feast would erase any resentment my dad held on to and, by the afternoon, their roles had reversed. Dad lay out by the pool on a lounge, passed out from eating so much food, and the women would be bright, awake, alert, and ready to entertain my every need.

I loved Christine, but I envied the two of them together. I had always wanted a sister of my own—a built-in best friend, another girl, another soul that worked and thought and moved like mine. Christine was always at our house. She and my mother would stay up late into the night talking. Their conversations were snippets and puzzle pieces. I set out the four corners and tried to build the edges, but the bulk of it was always just a pile of pieces floating around in the center. I wanted to be part of their friendship, part of something bigger than just myself.

And then, when I turned ten, my mom got pregnant. At first, I didn't know why she was always feeling sick. I was old enough that I could see the signs, know something wasn't right, but I had never stopped to consider the reality that my parents wanted more children, that they might still be trying. I had begged when I was younger, tugging at their sleeves and asking for a sister. They had offered me a puppy instead, but I wasn't interested—it felt like a temporary solution.

My parents sat me down at the kitchen table to tell me the news. I remember reaching out to touch my mom's stomach, the stretch marks just

beginning to web their way toward her bellybutton. The bump pulsed underneath my hand.

"You're going to be a great sister," my mom stroked my hair, smiling.

"Is it a girl?" I asked.

"We have to wait and see, honey," my dad replied.

*

The months passed. I hovered around my mother as she grew bigger and bigger. Christine brought us groceries and the three of us ate orange popsicles one after another. The juice trailed down our arms, dripping onto the tile floor, and I remember thinking it was my mom's job to clean up. But she couldn't do all the things she usually did. I dabbed at her skin with a paper towel and she smiled at me like I was some kind of personal angel.

My dad worked long, unhealthy hours to bring in more money while Mom stayed home to rest. She had been working as an office assistant downtown until a few months ago; he worked out on the Everglades as a consultant for a biological team from one of the local universities. They paid him to help preserve and protect the wetlands. He would catch fish and put them in tanks for the scientists to study for a few weeks, and then they would pass the tanks back to him to return the fish to their natural habitat. I wonder if the fish even noticed. He watched birds, too, and came home late with his military-green binoculars still slung around his neck. He was tanned a deep,

leathery-orange and his skin blistered across his shoulders and the bridge of his nose. He was up early and out late every day. I remember him coming to my room late in the evenings to kiss me goodnight, and I could smell the sweet stink of his sweat. I didn't fully understand his work, but I was enthralled by the reference books he left strewn around the house, his late-night reads before he fell asleep wherever he had been sitting. I tore through the pages while my mom lazed out on the patio under an umbrella and sweltered in the heat with Christine sunbathing beside her, soaking up sun for both of them.

I taught myself about turtles. Maybe because I liked wildlife too. Maybe because I missed my dad when he was gone. I liked how turtles could sneak back inside their shells when they were scared or, I imagined, when they felt tired. I imagined I had my own shell to retreat into, and I tucked my body in small and curled under the blankets on my bed. I pretended I was one of them. I had this fleeting spark of a thought—that the new baby inside my mom was kind of like a turtle too, living encased in something bigger and protective. Mom was the shell, and it was her job to take care of the floating body inside her.

I had learned about babies at school already. My teacher, Mrs. Woods, wanted our class to do research projects using the internet. The internet was new to us and the possibilities to explore were endless. She told us to pick a topic we were interested in, or inspired by, or something that affected our lives. All I could think about was my mom and the baby, so I wrote down

everything I could find about babies in my yellow composition book. I learned the technical words like “embryo” and “zygote” and I imagined the baby spinning around in there, bouncing off the walls of my mother’s womb, bobbing and gliding in “amniotic fluid”—another new phrase. I didn’t like to think of how the baby was *created*, only that my mother’s body was where it grew, that it would be nurtured, and it would transform into a real human inside her. I didn’t like to think about it coming out either and tried to put that part out of my mind.

Christine worked as a teller at the bank. She switched her shifts to work mornings so she could pick me up from school to save my mom the trip. She talked to me like I was her own daughter.

“How was school, my love?” she smiled at me as I clipped my seatbelt into place in the passenger seat beside her. I told her about my project, how Mrs. Wood had given me a good grade, and how I had memorized so many new words. She nodded and *uh-huhed*, and I felt a sloshing in my own stomach as we drove home talking about my mom.

My mother’s contractions had started a few minutes before I arrived. Christine had intended to drop me at the door, watching as I pulled out my house key—my dad had made me a copy in pink with little jewels on the base so I would know it was mine when I hung it on the hook in our hallway—and I pushed it into the lock. The key turned, but there was no resistance. The door was already unlocked, and I could hear voices in the living room. My parents were both already home.

I shot a look back at Christine and she must have known something was different. I heard the engine shut off and the door of her car slammed as I walked in, following my parents' voices. My mom was crouched on all fours and moaning like some wild beast. She looked so different, so ragged. I pushed my body against the wall, away from her, wanting to give her space, and waited. Christine slipped into the room and took my hand, pulling me away.

"I'm so sorry, baby, I'm so sorry," my mom repeated, my dad holding her elbows and grabbing the bag of baby supplies at his feet.

My mother didn't look at me when she spoke. She could have been speaking to the child inside of her. I looked at both of my parents together, but they were strangers to me. My mom cried, retreating into her shell, rigid and disconnected from the world outside her body. My dad gave up, picked her up and carried her to the car. There was no time or space for me in their bubble.

Christine whisked me away to her house. I wanted so badly to be with my parents, but I couldn't shake the image of them—ignoring me, my mother in pain—from my memory. I cried into Christine's shoulder and let her lull me to sleep. When I woke, I had no energy to open my mouth to speak. I lay in Christine's lap on her couch, drifting with the sounds of the television, her warm hands clammy against my forehead.

Every hour she would get up and walk to the patio, lighting a cigarette and blowing the smoke outside and away from me, over her shoulder. I listened to the puckered-suck as she inhaled and I felt dizzy. My fingers were weak as I tugged at the blanket she had left me. I was hungry, but the thought of food made my stomach heave. There was a plate of dry toast on the coffee table in front of me. The sight of the food pulled at my insides and I leaned over the side of the couch and vomited before I could stop myself.

Christine found a roll of paper towels and cleaned the floor. I could hear the water in the kitchen as she went to wash her hands, the sounds tugging at the space behind my eyes. Before too long, she returned to her seat beside me and traced lines through my sweat-matted hair. I followed the sensation of her fingernails in my mind. She made the infinity sign, a sideways figure eight. It was then, when I realized she hadn't yelled at me for ruining her rug, she hadn't been surprised by my sickness, and when she had come back to me and stayed for so long—all day and into the darkest parts of the night—that I wondered if she was an angel.

"It's just a bug, sweetie, it'll pass."

She had muted the TV, but kept it switched on, and her face glowed pale blue in its light. Her eyes closed even as her hands still moved to comfort and hold me.

Night became morning again, and I listened for the sounds of my mom moving around downstairs, making breakfast, but then I sat up and

remembered I wasn't at home. I was covered with a thick fluffy blanket and I was no longer on the couch, but on a pull-out bed in a spare room. I felt a tingle along the edge of my jaw, and my teeth tasted of filth. I tried not to swallow the salty saliva in my mouth. I couldn't face what it might taste like sliding against the back of my throat.

On the nightstand stood a piece of yellow paper, folded in half and half again, like a greeting card. I stared at it through sleep-crusted eyes. I worked my way out of the blanket cocoon and propped myself up on weak elbows. Taped inside the card, pushed into the crease, was a Polaroid. A round, blue-tinged face; a forehead covered in a soft blue hat. I couldn't see a color in his eyes yet, but I pushed my fingers gently to the edges, running them along the lashes and into the corners. I didn't know how long I'd been asleep, or how long I'd have to wait until my dad came to pick me up, but I understood that while I'd been here, lost in sleep and sickness, the baby had been born, and it was a boy.

I let my eyes adjust to the room. I realized I had never been in this part of Christine's house before. I had only seen her kitchen, her living room, her back porch with the swing-seat where I loved to dangle my legs and let my body rock back and forth while she and my mom were busy making lunch or brewing iced tea on summer afternoons. We spent most of our time at my house. It must have just been easier for my mom to host, for me to have all my toys and things readily available, than to go over to Christine's each time the women wanted to get together. As I looked around, I noticed the walls—

pale pink, rainbows. The closet was closed, but I imagined the inside to be filled with sparkling dresses and shiny leather shoes. A girl's bedroom. There were shelves with photographs framed and on display, decorative purple butterflies on the ledge beside them. Christine's red hair in each picture, a baby in her arms. It looked like the pictures I had seen at home, in the box beside my mom's bed. The child looked like me, but the more I looked, the more I knew it wasn't.

