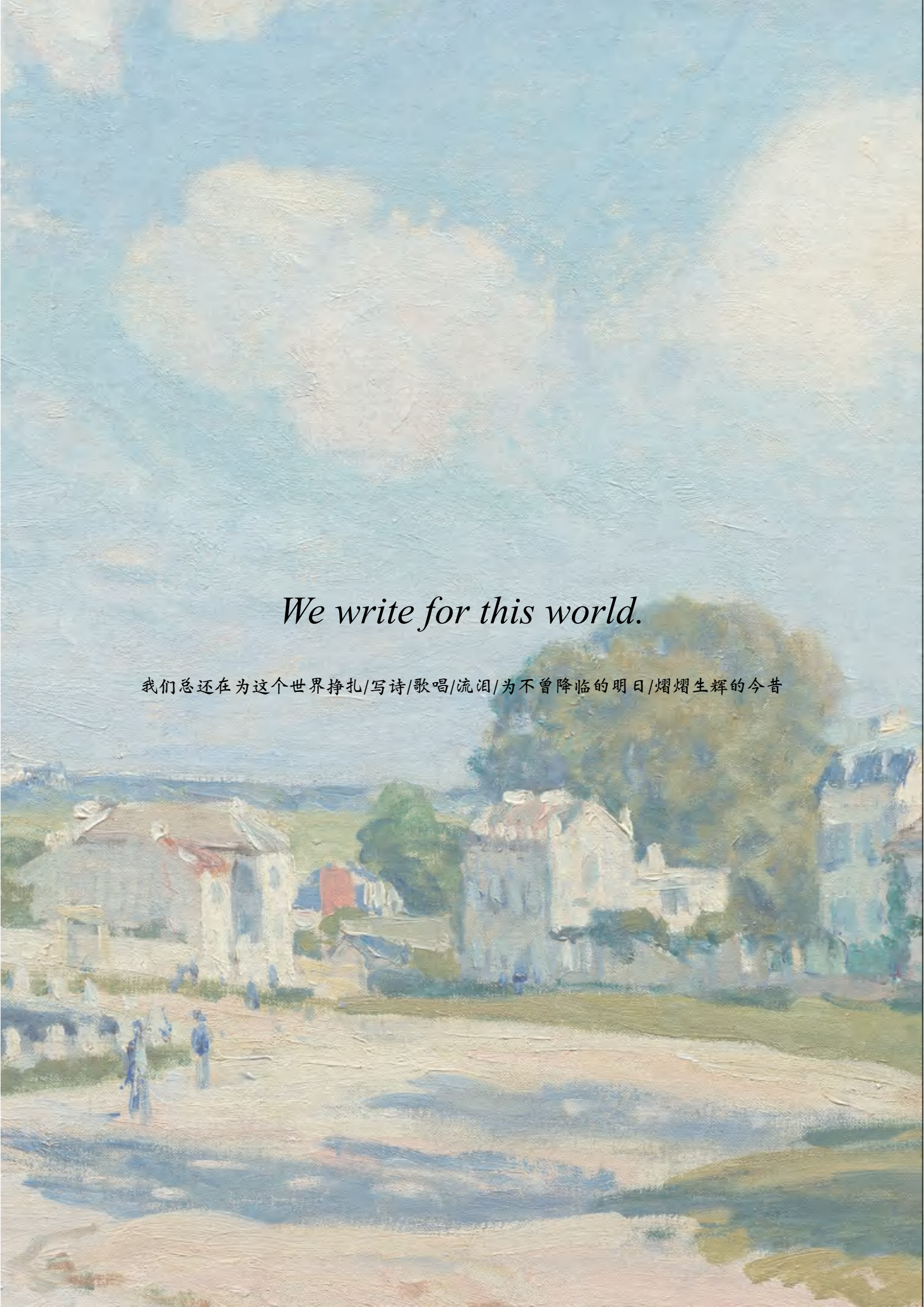




#ISSUE 7

**POETIC
SUN**

**EDITORS:
SHIYANG SU
JIANING RAN**

An impressionistic landscape painting featuring a large, textured sky in shades of blue and white. Below the sky, a village scene unfolds with several buildings, including a prominent white structure with a red roof. A large, dense green tree stands to the right. In the foreground, a sandy or dirt area is visible with a few small figures of people. The overall style is soft and painterly, with visible brushstrokes and a focus on light and color.

We write for this world.

我们总还在为这个世界挣扎/写诗/歌唱/流泪/为不曾降临的明日/熠熠生辉的今昔

Contributors

Ajanta Paul

Amanda Labriola

Arthur Samuel Papa

C. T. Holte

Cheryl Caesar

Dale Cottingham

Esme Chen

Jianing Ran

John Tustin

Joseph Kerschbaum

Kelly Sargent

Lorelei Kay

Martina Reisz Newberry

Megan Kirkpatrick

RC deWinter

Robert Beveridge

Shiyang Su



Logbook

I bend down to tie
the shoelaces of time
as it prepares to slip away

through mists of millennia,
and gyres of galactic years,
past destinations that become mere stations,

trailing its shadow under the lamplight
of your eyes, and the twinkling tail lights
of receding relationships on rainy nights.

It will return to haunt me
like recalcitrant thoughts which
pull into platforms of pain

in the ritual of departures and arrivals,
picking up speed like the hollow laughter
of quick turning wheels,

the raspy, rustling strain
that follows me everywhere
like a sobbing refrain.

The heart maintains no logbook
of comings and goings
just as the beating shore cannot record

the ebb and flow of the tide
save in the debris left behind,
a testimony to all that died.

Disposal

The empty rocking chair
Silent and still, the desk, bare.

The reading glasses, neatly folded
And kept away.

Personal effects culled
and duly distributed

Amongst friends and relatives
and willed legatees.

Corners cleaned, dreams dispersed
Dust wiped and the rooms aired.

The books that used to be scattered
On the bed, sofa, chairs and floor

Are in stacks, to be donated
To various local libraries.

