

Everscribe

M a g a z i n e

ISSUE NO. 10

MANUS AETERNUM

Embrace the art of the written word in Everscribe's milestone tenth issue, showcasing incredible works from our talented writers.

everscribemag.com



Table of Contents

Editor’s Note	iii
Scribe’s Corner	1
Fictional Short Story	2
Alexei Raymond The Nutcracker's Charge	3
Zary Fekete Ruth	5
Louisa Prince Broken Vows	8
Regina 'Rina' Keough To be her son	11
Jeff Kennedy Chaos Theory	12
Poetry	13
Stephanie Holden Bird Song	14
Randi Neville Narcissus	15
Malcolm North TO THE GODDESS WHOSE NAME IS LOST	17
Jer Hayes Give me the heart of Van Gogh	18
Ágnes Cserháti LOVE’S ELEGY FOR THE CINNAMON FERN	19
Oliaku Wisdom Ikechukwu Serpentine Transfiguration	20
Arvilla Fee The Crack	21
	Spent Summers 22
Aqsa Qaddus Fleeting Moment of Reckoning	23
Wilmot Railey Colored	24
Alan Hardy WORDS	25
	COPY 26
JB Wocoski Burning Bridges	27
Monoreena Acharjee Majumdar Trigger	28

About Everscribe

Everscribe is a non-profit digital literary magazine dedicated to showcasing exceptional writing and talent. We invite individuals from all backgrounds, experiences, and ages to share their work with us.

Our primary goal is to showcase writing that is impactful, beautifully crafted, and thought-provoking — stories, poems, and essays that leave a lasting impression! We want to break down barriers and provide opportunities for all writers to showcase their talent and creativity, as we believe that talent should speak for itself. Everscribe aims to be a launching pad for those who have longed to share their stories but felt limited by traditional publishing routes. Our submissions are always open, and our process is free, easy, and unlimited!



everscribemag.com


Table of Contents


Isaiah Alexander	burning men	29
	year twenty-five	30
Elizabeth Barton	Buck Rock	31
Simon Collinson	The Fates	32
	Tin Town	34
Christina Chin	Spring Fields	36
Christina Chin & Uchechukwu Onyedikam	The Sunken Soul	37
Regina 'Rina' Keough	Prepared?	38
Acknowledgements		iv
Future Issues		v


Everscribe's Platforms

Join the conversation and fun in Everscribe's welcoming community across various platforms.

Visit our official [Discord](#) server and reach out to us on [X](#), and [Instagram](#)!

@everscribemag.com

@everscribemag

@everscribemag

Editor's Note

Dear Scribe,

Welcome to *Manus Aeternum*, our milestone tenth issue!

The name speaks to something we've come to believe deeply: that writing connects us across time, that words outlast their writers, and that stories continue their work long after we've finished telling them.

Making it to our tenth issue means more than we can properly express. We're grateful not just for the beautiful work we've been entrusted to share, but for the relationships formed along the way. There's something special about hearing from writers who've gone on to publish their books, receive recognition for their work, or simply tell us that seeing their words published helped them feel truly heard. These connections endlessly encourage us.

We have plans for what comes next — new events, new issues, and new ways to lift up exceptional voices. But for now, we hope you'll take some time with these pages and perhaps feel what we felt while putting them together: that this might be our most beautiful one yet.

With warmth and thanks,

A handwritten signature in white ink that reads "Dafia". The script is elegant and cursive, with a large initial 'D'.

Founder & Editor-in-Chief

Scribe's Corner



Word of the Month!

The Scribes have spoken... The word of the month is: **Evergreen**!

Evergreen is June's promise: to endure beyond seasons, to remain when all else surrenders, and to renew from within. It lives in the defiant leaf that clings while autumn strips the world bare, in ink that refuses to fade though years brittles the page, in love that deepens rather than diminishes across impossible distances. Evergreen is the steadfast after we've made our choice in the long, slow road of commitment.