I was still sick, and before I could really make sense of it all, I drifted back to sleep as quickly as I had awoken. My dreams were filled with butterflies and baby cries, and when I woke again, the card was flat on the nightstand. I was laying on my side and Christine stroked my back, my hair, pulling me back into consciousness. Maybe days had passed, maybe only a few hours. I had no way of knowing.

"What happened?" I asked, breathless after just two words, gasping.

"Nothing, sweetie, you just need to eat something."

"No, what happened to the baby? The girl in the pictures?"

If I had not been sick, I could have masked this question, been more sensitive and less abrupt. In the moment, it felt urgent like this other child, the girl who would have been *my* best friend, was just waiting in the wings to be revealed. I needed to know why I had never seen her, heard of her before.

"Oh honey, my baby was very sick." She trailed another infinity on my arm. The skin of her face was loose, big bags under her eyes. Her hair was a mess, but her lips were dabbed in something pink—pristine save for one corner where the gloss had leaked over the edge and smudged.

"She wasn't strong enough. She didn't make it."

Christine tried to hide this sadness from me. I felt my face burn, embarrassed to have been so bold, but I looked up to her—to my parents, too—like she was a goddess, a queen, magical and all-powerful. The adults always had answers; I didn't know my question had power until I'd spoken it. It was unnerving to watch them unravel. Christine knew this, and she hugged me tight. I wanted my skin to meld with hers then, to absorb every ounce of suffering she had ever felt, and to bring her baby back. I thought of my parents together at the hospital. I missed them, their touch.

When Christine pulled away, her eyes were red and puffy. I knew that when she looked at me she saw the child she had lost.

"Honey," she said, her voice garbled like she was drowning. She cleared her throat. "Sometimes bad things happen and there's no reason for it. When one life leaves this earth, it's just making room for another to come along and take its place. My baby left this world before you were even born."

As if there is only so much space in the universe for a specific number of lives; like how there were a certain number of rooms in a house for a certain number of people to exist together at one time. One had to leave so

that one more could move in. I could picture it this way. It was easy, it made sense to me in the moment.

I was afraid that I would keep on hurting her if I asked any more questions. I wanted to know this girl's name, her birthday, how long she had lived. I wanted to know why Christine hadn't tried to have another baby, where her husband or partner was, why I hadn't heard these stories before. Why there were no pictures in the boxes my mom kept at our house. I wondered if Christine thought her baby had died so I could survive, that maybe she meant my life had replaced the other. A flash of thought that scared me. I wanted my mom.

Days later, after my fever dissipated and I could eat little slices of watermelon without feeling queasy, Christine drove me back to my house. It was quiet in the early hours of the morning, but neither of us could wait any longer to see my parents, to meet my brother. My body was stiff in the car; I worried I might still be sick, that I could pass it along to my mom or the child. Christine squeezed my hand as she parked and helped me out of the car again.

Inside, my mom lay on the couch. She wore no makeup. She was sleeping. The room was clean, but it smelled different. Like cotton and warmth and life. My dad sat in the armchair by the window holding a bundle of blankets. He nodded for me to come closer. Christine went to sit beside my mom.

"This," my father said, his eyes glued to the baby's face, "is your brother."

I peered over and into the blankets, pulling them back to let the light touch his face. He was sleeping, but his lips moved in little twitches and gurgles. My heart hummed in my chest. He opened his eyes in little slits, seeming to wince at the newness of the world, and I found my own gaze being tugged and tethered to his. I reached out a hand to touch his fingers, his fingernails soft and bitty, and he clutched my pinky in return. Magnetic.

There was something in the way this tiny, fleshy ball of baby looked up at me that hooked something inside me, reached down into my shell, deep into my core, and pulled me to him. I felt small—the smallest I had ever been, sitting beside my father, my butt perched on the arm of the chair, my legs dangling—and simultaneously I was a giant, the protector, aware of the size of my body in comparison to this new little one. We held on to each other—my dad holding my brother, my brother holding me—and I knew I should still feel sad as I thought about the baby girl Christine had lost, about my mother's cries of pain just a few days earlier, but everything had been erased.

TULIP FLAME

DAVID A. GOODRUM



PRAYERS FOR GREGORIO

JENNIFER MOGLIA LUCIL

There were many prayers in the atmosphere the day six-year-old Gregorio was hit on the head by a workman's hammer. This is the story of my grandfather when he was just a little boy watching the big kids play stickball on the lower east side of New York City, 1919, when that hammer fell from the sky, presumably from a work site above to the lot below. While I am not sure what was happening at that precise moment, I'm choosing to picture Greg watching a stickball game in the lot—it's for the lifelong baseball-fan-grandpa I knew. I imagine the older boys looking into my grandfather's face for signs of life and his boy body lying in the dirt for eternally long moments while one of the old ladies who stared out the window of the tenement building called out, "*Clorinda, Clorinda, vieni presto!*" and made the sign of the cross.

Clorinda was Greg's mother, my great grandmother. She must have been home from working at the factory where she made artificial flowers. I imagine she stopped in the middle of hanging laundry on the line and ran down three flights of stairs. The big kids made way for her as she swept in to soak up the blood from her boy's head with a cloth one of the neighbors brought over, repeating "*Caro Gesu', caro Gesu.*" Clorinda patted her boy's cheeks until his eyes opened to the warmth in her deep brown eyes. Did she have help to get to the hospital? I do not know this detail either, but I

suppose she could have carried Gregorio in her arms as she ran block by block.

At Saint Vincent's Hospital, the nuns helped the boy into a bed. If he sustained a concussion, we are unsure, but to bed they nursed him and curtly bade Clorinda goodnight. Visiting hours were over. "I come back, when is the time I come back?," she asked mournfully in her broken English, knowing she would have to work all the next day. Days were long at the factory, and she could not return to the hospital until 7. "*Per favore*, how I can see him?" One sprightly nurse, schooled as she was in kindness and morality, offered sympathy to the immigrant mother. "Go wait across the street from this very window, the third from the corner, *uno, due, tre*, and look up four flights. I will make sure you can see him."

The next day, Gregorio came out of his fog with bandaged head and the overwhelming awareness that he was alone but for the nurse-nuns. The women's presence—a proper fluttering about with purpose and intention—was curious to the boy until the uniformed workers, sterility of white sheets, and acidic cleansers chilled him to the bone. His tears began to flow. "*Mama, mama...*" Gregorio commenced a low moan that continued throughout the day.

The kind nurse came at 7 with outspread arms, "Come, come, little one." She held him to the window where he saw Clorinda and cried out, this time loud enough for all the patients to hear, "Mama! Mama!" The nurse felt the twinge of fear, a look of scorn from an older nurse, and rushed the boy

back to bed. He screamed now, "Mama! Mama!" At this point, the Mother Superior made haste to the bedside of this frantic boy. With steely face, she slapped him with all her might to silence the street kid before he disrupted any more peace and, *God forbid*, unsettled the convalescents, not just on the fourth floor, but on every wing of Saint Vincent's.

The story goes, and my grandfather would have told you, that this was the beginning of the end for any belief he may have had in God. Greg said he was a lifelong atheist, with major life decisions being influenced by that early encounter. When his mother brought him to the Catholic school down the block for his first day of kindergarten, he screamed bloody hell—"NO NUNS, NO NUNS, NO NUNS." Thus began a life of public school education when Clorinda walked him over to the public school instead to quell his terror of the nuns. When in middle age, Greg went to a Catholic church to ask about a funeral for his deceased father, Pietro, the priest said, "Your father has done nothing for this church." Greg could think of nothing but the injustice—his immigrant father, whose life was about working to the bone to survive, condemned by the holy father for not giving over part of his pittance of a salary to the church. And so Pietro was buried with only the services of the city.

When I think of this story now, a middle-aged woman myself in a time when instability and fear about the future reigns, I wonder about adjusting the lens on the events. What if the story is about that nun who carried Gregorio to the window, a woman tender enough to miss her own mother

amidst the rigor of the training hospital? What if the story is about the Italian slums, where squalor may have reigned, but knowing the kids on the street and people in the building helped save a life that day? What if the story *is* about a hand of God, a divine trickster who dropped a hammer out of the sky to see if the boy would survive? Survive, he did, and maybe the story is about Gregorio's awakening to the deep well of kindness in his mother's eyes, her unconditional love like a pre-emptive strike against the merciless blows that haunt a life.