The paraphernalia of a lifetime,
Collected over years, finally cleared.

The letters, written on the pages of life,
No longer flutter with urgent news,

But are a faded transcript
Of the past, or are lost in transit.

If life is mainly about gathering
Is death only about disposal?

— Ajanta Paul

Bio :

Dr. Ajanta Paul is a poet, short story writer and literary critic from Kolkata, India who has been in academia for the past 30 years. She has published in literary journals including *Spadina Literary Review*, *The Pangolin Review*, *Poetic Sun*, *The Piker Press*, *The Punch Magazine*, *Harbinger Asylum*, *Innerchild Press International*, *The Bombay Review* and *The Statesman*. She was nominated for the Pushcart Prize in 2020. Ajanta has published a collection of short stories - *The Elixir Maker and Other Stories* in 2019 (Authorspress, New Delhi) and a book of poetic plays *The Journey Eternal* (Salesian College Publication, Siliguri, 2013) and has contributed poems to several seminal anthologies of poetry.

“Vacancy”

Like a constellation
of dust that lingers
in a ribbon of sunlight spilling
through hazy windows, fractured
by the panes,
the city dizzies.

Sounds are thinner here -
by 6 a.m. every sidewalk is gilded.
The smell of chaos and coffee floods
through our apartment walls as you pour

your own cup and watch the eddying cream,
the soft undertow of white
in a blackness.

Here, there is rhythm –
the rhapsodic concrete, the monosyllabic
speech of taxis and brokers,
the exhaust that seeps
from everything.

Crowds stand in subway lines, pickpocketed
and porous. We, like them, maneuver through
prisms and live by street lights.
We find our own linearity
to be finite.

There are more goodbyes here
and we slink
like the sun
through peaked days
and harlequin nights.
We come and go like tides
on separate shores, contained
by the same waters.

You puzzle over the last
of Sunday’s crossword; you empty
into the boxes –
Three down, seven letters –

“an unoccupied space.”

Silence answers for the both of us.
We weren't always here.

We left those porcelain skies
lacquered in the lavender of maternal mornings -
skies never scraped. There, the sun
would yo-yo on a string tied
to God's finger.

Something else commands here -
the night's complexion has lost
its star-freckled cheeks.
The days are viscous, the air
is always marbled.

Here is vacancy.
Still, too overcrowded
to let anything grow.

— Amanda Labriola

Bio :

Amanda Labriola hails from the quaint town of Kingston on the south shore of Massachusetts and currently resides in Boston. She received her Master's in English in 2019 from Boston College, where she now teaches First-Year Writing. While within the classroom walls she stands as teacher, it is from the seat of a perennial student of the world's wisdoms, simple or profound, that her clumsy pen scribbles.

Broken Promise (a Rewrite of Langston Hughes' 'A Dream Deferred')

What happens to a broken promise?

Does it sting

like a bee?

or creates a wound

and leaves a scar

does it die in the heart

or grow as a seed

Maybe it just lives

Like a ghost

Or it creates strangers?

— Arthur Samuel Papa

Bio :

Writing under the pseudonym “Dada Seidu”, Arthur Samuel Papa is a Ghanaian poet and undergraduate studying English and education at the University of Cape Coast, Ghana. He believes in the use of poetry as an instrument for entertaining, educating and correcting societal errors. He has published in journals such as Kalahari Review. His works can be found on hello poetry as well as on his personal blog for poetry www.samsther.blogspot.com . you can connect with him via his twitter handle @dada_seidu.

Passwords

In the beginning, there was “Open Sesame.”
Suitable for kids and grownups alike,
this one worked for Ali Baba, and later
for innumerable forts and clubhouses.

Not for speakeasys, though;
thus “Joe sent me,” or maybe
Charlie, or Guido; or maybe code:
one knock, then two, then one.

The repertoire for access control
remained simple, yet sufficient in most cases
to get *you* in, keep *them* out.
And then credit cards, ATMs, the Internet:

PINs and passwords abounding.
Simple enough, but easy to hack.
As many discovered to their loss,
unwants, like Ali Baba, still got in.

The rules become increasingly fussy:
today’s requirement: 9 to 29 characters,
at least two capital letters, three numbers,
two symbols, and your college GPA.”

I now carry my notebook of passwords at all times.
Many sites have a remedy for forgotten passwords,
but there is no “Click here if you have no idea
where you left your ****ing notebook.”

I pray that biometrics
will take over soon,
as I have never yet lost track
of my fingerprints or eyeballs.

— C. T. Holte

Bio:

C. T. Holte grew up without color TV; played along creeks and in cornfields; went to lots of school; and has had gigs as teacher, editor, and less wordy things. He recently migrated to New Mexico; and got a cool electric chainsaw for Christmas. His poetry has been published in Words, Touch, California Quarterly, Months to Years, Pensive, The Daily Drunk, and elsewhere, and has been hung from trees to celebrate the Rio Grande Bosque.



Carnival at Veterans' Park, Ann Arbor, May 1961

The ballerina lights
on her partner's shoulder.
A butterfly. Her arms lift
like the flexing of wings.

Despite the pose and the tutu,
my father and I are nothing like that.

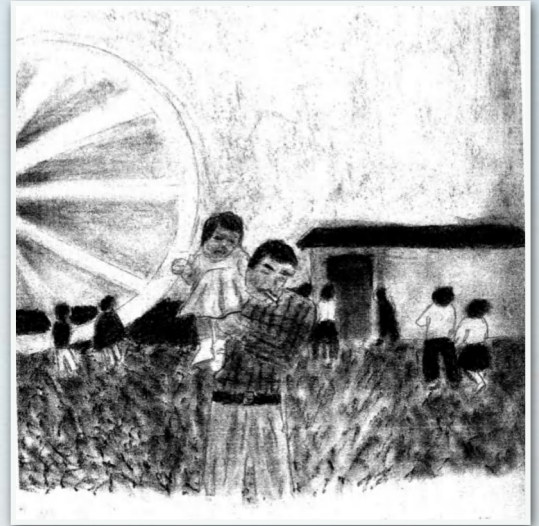
My two-year-old arms lift
like a saguaro with fists.
My father grips my thigh
to his shoulder.