Want to help choose our next Word of the Month? Vote in our polls on Discord and social media!

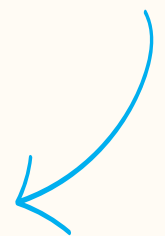


Literary Technique Spotlight

Some sentences don't just state — they unfold. **Hypotaxis** layers thoughts through subordination, guiding readers through cause and consequence, reflection and doubt.

Unlike punchy statements, hypotactic writing expands along winding paths where meaning emerges through rhythm and relation. It mirrors how real thoughts grow in roots and branches.

When Brontë's *Jane Eyre* declares her love, her thoughts unspool in mounting clauses: "Do you think I am an automaton?—a machine without feelings? ... I am a free human being with an independent will." Her passion builds, accumulating intensity, the very essence of hypotaxis.



Question for our Scribes...

Sitting by the warm window in June and finding yourself drawn to a quiet commitment to storytelling. What stories are you committed to tell? What thoughts are you committed to show the world? What do you grow from the stark sunlight? What keeps your commitment evergreen?

Send us your answers in our official Discord community, or post them on X, Bluesky, and Instagram using **#ScribesCorner**.

Fictional Short Story

Alexei Raymond

The Nutcracker's Charge

The Nutcracker is picking at some sourgrass. He finds a large stem, tears the yellow flowers off it, and chews it with his awkward wooden jaws. He is out in a sandy field; not snowy, no. The Mouse King's mice mill about here and there. They seem to have forgotten about the Nutcracker for now. They don't nibble him, poke him with pikes or brandish their poleaxes as if to chop him into firewood. But his body already bears the marks of their teeth; his head is splintered, and he's in need of a fresh coat of paint on his sandblasted feet. It's likely that they've simply grown bored of him for the time being.

The Nutcracker knows how the story goes; he's seen it countless times before. And though the scenery is different here and he's not exactly sure where in the story he is, he's still the Nutcracker, and he's certain that when the time comes, he will know what to do. Only where is—ah, there! There's Masha. That's the girl who'll release him from the Mouse King's curse and turn him back into a prince.

But it's strange. She seems to be playing with the mice, even though the Mouse King is nowhere to be seen. The Nutcracker drops the stem he's been chewing on and tries to discern her actions. Perhaps she's just playing along? If they knew what she's planning to do—to

break him free—then they'd surely harm her. Yes, so it's an act meant to protect them both. She looks happy. And, well, that must be Masha, right? She certainly looks the part. She's the prettiest and he can hear his woodheart knock inside his frame when he looks a bit too long. It's certain, then—he's identified the correct girl in Masha's role.

He looks about him, suddenly remembering his sabre and his toy steed. Are they gone? It must be why he can't defend himself, why he's vulnerable. And without his steed, without his golden sabre, how will he lead the charge against the Mouse King's forces? He can't do it alone. He sees the lone gingerbread boy sitting nearby. They sometimes talk for they feel a kind of kinship. The mice bother them both. But even with the timid gingerbread boy's help, it's unlikely that they'll put up any kind of challenge for the armed, numerous mice.

— Hey, Ginger, what should we do?

— You're asking me? You're the one who's seen the story before.

— I know, but this is different. I don't know how we're supposed to do all of that. Some things are wrong.

— Well, you're still the Nutcracker, aren't you? And that girl's Masha?

— I think so. But it's strange; I can barely hear the music. The music usually makes it all happen.

They sit down in the sand and look at the merry mice camp before them. Both can see Masha giggling, darting from one mouse to the next. All around, she's attended by adoring mice. Unapproachable and gorgeous.

The glossy lacquer on the Nutcracker's blue eyes is the sole sanctuary of any shine left in him. As he tunes out the mice around Masha, his eyes gleam brighter. She is good and she means him well. As strange as this permutation is—and he's already foggy on what needs to happen to break the curse—Masha is right there, all smiles, kind, and surely meant for him.