SOMETHING SAD ABOUT CHICKENS IN ITALY

DAGNE FORREST

"Something sad about chickens in Italy"
is how my teenage son
continues his late-night monologue,
begun after I shared a poem
inspired by a headline. He spends
his days absorbing new information,
the deep and the absurd.
His focus reminds me of the tireless
pecking our hens carry out in their yard,
hunting for morsels amidst dry grass,
never bored or deterred.
He ducks out from the noise of his anxiety
by collecting facts and analysis,
which he largely stores up,
but on rare evenings he springs to life
and shares the best bits,
zipping from the latest in space
exploration, to global supply line
kerfuffles, and inevitably to something
plain cuckoo. Like tonight,
when he mentions the Italian soldiers
who mistakenly blew up
a chicken coop during a training exercise,

which makes us laugh
but also unbearably sad.
But that reminds him of a
story about a new tank,
and he's off again, riding
roughshod over the uncertain
terrain of his own mind,
bringing us along with him.

YOU HAVE TO

BRYAN VALE

you have to go
through the period of confusion,
through the fractures
and missing punctuation
and collapsing ideas.

you have to go
through the dissonance
(oh you really do).
yeah, through the errors
and blunders of your own
making.

you have to go
through the shame and the
mistaken identity, through
the hail of stones and
sadness and inexcusable behavior.

i don't know why —
you just have to go through.

SPACE OUT

JANE REPLOGLE

The worst part is
 that all it takes
is the same song, the same weather, the same 1am
 and you phase between moments:
 basketball game, rug between toes,
 late-night tipsy; the Normal Album, 4 hours after
 the last lake light, candle crackling;
 ceiling gradient, folk cover song, winter
 orange-eyed madness. The right order
of things and you shift
from then to now and back
 and you feel unnerved
 by the ease at which your mind can sink
 into the way it was
a year, a month, a decade
ago. Impermanence doesn't deny meaning,
but you're worried you might deny permanence.

MILK BOX

DON POMERANTZ

And there was Mr. Anderson, the milkman.
When we moved to a place more green
we moved the gray metal box with us
to the new stoop and sure enough, our first Tuesday
in new surroundings the same clink
of the bottles in their metal rack,
exchanged for the empties to be washed,
refilled and paper capped.
He in the same gray uniform, bow tie,
high peaked cap, same as all milkmen everywhere,
that box like a homing beacon, wherever
we had gone, he knew and would follow,
an assurance that at least some things would never change.

Until they did and the last empty bottles
unexchanged stood on the counter
like orphans for awhile, that became
vases for flowers on occasion or something
handy to water the plants, the orange
label fading. That metal box vanished into the mystery
first, what alternate use could it possibly have,
joined at some unnoticed time by the bottles it had held

and Mr. Anderson in his bow tie, he was pretty young,
what did he change into, we never knew.

WINTER OUTSIDE WARM STILL LIFE INSIDE

DANIEL FINALDI



IN DELFT

DON POMERANTZ

I live on the street where Vermeer lives,
his studio just across from my window. In my window
where all day I sit all day here and I sew.

Over there, one after another
they gaze out his window on the holy light,
their gazes fall surely not on me.

A woman with a pitcher, a man with a globe,
a maid waiting on her mistress writing,
a woman with a lute, a guitar.

Somewhere upstairs in a farther room, a man practices
his viol, his harpsichord, his cittern and hurdy gurdy.
All day they gaze out for the source of the music
they hear descend from no place that they can see.

A woman with a pitcher, a man with a globe,
a maid waiting on her mistress writing,
a woman with a lute, a trumpet, a guitar.

They gaze out the window into the light.
Their gazes fall surely not on me, a woman who

has misplaced her country, who sits all day
by the window and sews in blues. Sews in whites.

My husband said today inside a shop window he saw
a painting of a woman sitting in a window sewing.
And there were her hands there, half drowned in the light.

TROUT FISHING IN IRELAND

DON POMERANTZ

Doing as usual nothing I was, other than
observing the man standing on the bridge fishing—
bent slightly forward, elbows on the rail, hands extended,
though his fishing pole was oddly missing.

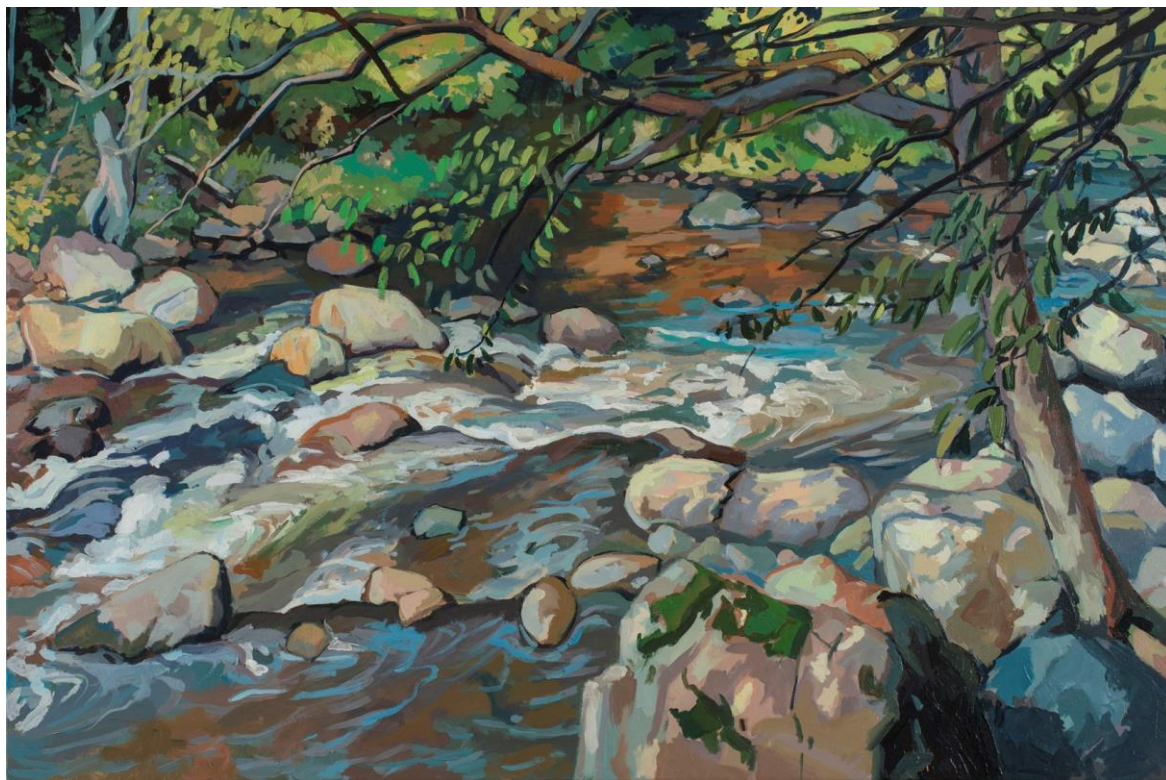
Odd indeed since this river was among the best for trout fishing
in all of Ireland. It was as clear to me as the river beneath him
that he was doing catch and release but with the catch part left out—
still retaining the pleasure of watching the fish skitter off into freedom

without the likely permanent trauma of a bloodied hook
stuck in the mouth while gasping for tentative breath.
His many decades of practicing catch and release,
catch and release had brought him this wisdom and generosity.

Several brown trout frolic in the crystal clear waters
below him, so visible and at ease,
feasting on succulent bugs off the surface,
grateful for their liberty without knowing quite why.

LOOKING AT THE AUSABLE RIVER

DANIEL FINALDI



THE DYLAN THOMAS BOATHOUSE

— on the occasion of visiting Laugharne, Carmarthenshire, Wales

TIMOTHY RICHARDS

Now as I wander the wooded paths
and pause reflecting sweet on
Dylan's words eternal—
his shadow lingering on—
I feel the padded earthen way of
Milk Wood under bending boughs of
shady leafy green.

I see the estuary's muddled gray brown
bed flat and smooth,
soon brimming ever slowly
with the evening tide.

And bracing now against the firm
crisp wind, I stand before his
writing shed, peering through
its unwashed window, eyeing long
discarded, wadded drafts all
crumpled strewn and balled
beneath his wooden desk.