My face is screwed up
like a fist -- laughing, I believe.
His is clenched against his smoke,
turned away so as not to scorch my skirts.
But he might have been smiling too.

I think he was proud
to offer this treat to his family,
although I never really cared
for forced vertigo. This shoulder perch
was better than any Ferris wheel
or Tilt-a-Whirl.

All I ever wanted to ask of him
was to give up the cigarettes.
I never could. It seemed as though
they were all that he had.

Within a few years I would disappear
from family pictures, insufficiently
photogenic. My mother would play
ballerina for the lens. But I'm thankful
to have this snapshot. Look closely.
Lend me your eyes.
Wouldn't you say we were happy?



— Cheryl Caesar

Bio:

Cheryl Caesar lived in Paris, Tuscany and Sligo for 25 years; she earned her doctorate in comparative literature at the Sorbonne. She teaches writing at Michigan State University. She publishes poetry worldwide and gives readings locally. Her chapbook of protest poetry *Flatman* is available from Amazon. Some of her COVID-era poems appear in *Rejoice Everyone! Reo Town Reading Anthology*, and the *Social Gap Experiment*, also available from Amazon. An upcoming anthology, *Words Across the Water*, features her poems and recent artwork.



An Earthly Time

2.

Outside a lone tree leans permanently north
shaped by relentless north winds.
Having borne drought and sun,
its leaves a harsher green, yet rising
with every intention of being.
I am glad to have a job and friends
who give me context for being
as the day extends everywhere offering purpose.
I hear many things, some said to me,
I think about, sometimes brood over.
The day comes on with more heat.
Old cars rest in tall grass, trucks pass on the Interstate.
What is said is what is revealed.
What is left unsaid is silence.
It is close and far away.

4.

I have a need for intimacy even among
the waving grass and leaning trees
as the sun tries its move on the horizon.
Yep, the hard parts remain:
the backroom still needs a coat of paint,
my clothes look a year older,
which they are and out of vogue.
I find your glasses an excuse
to dive over, and don't want to leave.
Look at the coming night, so full of promise.
We can sleep together again,
let lose our hearts without blemish or shame.

Predawn darkness now prevails.
Eyes closed but my reason niggles
my memories, feelings, what occupies it now.
I am glad I stayed with you tonight
for it gives solace against my loneliness,
all our whispers and play among the sheets that come
with closeness, although it endures like lostness on a broad plain.

— Dale Cottingham

Bio:

Dale Cottingham is of mixed race, part Choctaw, part White. Cottingham is a Breadloafer, won the 2019 New Millennium Award for Poem of the Year and am a finalist in the 2021 Great Midwest Poetry Contest.



伤口

一道血肉分离
张开的口子
只是掌心纹路里略显平直的一条
狭窄得
看不出痕迹
----一道横贯的破折号。

肉色手掌里
蓄满的冷汗
可以浇铸出一整个秋天的沉郁
要泡烂、漫出水来
像涨潮时的海岸

潮涨了
我的手颤起来
潮退了
我的掌心干燥、完好无损
像从没有过任何伤口一样清白。

— Esme Chen

Bio:

Esme Chen is an 16 years old international student who currently studies in Vancouver, Canada. She enjoys reading and writing different things. The only sport she likes is horse riding.

EXACTLY LIKE THAT

The sun comes in and finds her spot on the carpet
To warm.

The cat comes and cavorts there,
Grinning like cats do
When they feel like kittens
For a moment.

I smell the bacon frying in the kitchen,
Taste the first sip of coffee
And open the Sunday newspaper,
Sitting in a warm lovely open space
Not worrying for a moment
About tomorrow.

I close my eyes
And see you sleeping,
Eyes shut tight,
Hair splayed across the pillow
In thousands of open strands.
I see you emerging from my dreams,
Touching my cheek and kissing me slowly,
Standing on your toes.

I open my eyes and see the branches sway,
Snow glistening on every limb
Out beyond my reach.
The wind whispers lovely inanities,
The room grows brighter as I sigh
And my body shivers
At the thought you may be sitting at your table
And thinking of me.

It sounds like music,
It feels like spectacular hands touching my stomach,
It looks like the sun coming in,
It feels like the heat coming up to meet the chill,
It tastes like your hot soft tongue
Melting in my mouth –

That is what it's like
Just thinking about you.
It's
Exactly like that.
Every
Single
Time.

— John Tustin

Bio :

John Tustin's poetry has appeared in many disparate literary journals since 2009. fritzware.com/johntustinpoetry contains links to his published poetry online.



YEARS TO BURN

Shadows bleed
over every frozen thing

in the elongated evenings
of muted winter days

with the dull shine of tarnished silver
when my circadian rhythms

run ragged & I can't sleep
in all this darkness.

I take sunlight
(& countless other things)

for granted
as if it will always be

here exposing
the casual carelessness

that lingers like dust bunnies
in empty corners

where I don't remember
the piece of missing

furniture that made those
indentions in the carpet.

Today is not a punchline
or a finish line

as I drag my cold bones
like a burlap sack of clocks

across the border of April.
Gaining an extra minute

of daylight each day
doesn't replenish

a dwindling hourglass
with freshly found time

in our zero
sum game

of exchanging light
at either end of the day.

This year
will be better

I say every year
when spring returns

as if I have years
to burn

& endless people
to neglect.

— Joseph Kerschbaum

Bio :

Joseph Kerschbaum's most recent publications include *Mirror Box* (Main St Rag Press, 2020) and *Distant Shore of a Split Second* (Louisiana Literature Press, 2018). Joseph has been awarded grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Indiana Arts Commission. His work has appeared in journals such as *Poetry Distillery*, *Hamilton Stone Review*, *Panoply*, *Flying Island*, *Ponder Review*, *Main St. Rag*, and *The Delinquent*. Joseph lives in Bloomington, Indiana with his family.