Suddenly, something tells him that the Mouse King will come back soon. Too much time has passed without him in view. When he returns, they will all be herded back into the castle where the Nutcracker will be forced to remain silent and still. He gets up from the

“All around, she's attended by adoring mice.”

sand with his woodheart beating out marching orders. Ginger is startled by the sudden movement

and looks to him for an explanation.

— Ginger, now. We have to do it now.

— What? What do you mean now?

— I don't know when we'll have another chance. We have to get to her now. Somehow.

— But all the mice!

— The Mouse King will be here any minute. Please, will you help?

The gingerbread boy rises—worried but trusting. In the hollow of the Nutcracker's head urgent violins scythe and cascade, and the drama begins to align.

As the violins do declare, a sabre's handle appears, lodged in the Nutcracker's rigid right hand, and as the brass section blares, Ginger multiplies and is an army at the back, and when the orchestra swells, the Nutcracker is carried

forth by his white steed to lead the charge.

He charges between the pikes, past the poleaxes, cleaving through formations of mice. Closer, closer—through the squeaks and scratches. He cuts down all the grey around Masha. The scene terrifies her but it's how the story goes—she knows,

“He cuts down all the grey around Masha.”

she knows. The Nutcracker dismounts and runs through the last of Masha's captors. Now that the two of them are in the eye of the battlefield, he remembers—it's time for their dance. But she appears frozen and unresponsive—

is she confused? He gets down on one knee and raises the hand that holds no implement of war, though she makes no move to take it. The music stalls, falters—is something wrong?

She turns away from him. But all is not lost; he gets up and walks up slowly, carefully, for his form is graceless, his wooden bulk offensive. He leans toward her ear, and her soft hair tickles his face. He knows not why he's so close until he begins to whisper—these clear words must be the cue for the commencement of the pas de deux:

— Masha, I love you.

But Yuval makes as if she hasn't heard, then smiles and runs off with the other kids, and Ilya is just a boy in the kindergarten's yard. Playtime is over.

Alexei Raymond is a writer whose work explores post-Soviet diasporic lives, moments of threshold, and fractured identities. Originally from the Middle East, he is currently based in Belgrade. His stories appear in *The Bloomin' Onion*, *Lowlife Lit Press*, and *The Crawfish*. Connect with him at x.com/enemyofcruelty.

Zary Fekete

Ruth

The sun was low, barely brushing the tops of the trees, when Ruth stepped off the bus. She looked around her for a long moment and saw it immediately... the town hadn't changed. It had the same sleepy air, as if all those past years only a few seasons had happened here. But Ruth felt different. Was it the absence of him next to her? The loss of whatever life they had made? She couldn't answer.

She walked the short stretch from the bus stop to her mother-in-law's house. Naomi's house, small but well-kept, with its white paint now a little chipped and windows curtained with heavy lace, held memories Ruth wasn't sure she could face. She remembered her first visit here, just after Thomas had proposed. His quiet voice... *Mother, meet Ruth. My fiancé.* Ruth had been enveloped by Naomi's instant embrace and had always felt welcome here ever since. Except now she was returning alone.

She looked up.

Naomi had opened the door before Ruth even knocked. Her eyes, once sharp and full of observation, were soft now, as if she too had been worn down by time and loss. She stepped forward, a bit more slowly as age had stiffened her legs, but Ruth felt a flood of emotion as the same warm embrace encircled her.

"Ruth," Naomi said, stepping forward to hug her. "You have no idea how happy I am you're here."

Ruth quickly brushed a tear

"The quiet between them stretched, thick and heavy."

away. Naomi grasped her arm gently, pulling her into the entryway. The house smelled like it always did, cinnamon, dust, and the faintest scent of lilies, the same flowers Naomi always placed on the kitchen table. The house felt full of years, full of silence. Ruth's footsteps seemed too loud on the floorboards.