Now as I, my thoughts stirred and
birthing, gaze across the

River Taf's broad beam,
I see its salt marsh fingers threading
empty, muddy creeks meandering
deep, ending now at landed boats
full tilt and tethered.

And as I wait the evening tide's return,
thick with thought, awash in teeming
rhythmic line, I feel his spirit
everlasting, his presence now within.

YARD WORK

PETE MACKEY

I never tire of the satisfactions of pulling weeds,
trimming hedges, raking leaves, mowing—
of seeing my work change
this little piece of life I intend.

The dirt gathers beneath my fingernails,
the sweat slides down my back, and green
under my knees settles into stains—
the small signs of good labor.

I have no illusions. The dandelions never relent.
The shrubs only know to grow unruly.
The god of grass must rise. Leaves will surrender.
But as long as I can push and pull
I'll keep on. When I'm done, though, let it go.
The weeds that claim my grave can have it.
Soon enough I'll blend in, joining what I cannot
beat, having had my passing say.

I LEARN TO MAKE CHA GIO

OANH NGUYEN

In between checking texts and calling the hospital.
I start to make cha gio in your kitchen.
With a damp cloth I wet the delicate clear banh trang.
This morning I held your hand.
It was stretched thin like the transparent rice crepe I am holding.
I could see the veins pulse through your delicate rice papery skin as
though slivers of wood ear mushrooms, and glass noodles.

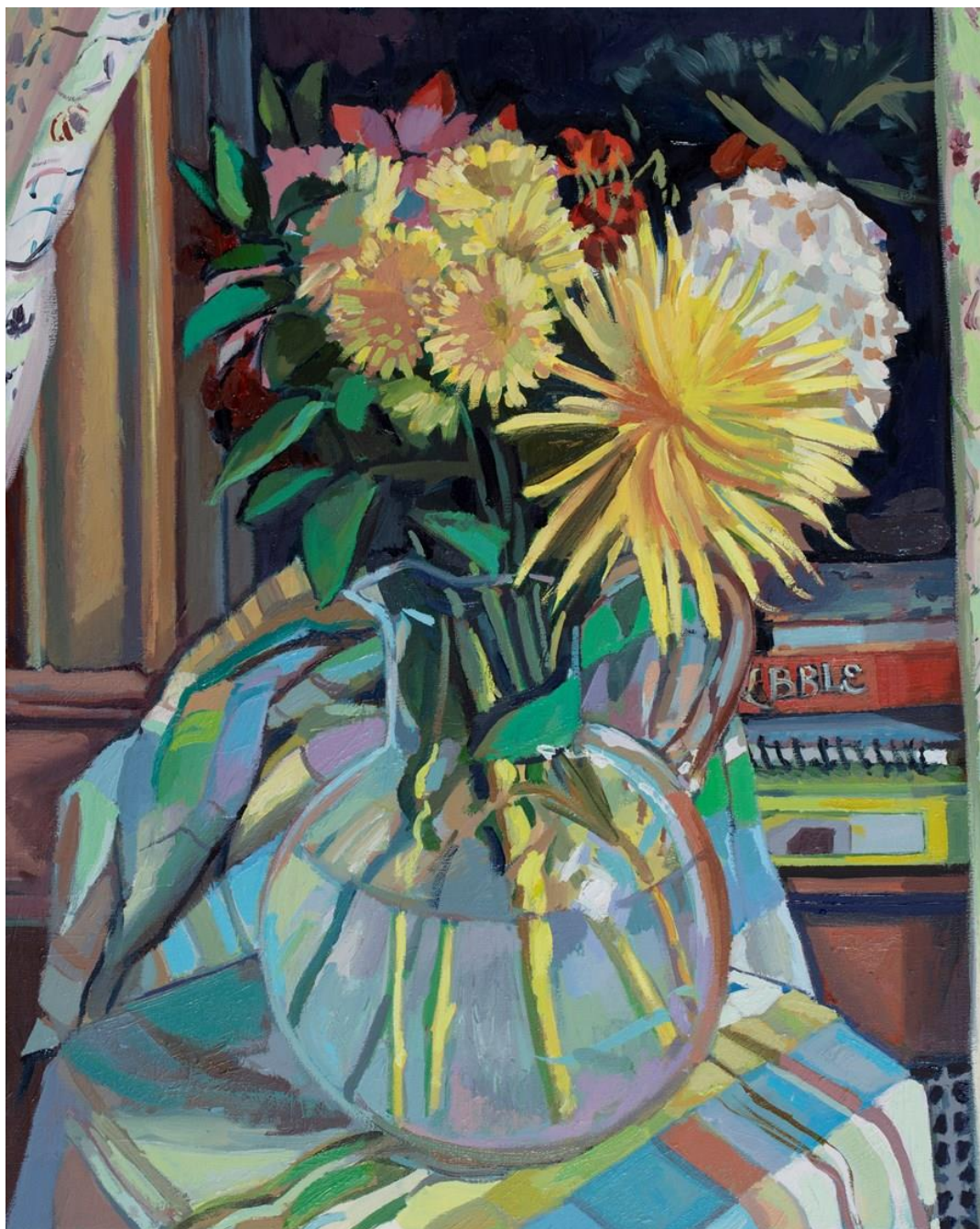
I hear the past echo in the kitchen.
How do I know how much seasoning? You taste it, you know!
How long do I cook it? You'll know!
But how much? How do I know? I cry.
You eye it, you know!
Just this much – like this - for each cha gio.
Your tiny hands measured everything from muscle memory.
My own clumsy hands will never be as deft as yours.
Too much pork in the cha gio. The belly will burst.
I ooze pink pork out of my chubby spring roll.

I rinse my hands and call the hospital.
I was five when you first taught me to make cha gio.
You made me believe I had made it all by myself.
"You might as well sleep," my brother says, "There's no change."

But everything had changed.
And now I am making cha gio all by myself.

NIGHT TIME STILL LIFE

DANIEL FINALDI



NIGHT WHISPERS OF SUMMER

OANH NGUYEN

A gentle breeze overflows my body like a warm bath.
listening. I wait for sleep.

living out the fullness of their desperate love lives,
crickets trill, chirp and click with deafening regret.

an abandoned apple tree's laden branches creak and groan
heavy ripe fruit disfigured by time plop to the ground.

buoyant wingbeats, a beseeching shriek, a ghostly heart face
accusing piercing eyes staring, patiently waiting.

in the thick night air, the old church gravely stands silent
decaying forms of wrought iron overtaken by nature.

dreamily, I climb to the highest branch of the apple tree in bright sunshine.
with a good pocketknife I carve open still sweet and sour flesh.

MAKE ME

LEONCE TONIO

She had to smile. For him to do things without subtlety was amusing. You never see an empty house. Blank walls and a floor. No forlorn rag, no broom in the closet. Even the sound of the key in the lock had an echo. Furniture, rugs and stuff are noise eaters. Without them everything gets louder. A Black Sabbath concert without an audience would make buildings fall.

She opened the door, saw what happened and used her oldest trick. Her best. From that point on, every girl from every school you've been at is looking at you. You're the new student and all of them are judging you, measuring you up, while you cross the desert between the entrance of the classroom and the desk that has been assigned to you. Every step you take is going to be heard. Every time you move your eyes you'll meet theirs. Weakness is forbidden, kindness ineffective. What you need to be is defiant. Like all navy kids, she went to a dozen different schools, following her dad from the hot Pacific bases of his youth to the cozy European assignments of his later years. All the way to the DoD in Washington. That made a lot of classrooms, a lot of girls and a lot of defiance. The emptiness facing her didn't stand a chance.

Her heels on the floor sounded like slow motion clapping in a bad flick. She moved on, greeted home by scents of cleaning products. The floor shined like a TV commercial. Remember: every girl from every school, waiting for tears. You want me to cry? Make me.

Mario had done good. He had waited for an argument. Any excuse for one. It happened to be about a picture of them that they loved. It happened this morning. It had been taken a year ago in Poggioreale, one of those Sicilian ghost towns. Complete abandonment, like a western for zombies. They were standing on each side of what used to be a little pink church and was now a memory. Mario on the left, smoking, with a foot on the wall, unaware that one of their friends was taking the picture. Her, on the right, looking up to the crumbling top of the building. One October day in 1968, an earthquake decided that the world would go on without Poggioreale. In seconds, hundreds died and those who survived never came back.