Seeing Voices

My twin sister used to shut her eyes
to shut me up when we argued.
Born deaf, she held the advantage in any girlhood fight.
I had no choice but to be instantly
muted.
Her almond-shaped eyelids —
 a remote control when static sounded like me.

I would steady my hands in a signed
first-word-of-a-sentence,
poised to whip the air in a justified retort.
Hands tired in one position though —
 a pouting pinkie dangling from my palm.

If I caught her squinting one eye, I signed swiftly to get a word in,
until
nut-brown eyelashes cemented once more,
silencing my voice,
sheathing my words without permission.

Tap, tap, tapping her shoulders ...

Listen to me.

Tap, tap, tap ...

I have something to say ...

I'm sorry. I was wrong.

*You'll never know if you don't open your eyes
and hear me.*

I'd reach out

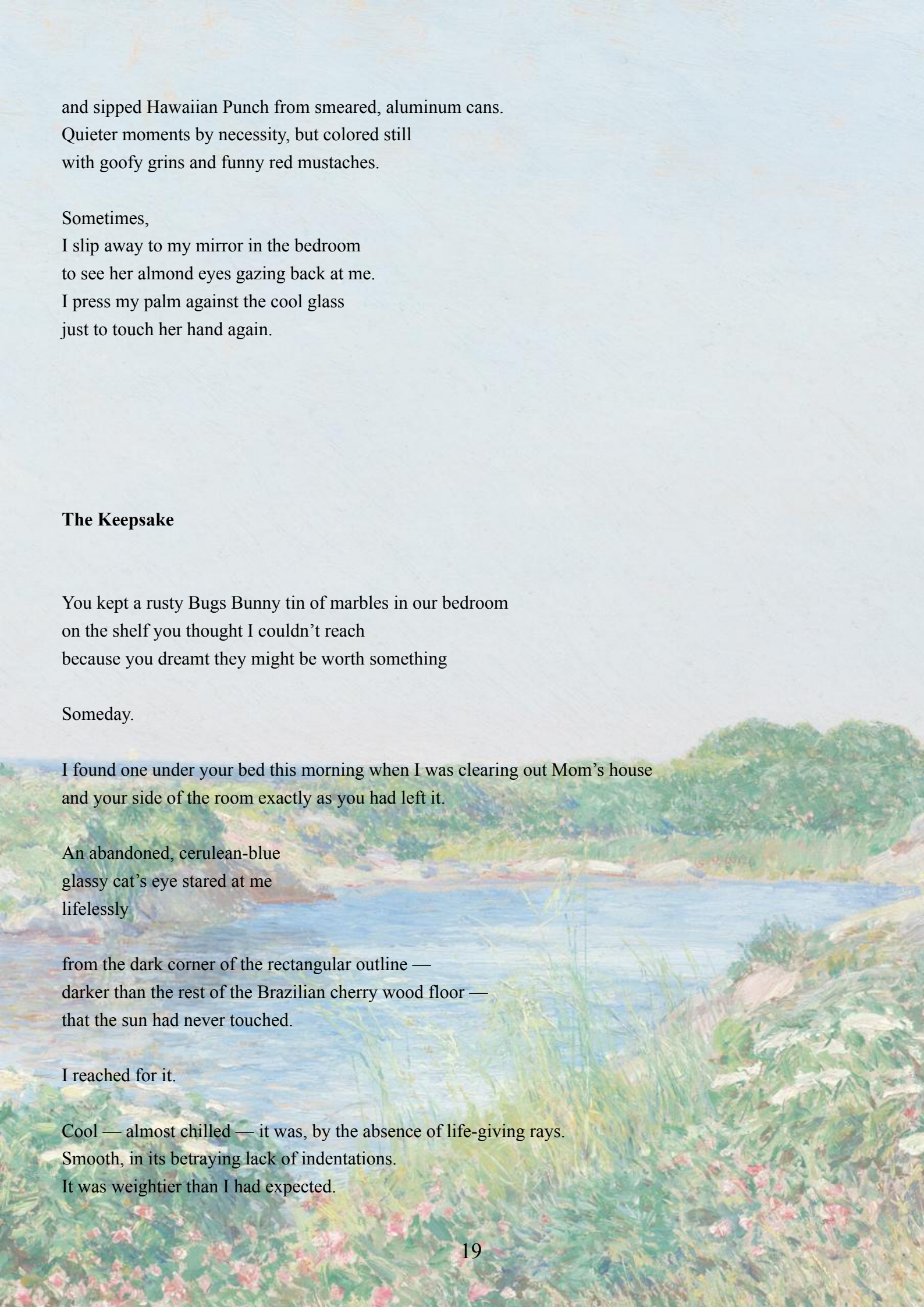
to touch her hand.

I can't shout if I'm holding yours.

Truce?

I miss her most on cloudy days.

I recall those rainy afternoons when we finger painted
under the kitchen fluorescent bulb



and sipped Hawaiian Punch from smeared, aluminum cans.
Quieter moments by necessity, but colored still
with goofy grins and funny red mustaches.

Sometimes,
I slip away to my mirror in the bedroom
to see her almond eyes gazing back at me.
I press my palm against the cool glass
just to touch her hand again.

The Keepsake

You kept a rusty Bugs Bunny tin of marbles in our bedroom
on the shelf you thought I couldn't reach
because you dreamt they might be worth something

Someday.