Naomi didn't say much as she led Ruth into the small guest room where she would be staying. It was the same room Ruth had once stayed in during weekend visits, before everything fell apart. Naomi had already prepared the bed... simple, but the sheets were soft, the pillow well-fluffed. Ruth sat on the edge, her hands folded in her lap. Naomi touched Ruth's cheek then turned away toward the window, her shoulders shaking gently. The quiet between them stretched, thick and heavy.

"I'm not sure how long I'll stay," Ruth said, breaking the silence. "I'll get a job, find a place..."

"Stay as long as you need," Naomi turned back. "I'm not asking anything of you."

Ruth nodded, but even as she did, she felt a tightness in her chest. Naomi's kindness felt like a weight she didn't know how to bear. She had nothing to give in return, nothing but her presence, a reminder of everything that had gone wrong.

"Tomorrow, we'll go to the market," Naomi added. "You can help me with the bread. It'll be good to have you here."

That night, as she lay in the guest room, Ruth stared up at the ceiling. She could hear the hum of the streetlights outside, the sound of cars passing. There was no wind tonight, just the stillness of the air. It was the kind of silence that held its breath. In the darkness, Ruth thought of Thomas, the way he laughed, the way his hands felt warm, the way he would look at her when he thought she wasn't paying attention. The man she had married. The man now lost, his body somewhere across the sea.

The next morning, Ruth awoke to the sound of birds chirping outside the window. She hadn't realized how quiet the house had been the night before until she heard them. Naomi was already in the kitchen, preparing breakfast. The smell of sizzling bacon and fresh bread

drifted into the bedroom. Ruth had to remind herself to get up, to move. A weight pressed her deeper into the pillow, trying to keep her in bed. But Naomi had left the door open, and the light from the kitchen spilled into the room, pulling Ruth out of her own head.

She slipped into a faded blue dress, the one she used to wear for Sunday mornings, and joined Naomi at the table. Naomi didn't speak much, but there was a quiet rhythm to her movements that made Ruth feel both safe and uncomfortable. It was as if Naomi had created this world for herself. She too had lost her husband, but that had been years ago and she had long since carved out a life around that grief. The house felt like Naomi's small, quiet universe, and Ruth was a foreigner trying to fit into it.

"Plenty to eat here," Naomi said, placing a steaming plate of food in front of Ruth.

Ruth stared at the eggs, toast, and bacon. She hadn't had an appetite since the news. She had barely eaten during the long train ride back, and now it felt like her stomach had forgotten how to take in food.

"Sorry," Ruth said softly, pushing the food around with her fork. "Not much of an appetite yet."

Naomi didn't press her, but Ruth could feel her watching. It wasn't an accusing stare, more like an understanding. Naomi had lived a life of hard work, of resilience. Ruth had always admired that about her. Naomi's steady calm was something Ruth felt she could never attain. She wanted to ask Naomi how she did it, how she could live day after day in the same place without feeling like she was suffocating from the

quiet absence beside her.

"Life comes back," Naomi said, as if she could read Ruth's thoughts. "But not fast. Nothing worth having ever does."

Ruth nodded. But she wasn't sure she believed it.

Later that morning, Naomi handed Ruth a basket and asked her to go to the market. Ruth didn't want to face the familiar faces, people who remembered her, who remembered Thomas. She didn't want to face their pity, their questions, the way they looked at her like she was broken. But Naomi's kind insistence made it clear she had to go.

The market was busier than Ruth expected for a Thursday. People haggled over prices, children ran between the stalls, and the

*"She looked at the sign.
It said, BOAZ
GROCERY."*

occasional man shuffled by with a bundle of flowers or fresh vegetables. Ruth walked slowly through the market, keeping her head down.

She passed a stall selling flowers. Her hand lingered over the daisy stems. It was an unconscious gesture, but it was enough for Ruth to stop. She picked up a small bunch of daisies, their petals soft and delicate in her hand. The scent reminded her of summer days when she was a child, when the world felt simpler, less burdened. But as she turned to leave, she saw him.