They loved the picture and had it framed. She thought that if this was their masterpiece, it should be hung in the living room. It was a good story. He felt they should keep it for themselves and put it in their bedroom. They argued, but not too fiercely. He almost got angry when she knocked in the nail to hang the picture later. But not as usual. She was a little disappointed. This situation could have been a fantastic toy for her mind to play with. The representation of the self, of the couple, the narcissism... Good stuff.

This time, Mario let it go. He said he'd do whatever she wanted. "As always," he added. She didn't have a response, so went to work and forgot about it. Then she got back and her key was so very loud. Nicely done Mario. The entrance of the house alone was the size of most young people's first flat. A kind of vestibule where you'd expect some old guy to materialize out of thin air and take your coat. Five-stars' daughter perks up. Nothing in it now. Just the white paint on the walls and the clinical smell of cleanliness. She kept going, with her heels as a soundtrack and every girl from every school as an audience. Very theatrical. More so than Mario's move. Taking all the furniture in one day was shocking. But desperate. Defeated. A skull and

crossbones on a white flag. She was sad for him. Like Napoleon said: After a battle you just lost, there is nothing sadder than a battle you just won.

The living room got her mind off of that. It was a big space, but it could have been bigger. On the other side of the back wall was a kitchen with a huge window. She had wanted to break that wall to make an open kitchen. More conversation while she cooked and more sunlight in the evening. Mario thought it was too much work. Plus, like all theatre people, he liked a backstage area. Still, the place was beautifully furnished only twelve hours ago with Togo couches facing each other near the main wall, a blue velvet chair on their right, and an Eames coffee table between them. All of that on some Persian rugs and surrounded by an array of tasteful touches that their friends said gave a design magazine look to the place. Everything was gone, but on the wall, where she wanted it, was the picture. Now, that was theatrical. Beautifully executed. Even painful, she thought. Really painful. She realized she was about to lose. He bested her. Fucking play writer with his sense of plot and ending. Getting dumped was one thing. Being alone was manageable. But this picture, nailed in the center of the wall was about to get the last word. Like an eleventh-hour surprise witness in a trial. Wait a minute your honor! Telling the story of their breakup to her friends would be impossible. The picture was a conversation ender. How do you come back from that?

She lit a cigarette to give herself time to think. She couldn't keep this picture now. She imagined putting it in a sad little box. Like a loser canning his silver trophy of a two-person race.

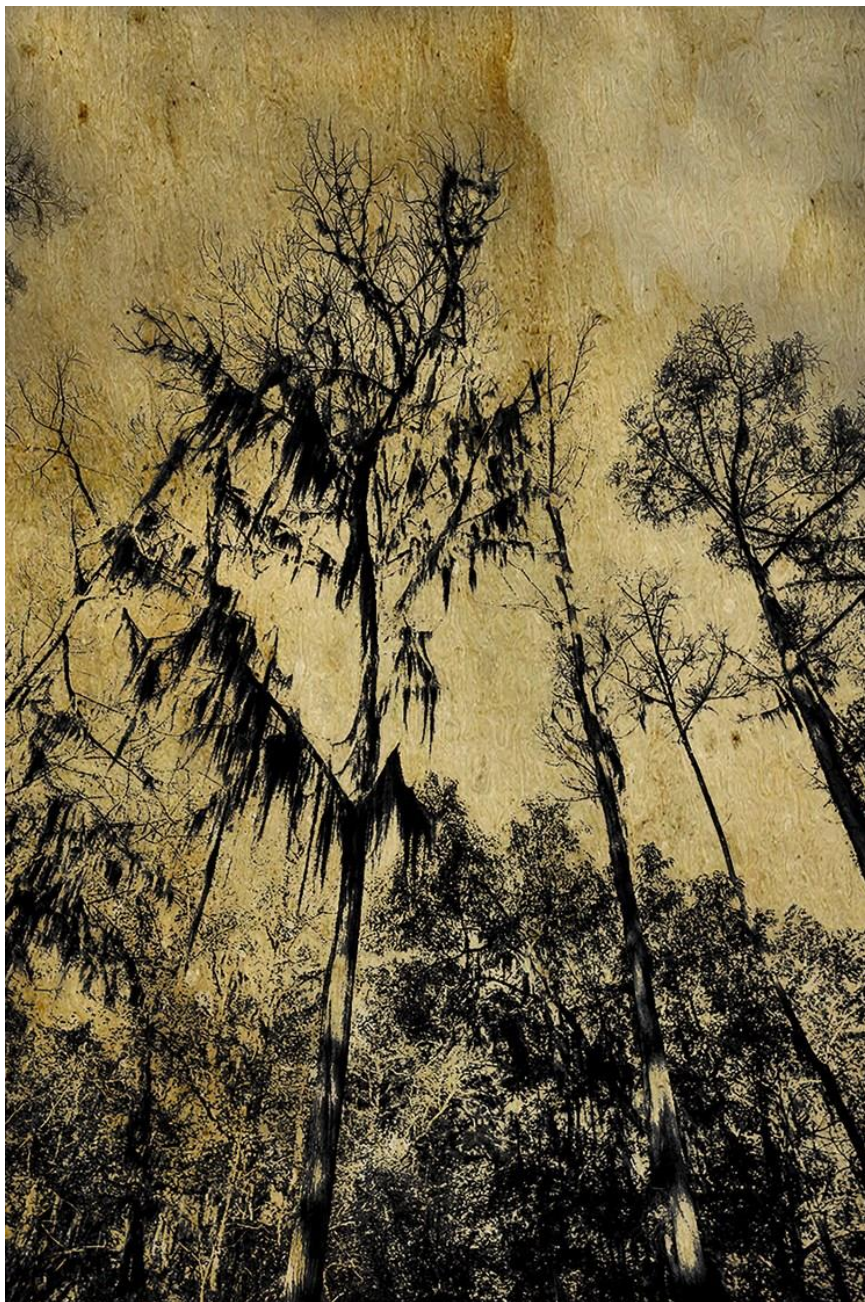
Her arms were crossed on her chest. The cigarette was moving a little, at the corner of her lips, like navy guys did back in the day. Her dad used to tell her about ships populated by young men with two free hands, a Lucky

between their teeth and an eye closed to filter the smoke. They fought wars that way, seeing just half of it. How? "By not ever playing defense," he explained. By attacking, however bleak the situation. Any problem can be a solution. Mario never believed this. He thought some problems could not be fixed and defeats needed to be accepted. But she didn't, and her dad didn't. She guessed he hadn't emptied the garden. A tool shed they never used, a wicker chair, and a bench that was as much a sitting proposition as it was an ashtray. Behind it, the huge hammer. Lazy artist.

It was an old tool, rough and heavy. She swung it over her shoulder, and back toward her with all her strength. That destroyed a piece of the wall. Plus, it was actually fun to do. She swung it again, away from the center where the picture was. It crashed to the floor after four strokes. The sound of shattered glass felt refreshing amongst this low-pitched symphony of wood-crushing. But already, she was on to bigger things. After an hour, she had taken off her heels, smoked five cigarettes, and almost nothing was left between the living room and the kitchen. The carcass of the Poggioreale picture was buried under the carcass of the wall. Dust floated the room, blackening her cheeks, like war paint. She could see it dancing through the sunbeam, coming in from her open kitchen.

SWINGING WITH THE CYPRESS

JOHN LIGHTLE



ANOTHER LIFE

HARI B. PARISI

I lived in a cave in some far-off life.
Saw the world in shades of black
and white, ate bread from the floor

of my hunger, swore allegiance
to men and monsters. The grass
was high and the rivers ran swift

and cold. I looked to stones
for comfort, thunder to carry
me through. In the winding veins

of my existence is a mountain
molded from fear, an avalanche
of doubt poised. There is a way.

I carve a small slice off each day,
take up my blade and scythe through
the jungle of grief to the tall trees

of forgiveness. Don't know the story
of the skies. I leave that for the future.
There is a whisper in my ear. I listen.

CHOICE

K. L. JOHNSTON

Go peddle
your despair
elsewhere. I'm
canceling
my subscription.

Life on this
precocious
precious globe
is no more
ferocious
than it ever was.

Just as joy,
overarching
like the nightjar's
swooping flight,
is no less
beautiful
winging home
to roost in
dawn's first light.

THRICE

K. L. JOHNSTON

Once I chased tornados and climbed rock falls,
shot the rapids in an inner tube,
piled into cars with bad boys,
and danced bare foot and fearless
in the local tavern's parking lot.