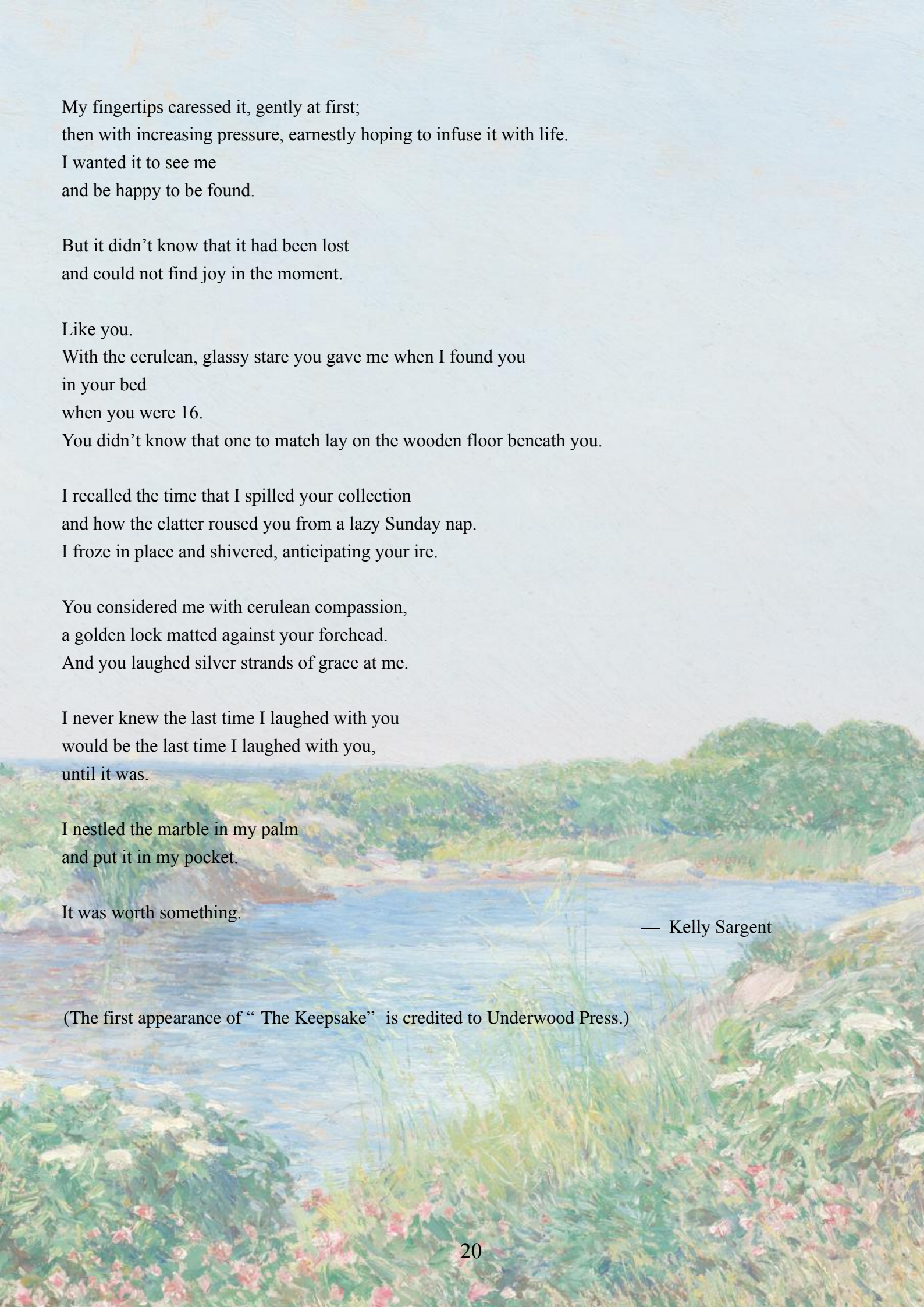
I found one under your bed this morning when I was clearing out Mom's house
and your side of the room exactly as you had left it.

An abandoned, cerulean-blue
glassy cat's eye stared at me
lifelessly

from the dark corner of the rectangular outline —
darker than the rest of the Brazilian cherry wood floor —
that the sun had never touched.

I reached for it.

Cool — almost chilled — it was, by the absence of life-giving rays.
Smooth, in its betraying lack of indentations.
It was weightier than I had expected.



My fingertips caressed it, gently at first;
then with increasing pressure, earnestly hoping to infuse it with life.
I wanted it to see me
and be happy to be found.

But it didn't know that it had been lost
and could not find joy in the moment.

Like you.
With the cerulean, glassy stare you gave me when I found you
in your bed
when you were 16.
You didn't know that one to match lay on the wooden floor beneath you.

I recalled the time that I spilled your collection
and how the clatter roused you from a lazy Sunday nap.
I froze in place and shivered, anticipating your ire.

You considered me with cerulean compassion,
a golden lock matted against your forehead.
And you laughed silver strands of grace at me.

I never knew the last time I laughed with you
would be the last time I laughed with you,
until it was.

I nestled the marble in my palm
and put it in my pocket.

It was worth something.

— Kelly Sargent

(The first appearance of "The Keepsake" is credited to Underwood Press.)

Bio:

Born and adopted in Luxembourg, Kelly Sargent grew up with a deaf twin sister in Europe and the United States. Her articles, essays, artwork, and poetry have been published in numerous magazines, including *Green Mountains Review*, *Twins*, and *Reunions*. Fluent in ASL, she has worked as an interpreter and wrote for *SIGNews*, a national newspaper for the Deaf. Her most recent 2021 poems will appear in *The Purpled Nail* (Underwood Press), *Wingless Dreamer*, *Stone Poetry Journal*, *eucalyptus & rose*, and *Poetic Sun*. *Modern Haiku* and *Kingfisher Journal* will feature haiku. Her artwork in 2021, including a current *Best of the Net* nominee, was featured in the U.S. and abroad in publications such as *Awakened Voices*, *The Bookends Review*, *Prometheus Dreaming*, *Sheepshead Review*, and *Beyond Words*. She has acted as Creative Nonfiction Editor for a literary journal, and currently volunteers as a bi-annual reviewer for an organization dedicated to showcasing works by sexual violence survivors.