Later I chased toddlers and climbed the walls,
shrieked and was shrieked at by teenagers,
chased ambulances to the hospital
because my children too, were fearless.

Now I keep a garden and plead ignorance
while my grandchild installs mysteries
on my cell phone, saying "don't worry,
this will make your life easier."

Not so long ago we took road trips,
hiked the woods and caught hellbenders
in mountain streams. I dried their tears,
chased off closet monsters, dressed them
for proms, taught them to cook
and do their own damn laundry.

These young ones learned to plant

and sow, to reap and wield their own
particular magics. What in our long sharing
gives them the idea
that *now* I'm chasing easy?

OUT OF GAS

K. L. JOHNSTON



THE LAST TRIP

JEFF HYNDMAN

Some memories stick to us like glue, even those we'd like to be rid of, while others slip away and evaporate like ice cubes in a glass. Our memories help define us and as we grow older they increasingly shape our perceptions of who we are in that nebulous region we denote as the *self*. My trip to Indiana over twenty years ago is one of those memories that *stick*.

Green corn towered over the lanky farmer repairing a section of wire woven fence along the gravel road. We were stopped at a railroad crossing with no train in sight, but the train's whistle heralded its approach. I can still picture that farmer in his faded blue overalls, his weathered face, his oil darkened leather work gloves, dwarfed by his nearby, bright red Case tractor. How incongruous that brief slice of time felt to me when I gazed out my window at the Indiana corn reaching for the sun. When I stole a glance in the rearview mirror, it was easy to see my father somehow withering away, his skin tinted an unhealthy yellow, his face tight, his mood gloomy. He held my mother's hand, his partner for over fifty years and the sole person on the planet who actually knew him on the *inside*.

The call came early on a Saturday morning, just after seven o'clock. Mom was on the phone. I knew she and Dad were vacationing in Anderson, Indiana to visit family. I thought it likely something was wrong for my mother to call me so early, especially on a weekend, so I took up the phone with trepidation.

Without preamble Mom told me to fly to Indiana as soon as possible and drive them back to their home, in Florida, in their car. Dad was sick and I needed to come get them. When I asked what was wrong with him, she

started to cry and repeated that I needed to get out there as soon as I could. I replied I would of course do so, and I'd call her back just as soon as I learned my flight information. She told me my cousin Debbie would pick me up at Indianapolis airport and drive me to Anderson. Mom said little else and hung up the phone.

It was unnerving to hear my mother cry on the phone. I felt her anguish just as if we were talking three feet apart while I watched tears cascade down her face. I realized for perhaps the first time that our relationship had morphed from parent and child to parent and adult child. We are the only species to stay connected to both our parents our entire lives, until they forever vanish, leaving many of us feeling adrift and unmoored. We retain a strong connection to our parents even after they've died, in the form of memories and belief systems, such as religion, political views or our sense of morality.

My anxiety was high when I saw Debbie later that evening where she waited for me in the airport's arriving passenger area. I followed Debbie to her car for the hour long drive to Anderson. It was a hot, sunny day in August. As soon as we got in her car, I asked Debbie what had happened. She patiently explained that Uncle Jimmy had gone to the emergency room the previous morning because his skin and eyes were tinted yellow, signs of jaundice. He'd lost six pounds, which doesn't sound like much, but Dad had weighed the same one hundred and fifty eight pounds since high school. My father was the most disciplined person I had ever known, due in no small measure to the poverty and harshness of his childhood growing up during the Great Depression years.

Debbie said they did an MRI of his abdomen, which showed a large mass on the pancreas as well as an enlarged liver. The ER doctor told him he

almost certainly had pancreatic cancer, but he should still consult with a gastroenterologist when he returned home. When Dad pressed him on his prognosis in the event of such a diagnosis, the doctor replied that most pancreatic cancer patients have already reached stage four when they are diagnosed and have a life expectancy of three to six months, perhaps a year at most.

Debbie started the car. I felt dizzy. Dad was not young at seventy-five, but the prospect of losing him was still wholly unexpected, especially someone as healthy as my father had always been.

The trip to Anderson was subdued but for the requisite sharing of information about our spouses and children. Debbie has always been an exceedingly calm person, which contributed to her longevity as a Special Education teacher. I gazed out the window at the seemingly endless flat fields of corn and soybeans. The soybean fields were half the height of the corn fields and awash in vibrant violet flowers.

We arrived at Aunt Flossie's house. Uncle Bob had died fifteen years earlier, but the house remained the nucleus for my father's side of the family, where Dad and his four siblings and their families would congregate once or twice each year.

The imposing, overarching elm tree still stood like a sentinel in the front yard, but the wooden swing we spent countless hours on as children had long ago vanished. The red brick elementary school across the street, which my cousins attended, was closed years before; one of the numerous signs of Anderson's decline from its heyday when GM and related plants were the engines of the local economy, all long since shuttered. Dad and his four siblings had all been married by my grandfather, an Episcopal priest, in the modest Episcopal church in downtown Anderson.

The small clapboard house was hushed when we entered. Mom was sitting at the white Formica kitchen table with Aunt Flossie. My mom looked haggard and downcast, as if gravity was inexorably pulling at her, causing her face and shoulders to sag. I leaned down to kiss her cheek and she rose and embraced me tightly. She smelled of Chanel No 5, the same lemony perfume she'd worn for as long as I remembered.

Words escaped us both as I awkwardly patted her back, an odd gesture for us both. She pointed to my father lying down on the adjacent family room plaid couch, worn smooth by years of daily use. How peaceful he looked, this good man, his fingers interweaved while resting on his flat stomach, the rise and fall of his chest.

I approached him and saw his sallow skin, an unhealthy hue out of place on this strong and quiet man, my father. Sensing my presence, his coal black eyes opened and he rose to greet me. We shook hands heartily, as we'd always done, but Dad's customary smile was absent, lost in a sadness even his stalwart personality could not mask. He'd always been the pillar in our immediate and extended family. I could not imagine a world without him in it.

The trip to Florida was a quiet one for the most part, with Mom doing most of the talking. Dad had always been more of a listener than a talker. There'd been an undefined quality about him that drew people to talk about themselves while he listened, his expression earnest and inviting. I never once heard him mention anything about his childhood, parents or the places where he'd grown up. It was just sort of known in our family that these subjects were not to be brought up; they were steeped in pain, buried deep beneath our dad's outward disposition.

My father was a poster child of the Greatest Generation. He grew up in poverty, his mother died when he was young and he was raised by an

indomitable, wrathful and stern father. It seemed miraculous that despite the indigence and darkness of his childhood, Dad still became the loving husband and father who exemplified in both spirit and deed a life well lived.

He fought in WWII and then had the great fortune to marry my irrepressibly happy mother, who was completely devoted to him through the calm and occasional stormy seas of their voyage together. My parents shared a love that never faded and was apparent to everyone who knew them.

We stopped often on that trip, Dad restless and Mom, ever solicitous. At one stop, a scenic overlook in the Tennessee mountains, I watched my parents, arm in arm, gaze at the majesty of the Smoky Mountains, ancient and green. The breathtaking vista unfolded before us as I watched Dad turn and kiss Mom, a common sight between them. There was something timeless about my parents' love for one another, as if God or destiny determined their sojourn together was irrevocable.

Much as I couldn't envision a world without Dad, I also couldn't imagine my mother without him. Dad fought the good fight for over a year, Mom always at his side, but the chemo treatments gradually reduced him to a shadow of his former self, a husk of the robust man we all loved and respected. Although Mom lived for another five years, she never recovered from his death. Even the love of her children and grandchildren could not overcome her grief. Once her partner was gone, the mischievous light in my mom's eyes never returned, dimmed by an unfathomable loss.

And now in my old age, I ponder Dan Fogelberg's lyric, *My life has been a poor attempt to imitate the man*, from his emotive song, "The Leader of the Band." Although I know I fall short in comparison to my father, I am still a work in progress and there is still road ahead of me.

Dad was a proud man, honorable to the core, with a clarity of vision of what was right and what was wrong. His boundless love of my mother was evident each and every time I saw them together, holding hands, kissing or sharing tender moments at the end of a long day, Mom cuddled against him on the couch.

I think of my father and mother most days. And I strive to be a better person in what remains of my journey ahead. Dad would expect nothing less of me.

JANUARY IN VERMONT

AMY ALLEN

Afternoons are fleeting, their daylight
quickly replaced by brilliant oranges
and pinks spreading and easing
down into Champlain.

Soon a three quarter moon takes stage,
a spotlight on snow-covered hills
illuminating the journey as our car slips
through wood stove smoke suspended

above the pavement, like a phantom tollbooth.
A solitary cow stands
just outside a lopsided dairy barn seeping
its warm yellow light out into the night air.

Her saucer eyes are fixed out to where the sky
joins the lake. The stars always shine brightest
on the coldest of days,
a reward just for making it.

TOWARD THE PAST

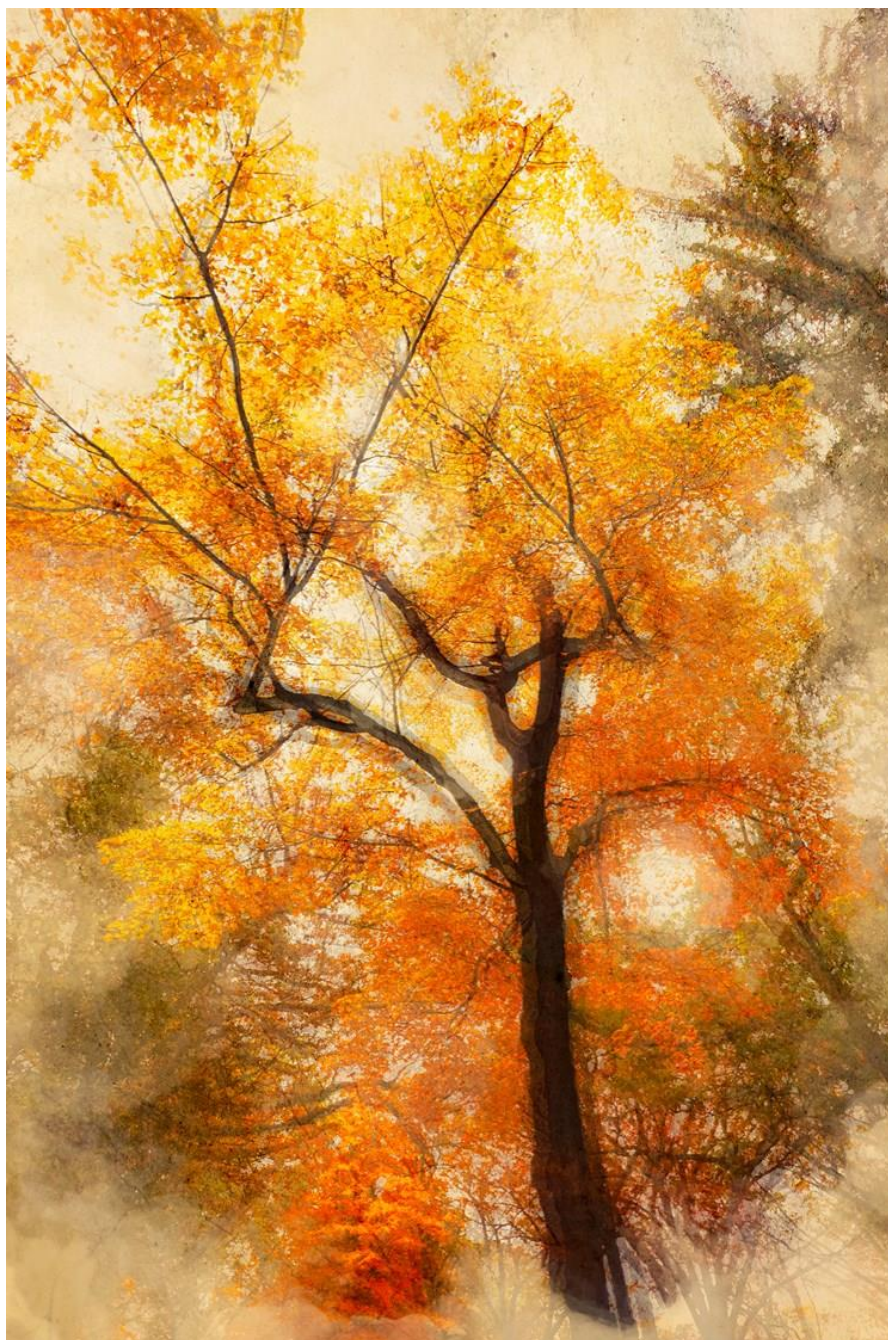
CATHERINE REEF

The past is a patch of light
viewed through black branches;
it is your mother
wiping her hands on her jeans
on a half-remembered day.
It is a scene briefly viewed
in a cloud of smoke—
a terrier runs toward you,
barks silently, and is gone.

Looking toward the past
means straining to see
through cataracts.
It means picking out details
as floaters fall and rise.
Images take shape
on fractured planes—
dead relatives seated at a table,
a sky with two remembered suns.

THE FOREST CONDUCTOR

JOHN LIGHTLE



WAYS OF LOOKING AT THE MOON

CATHERINE REEF

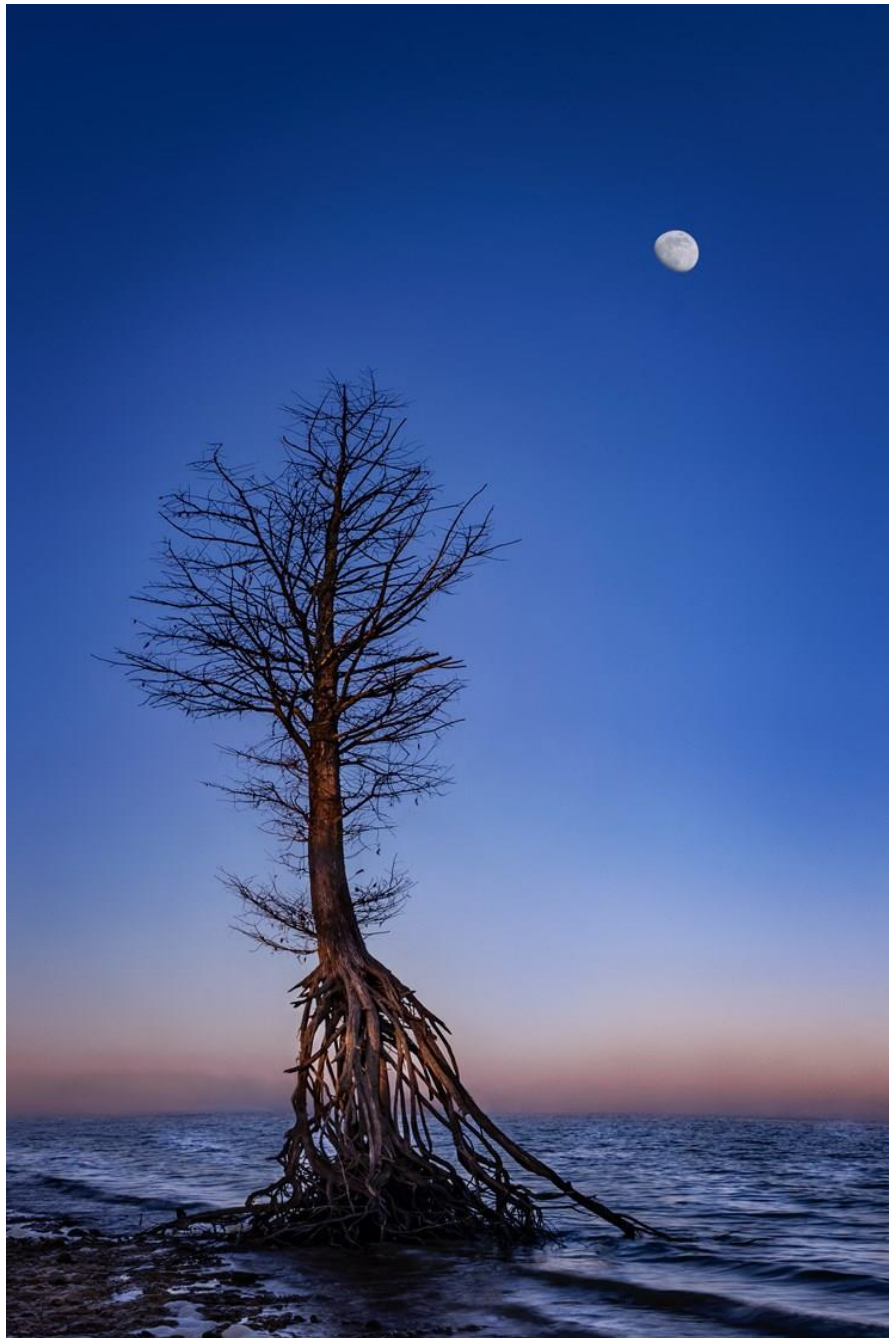
One of the last exhibitions we saw
featured photographs of the moon.
The moon as the blade of a circular saw,
burnished, the color of steel.
The moon as a bumpy gourd,
or as a desert land where
one can stand and look toward home.