KICKING THE LIMB FANTASTIC

Burnt ebony lass downside turned up
your hips springing skyward and free
from forest's rich dark sandy loam
Both slender legs tightly encased
in fishnet mesh stockings like coal
piercing white clouds sailing by

Kicking High

Heels over head defying all rules
flouting your nude solo show
midst spangled dry leaves dappled hills

Inky black toes stretch dancers pose
by backdrop of green-fingered ferns
while grass grows and cool breezes sigh

Kicking High

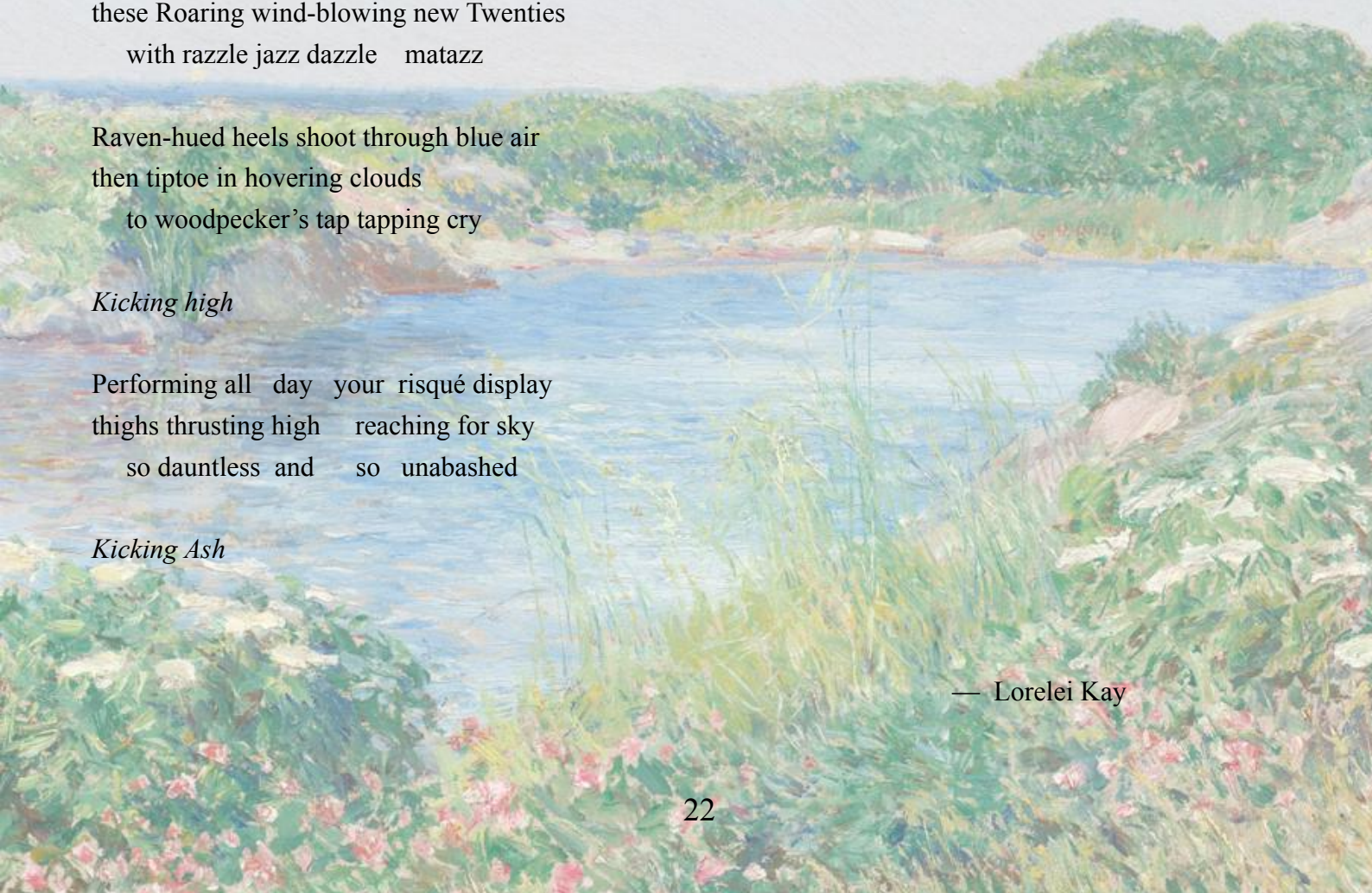
Creative distinctive your dance
these Roaring wind-blowing new Twenties
with razzle jazz dazzle matazz

Raven-hued heels shoot through blue air
then tiptoe in hovering clouds
to woodpecker's tap tapping cry

Kicking high

Performing all day your risqué display
thighs thrusting high reaching for sky
so dauntless and so unabashed

Kicking Ash



— Lorelei Kay

Bio:

Lorelei Kay is the author of a three-time award-winning memoir, *From Mormon to Mermaid—a Woman’s Voyage from Oppression to Freedom*, (Dog Ear Publishing, 2016), available on Amazon.

Lorelei became hooked on poetry when her dad sat her down and helped her write her first poem. She later attended Brigham Young University on a journalism scholarship.

Her poems have appeared in anthologies, online publications, and magazines.

Lorelei has served on the Blue Ribbon Judging Panel for Scholastic Arts and Writing Awards, as a mentor on the Dorothy C. Blakely Memoir Project, and on the board of the High Desert Branch of The California Writers Club.



THE PLEASURE OF EARLY WALKS

I know nothing about hay bales or barns
or mules or mountains—blue and beautiful—

on a spring day in, say, West Virginia.
It is said that there is a peaceful hum

in the constant work of such plain places—
that may be true. Contrasted with cities

I've lived in, it sounds right. What I do know
is the dauntless pleasure of early walks

to downtown, seeing the new-washed sidewalks
flood with soap bubbles, doors being unlocked

with keys older than the building recalls.
I know the peculiar happiness

of umbrella-ed tables being set out
in front of sandwich shops, the smiles pasted

on the backs of their chairs as I walk by.
I know the charms of women carrying

high heels in their tote bags, waving goodbye
to buses at 7:30 a.m.,
envisioning their 10 o'clock coffee
and almond croissant. I know there is some

heroism in a man's tired briefcase,
in the almost-frayed collar of his blue

dress shirt. There is a kind of peace here, too.
Concrete and glass hum their own work tunes, men

and women bow to gods they can't fathom,
break sweat, hold secrets working people share.

AN UNDERSTANDING

The soft curve of 6 a.m., like a road leading
to—what?—to the greetings and goodbyes ahead...
I know the dark and coarse minutes of this world:

the vapors of of murder, of mendacity,
the deep oceans of betrayal and grief,
the essential oils of evil.

Morning stays as long as it can.
It understands that, once gone,
I'll be making my way in the dark.

— Martina Reisz Newberry

Bio :

Martina Reisz Newberry's newest collection, **BLUES FOR FRENCH ROAST WITH CHICORY** is available from Deerbrook Editions. She is the author of six books. Her work has been widely published in magazines and journals in the U.S. and abroad. She lives in Los Angeles with her husband, Brian, a Media Creative.

It's almost the middle of the afternoon.

I still have

So much to do

So much to do.

I'm trying to count

The number of days it's been

Since I told you I loved you

But I can't.

Count, I mean.

No one seems to know

How to cram 4 years of living

Into seventeen months,

But if anyone can shove

3 beach vacations and

2 road trips into

1 summer,

It would be us.

Us.

I say it louder now.

I don't know how much longer I'll be able to.

Say it, I mean.

I mean this week

The future chasing me

Doubled in speed.

Maybe that's why

I can't breathe.

It's almost the middle of the afternoon.

Pretty soon

Summer evenings will come and go

And so will I.

The day will be new again.

Surely All This Wanting Will Eventually Lead to Eternity.

I want to wake up in the morning and forget entirely to base the countenance of my day on whether or not the sun is shining. I want to drink a gallon of water before my feet hit the floor and thank God profusely for the mulligan. I want to shine in neon lights that spell out ‘the bane of the devil’s existence.’ I want to dawn a cotton dress and dance barefoot in the vegetable garden while someone reads me e.e. Cummings aloud. Do you suppose angels do that; read poems to their protectees upon request? If they did, I suppose, it would be for my enjoyment only. I don’t doubt that their voices are so dripping with ballet-delicate enjambment and screaming house fires all melted into one beautiful candle of a melody that they require no stanzas of mortal musings to feel the heavy weight of beauty. Anyways, as the evening chills, I will dress myself in metaphors and my brother’s sweatshirt. I’ll eat green tea ice cream under the moon as the front porch transforms into a chapel, fall asleep on the concrete front steps as the choir comes in carrying the chorus. I’ll spill ice cream all over the sweatshirt and scream “THAT’S WHERE THE METAPHOR COMES IN, SEE?” Nothing perfect, or good even, lasts a second longer than I can hold my breath and consequently my imagination, but it’s nice... it’s nice to think that potential is half the battle. And surely, my wanting is never wasted.



Para la Mar

And she hugged every inch of my skin
All at once
Like even the air can never do—
Holding my head
Above the greedy surface—
Holding history
Capitalism doesn't deserve to see.

I'm not fluent enough
To be poetic in Spanish
Without my syntax seeming a mistake,
But still I only call her la mar
In a nod to her glory,
And to Hemingway.

When I grow up I want to be
Just like her,
Deep and wise
And attached to the moon
By a rope and pulley.

If I live long enough,
Maybe I can grow up
To hold her back when
She's the one drowning,
When I'm the one holding
Her history
That capitalism doesn't deserve.

— Megan Kirkpatrick

Bio:

Megan Kirkpatrick is a poet, traveller, and entrepreneur at heart residing in the northeastern United States with her lovely family and her two typewriters. For the past three years, poetry has been her time capsule, therapy, and weapon of choice. Her debut poetry collection *Proem* released in July 2021, and is her heart and soul on full display— as are all of her written works.



the plague of winter in the winter of plague

waking up with a start i pull aside
the curtain to assess the day
purselipped trees lean away
in the gloom of winter dawn
bare branches rubbing an ominous
oratorio in the key of way too early

i'd like to burrow back down into
the tunnel of sleep but my mind
is an uncooperative traitor
so sighing i throw off the quilts
and rise goosefleshed unrestored
and stumble downstairs to find

the coffeemaker sulking on the counter
is no happier than i to be called to
consciousness at such an hour
ignoring its indignation i fill it up flip it on
and pad off to donate the liquid waste
of dreams to the always thirsty toilet

somewhere on this dying planet the sun
is shining and in other places the dying
cough and the dead who were loved are
carried off to graves yet i with nothing
to offer but the disconnected thoughts
of a brokenhearted recluse breathe easy

but whoever said life was fair
so i refill my life with caffeine and
pretending i have something important
to do set about trying to figure out
what that might be until it's dark enough
to be horizontal without guilt

a piece of you

when i walk the damp sand where the sea kisses the shore
trying not to add my own salt to the cold green water
i see you in every wavelet washing over
my feet

when i get home and throw myself into a lawn chair
light up inhale exhale and stare up at the dappled sky
your smile floats in the smoke soaring on
the breeze

when i stand in the kitchen throwing dinner together
instead of letting things pile up to be washed later
i clean up as i go and there you are in the corner by the
fridge nodding

when i'm in the shower trying not to add my tears to
the gush of hot water washing the dust of the day
down the drain i close my eyes and hear you
singing handel

when at last i bury myself in that narrow lonely bed
trying to approximate the warmth of your arms
encircling me i drift off to that empty place called
sleep and

there you are whispering oh you're going to like me
as i dissolve into a cloud of memories sweeter than
any dream how is it everywhere i go i pick up a piece
of you

first night

the new decade swallows the old. the moon rises in a sky bruised
with ragged clouds. the leftovers of ungranted wishes blotting
the possibility of stars. it's been an odd winter, stained with sleet and mud.
i imagine somewhere up north snowmakers are working overtime.

the silence of my misshapen life lies on my chest heavy as a gravestone.
i go upstairs early, where i'll sleep under quilts ragged as these clouds.
dream of planes flying somewhere warm where smiling wage slaves deliver drinks
garnished with lime and flowers to those lucky enough to escape this purgatory.

i pull off layers of three day old clothing. shrug myself into a hooded nightgown.
glad there's no mirror to throw back a reflection of what i've become.
a face as hollow as my heart is nothing i want to confront on this night haunted with
elaborate memories of what should be. isn't. never will.

i bury myself in the bedding but the scent of old dreams rises up from dead skin
clinging to the sheets. i get up and crack the skylight.
sorrow drifts in through the open window. i breathe its dark perfume.
trying to remember how it was to be courageous.