One day toward the end you said
that I had enriched your life—
or something along that line.
I wish now that I had asked you to explain,
but we were on our way out,
and our talk moved on.

Now I cannot ask; I can only suppose,
just as I supposed then that there would be
more time. Now I get by on recycled hope.
At night I look to the sky
and see only flaws in the face of the moon.

WEATHERED AND GROUNDED

JOHN LIGHTLE



THE SUN AND THE MOON

WALTER WEINSCHENK

I was told, long ago,
That the very best way
To journey through life
Is to follow the sun
As it races along
Its ancient arc,
And so I did:
I followed the sun;
I ran as quickly as I could.

But I was not suited
For the running life;
I was simply afraid
Of what I might lose
If I stopped;
I know now that there
Was nothing to gain;
Despite the passage
Of so many years,
I stagger back
To the very spot
From which I came,
Disconsolate,
Weak and waning.

In the time that's left,
I will sit beneath
A maple tree
And never move;
I will stare through the gap
Between jagged branches
Into empty space
And watch the sun
Race overhead
In senseless circles
As the idiot moon
Runs after it.

Amy Allen studied English literature and creative writing at Skidmore College and at Drew University. She's participated in the Green Mountain Writers Conference and the Bread Loaf Writers' Conference in Sicily. Her work is published in Pine Row Press, Months to Years, Atlanta Review, Fauxmoir Literary Magazine, and Sunflowers at Midnight. She lives in Vermont where she owns All of the Write Words, a freelance writing/editing business.

Twitter: [@AmyAllenVT](https://twitter.com/AmyAllenVT)

Roger Camp is the author of three photography books including the award-winning *Butterflies in Flight*, Thames & Hudson, 2002 and *Heat*, Charta, Milano, 2008. His work has appeared in *The New England Review*, *Southwest Review*, *Chicago Review* and the *New York Quarterly*. His images are represented by the Robin Rice Gallery, NYC. More of his work may be seen at Luminous-Lint.com.

Daniel Finaldi was aware of a native talent and desire to make pictures at an early age. Finaldi's pull to be a creative lasted through his High School years and once in college the desire to dedicate his life to painting crystallized. The moment of clarity came to him during an art trip sponsored by the Community College Art Department. The itinerary was a weekend visit to the great museums in Manhattan. During a self-guided tour, Finaldi walked into the French painting wing and experienced an illumination of what his creative work would need to be. He realized in that museum that he was called to be a painter. The subsequent years of dedication to study painting brought Finaldi to an MFA in painting at Brooklyn College. In those years his mentor was Lois Dodd who became a lifelong friend. Finaldi continues to see himself as an evolving painter who is seeking to develop and proliferate more work.

Daniel Finaldi has exhibited regularly in the New York region and is represented by Denise Bibro Gallery. Finaldi is also a full-time art teacher at Freehold High School.

Dagne Forrest's poetry has appeared in journals in Canada, the US, Australia, and the UK. In 2021 she was one of 15 poets featured in The League of Canadian Poets' annual Poem in Your Pocket campaign, had a poem shortlisted for the UK's Bridport Prize, and won first prize in the Hammond House Publishing International Literary Prize (Poetry). Her creative nonfiction has appeared or is forthcoming in Lake Effect, Paper Dragon, and Sky Island Journal. Learn more at dagneforrest.com.

David A. Goodrum is a photographer and writer living in Corvallis, Oregon. His photos and poems are forthcoming or have been published in Ilanot Review, Willows Wept Review, Spillway, Star 82 Review, The Write Launch, New Plains Review, and other journals. Additional work (both poetry and photography) can be viewed at www.davidgoodrum.com.

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/goodrum>

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Instagram: www.instagram.com/goodrum/

Jeff Hyndman is a retired IT worker and currently works part-time as a dog walker with a local company, which is a great gig. He lives in an Atlanta suburb with his partner and spouse of forty years, Ellen, and their dog, Carmela and their cat, Daisy. They have two adult children who live nearby and two grandchildren, who are the best gifts, ever. He started writing essays recently and thus far two have been published in online literary magazines.

Rebecca L. Jensen is a writer from Coconut Creek, Florida. Her work has been published in Hobart, Parhelion Literary Magazine, Entropy, Pacifica Literary Review, and others. She was recently nominated for a Pushcart Prize and can be found online at www.rebeccajensen.com or on social media @rebeccajensen1

K. L. Johnston is a poet and photographer whose favorite subjects are whimsical, environmental and/or philosophical. She sees poetry and photography as natural companions in the arts with each discipline capturing viewpoints and revelations in time. Her poetry has appeared in literary journals and anthologies since the 1980s, and her photography appears in travel journals, galleries, and literary journals. You can see more of her work in her online gallery at 1-kathleen-johnston.pixels.com or on Facebook at "A Written World".

Virginia Laurie is a student at Washington and Lee University whose work has been published in Apricity, LandLocked, Panoply, Phantom Kangaroo and Merrimack Review.

John Lightle is a Texas writer and photographer spending many hours sitting on his woodpile contemplating. When away from his frame shop, he schleps his artwork among area artshows. The job takes him across the countryside, occasionally overseas, photographing the quiet resolve found within the golden hours.

Pete Mackey's poetry has been published in numerous venues, including in 2021 in Bangalore Review, Cathexis Northwest Press, Eclectica, The Dewdrop,

The Drabble, New Verse News, and Global Poemic; and as a winner or honoree in poetry contests by Panoplyzine and Third Wednesday, including a Pushcart Prize nominee. Poems are forthcoming in The Vincent Brothers Review, Farm-ish, and West Trade Review.

Facebook: [@pfmackey](#)

Twitter: [@macposter](#)

Jennifer Moglia Lucil is an outdoor education teacher with roots in Long Island and the New York region. As a writer, she enjoys sharing stories of working-class folks, and has been published in the T.J. Ecklesburg Review and [Alibi.com](#). Jennifer lives with her husband and twin teenage boys in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Oanh Nguyen was born in Vietnam and emigrated to the United States with her family in 1975. She is currently a part-time online student at the University of Pennsylvania, focusing on Creative Writing. She currently lives in the Philadelphia suburbs with her daughters and other animals.

Hari B Parisi's (formerly Hari Bhajan Khalsa) poems have been published in numerous journals and are forthcoming in New Plains Review, Minerva Rising, Wild Roof Journal and Peregrine Journal. She is the author of three volumes of poetry, most recently, *She Speaks to the Birds at Night While They Sleep*, winner of the 2020 Tebot Bach Clockwise Chapbook Contest. She lives in Los Angeles with her husband. Her website is [haribpoet.com](#).

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/haribpoet/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/haribparisi>

Don Pomerantz lives in New York City and Peekskill, NY where he is a retired software developer and educator. His poems have appeared in Washington Square, Consequence, Tar River, Eclectica, Conium Review, Kestrel, SAND, Adirondack Review and many other journals. His poetry collection, "The Moose of Felicity" is forthcoming.

Catherine Reef's poetry has appeared in several print and online journals. She is a poet and an award-winning author of biographies for young readers. Her most recent book is SARAH BERNHARDT: THE DIVINE AND DAZZLING LIFE OF THE WORLD'S FIRST SUPERSTAR (Clarion Books, 2020). A graduate of Washington State University, Catherine Reef lives and writes in Rochester, New York.

Jane Replogle has lived in Michigan all her life and works as a freelance copywriter. A graduate from Northern Michigan University, she enjoys many creative art forms, including writing fiction, creating poetry, making collages, and drawing portraits, as well as painting, photography, and sculpting. She's known that she wanted to write fiction since a young age, and more recently discovered her passion for poetry.

Tim Richards is the author of poetry, fiction, genealogy, and memoir. His poetry has appeared in Common Threads (Ohio Poetry Association), Hessler Street Fair Poetry Anthology, and his prose, poetry and photography have been published in Fredericksburg Literary and Art Review. Richards is an active speaker, reciting the spoken word in northeastern Ohio and has appeared as a featured speaker several times.

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