— RC deWinter

Bio:

RC deWinter's poetry is widely anthologized, notably in *New York City Haiku* (NYTimes, 2/2017), *Winter Anthology: Healing Felines and Femmes* (OtherWorldly Women Press, 12/2020), *Now We Heal: An Anthology of Hope* (Wellworth Publishing, 12/2020) in print: *2River*, *Event*, *Gargoyle Magazine*, *Meat For Tea*: *The Valley Review*, *the minnesota review*, *Night Picnic Journal*, *Plainsongs*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Southword*, *The Ogham Stone*, *Twelve Mile Review*, *York Literary Review* among many others and appears in numerous online literary journals.

ATAXIA

The butterflies flit through
the forest, alight on trees,
sample the moss that doesn't
just grow on the north side.

A tree kissed by a butterfly
is still a tree; a portal caressed
by the hand of a mystic is
if anything a wider portal.

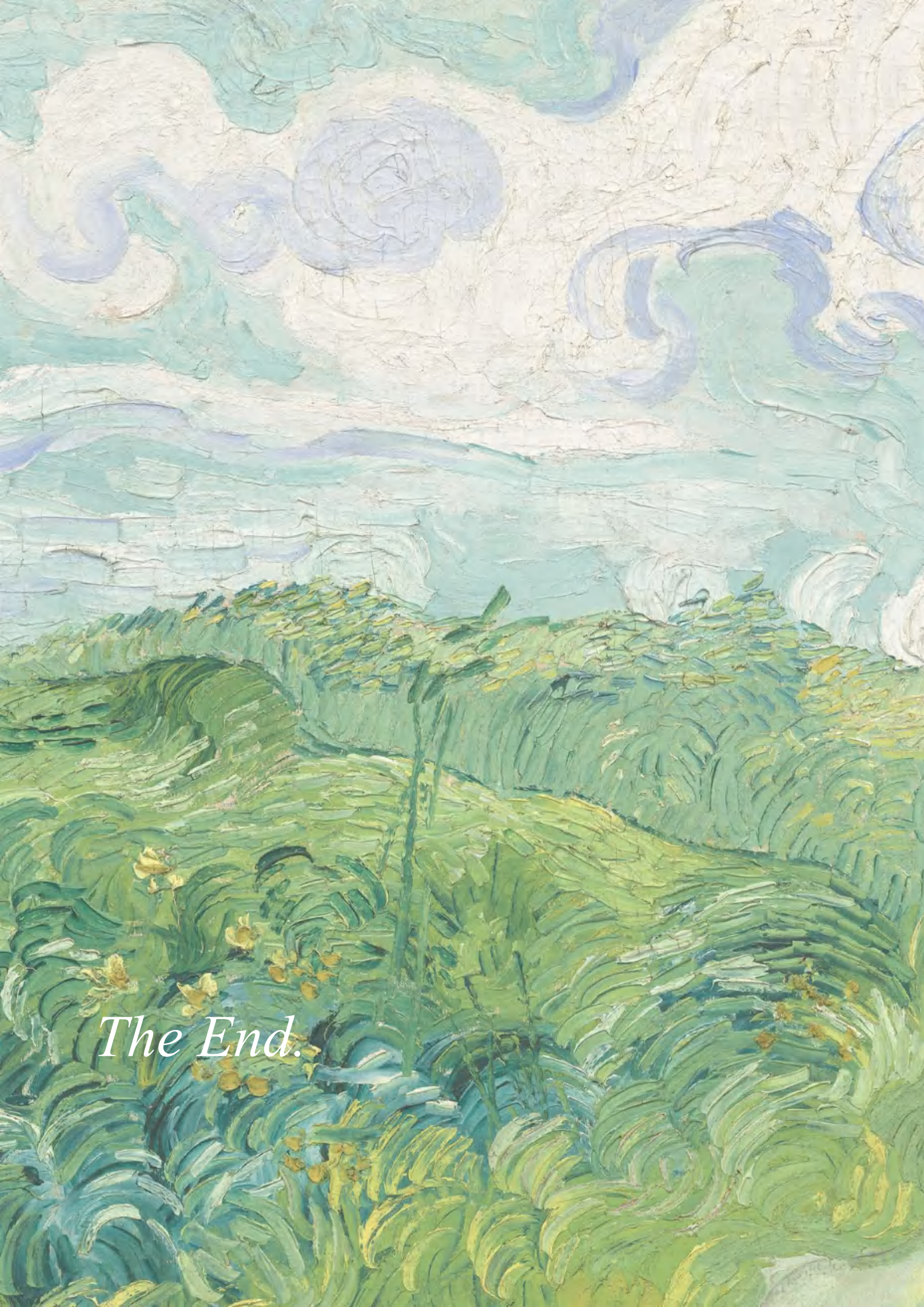
*Obscuritas nemoris, obscuritas
in abyssis*, and do you ever
wonder if those butterflies
are shaking rather than flitting?

We walk to the edge, as close
as we can. Kiss them goodbye.
We watch them walk away. We
remember. We dream. We forget.

— Robert Beveridge

Bio :

Robert Beveridge (he/him) makes noise (xterminal.bandcamp.com) and writes poetry in Akron, OH. Recent/upcoming appearances in Panoply, Sage Cigarettes, and Neuro Logical, among others.



The End.