He was talking to a woman in front of a store, helping her with a bag of flour that had split open. He

wasn't loud, and it was precisely his quiet that caught Ruth's attention. She watched him kneel to help the woman, his voice calm and his hands steady. Ruth realized it was his store. She looked at the sign. It said, BOAZ GROCERY.

The woman smiled and thanked him, and his gaze shifted and met Ruth's. For the briefest moment, their eyes locked, and something shifted inside her. She quickly looked away, uncertain of what she felt, but a flutter stirred in her chest.

He called out softly, "I hope the wind hasn't been too hard on you today, miss."

Ruth stopped, surprised. She surprised herself more by stepping toward the store.

"I like a breeze," Ruth said. "Reminds me of other places."

Boaz smiled. "I thought I was the only one. Sometimes, when the wind blows from the south, I go up on the roof of the store for a bit. It gives me a little extra energy."

Ruth looked up at the roof. "That sounds nice."

"Let me know if you ever need help with anything," he said. "I'm just up the hill, at the old farm. Boaz," he added.

She nodded. "Thank you, Mr. Boaz."

Ruth walked home, her mind still buzzing with the brief interaction. She replayed the conversation over and over, feeling the warmth of Boaz's words, but also a resistance in herself that she couldn't fully name. She still felt an absence in her heart. But today, perhaps for the first time in months, the feeling was fainter.

That evening, as Naomi prepared

supper, Ruth lingered in the kitchen, her thoughts elsewhere. Naomi noticed but didn't ask.

"I met Mr. Boaz in the market," Ruth finally said.

Naomi looked up. "I'm glad you met him. He's helped me before with some things around the house." She smiled. "A good man."

Ruth didn't respond. She wasn't sure what to feel. Only that for the first time in months, she didn't feel completely alone.

A week had passed since Ruth had last spoken to Boaz, but one morning, while at the store picking up bread for Naomi, she felt the familiar presence behind her.

"Good morning," he said, his voice warm.

"Good morning," Ruth replied.

They exchanged pleasantries before Boaz offered to help her with her basket. Without thinking, Ruth handed it to him, and they walked together toward the front of the store. There was an ease in the

"But it's easy to lose track of yourself in silence."

silence that stretched between them, as though they didn't need to fill the space with words.

"Have you been getting settled?" he asked.

Ruth hesitated. "It's been quiet," she said. She looked up at him with a small shrug. "I suppose that's good."

"Quiet can be good," he agreed. "But it's easy to lose track of yourself in silence."

Ruth nodded, her heart skipping a beat. "I don't think I've figured out how to hear myself yet," she admitted.

Boaz paused with his hand on the counter. When he spoke next his eyes carried an extra weight. "Your Thomas was a good man. The best sort."

She met his eyes. "Thank you," she said.

He straightened his shoulders. "I'll be sorting through some new shipments here at the store this evening. The sunsets are nice from the roof up top. You're welcome to come by if you'd like."

Ruth's heart skipped. It wasn't an invitation she had expected. Her first instinct was to refuse, to shy away from what felt like a bold step forward. But then she remembered Naomi's words about growth, about allowing herself to move forward, slowly.

"I'll be here," Ruth said before she could think better of it.

That evening they sat together on a pair of old folding chairs. The clouds were lightly parted on the horizon and the last rays of sunlight shown between them, lighting up the roof with the dazzling glow of the magic hour. They sat quietly, not saying much, but the silence felt nice to Ruth.

"I'm glad you decided to join me," he said.

"Thank you," Ruth said quietly, her voice carrying the weight of something she hadn't fully realized until now. "For inviting me."

Another pause drifted by.

"Do you ever think about the future?" Ruth asked, as though testing the ground beneath her feet. He didn't answer immediately. He leaned back in his chair, his hands resting on his knees.

"I think about it," he said finally. "But mostly, I think about today. The present. We don't always get the future we imagine, but the present is worth living."

Ruth nodded, her heart lightening at his words. As she sat beside him, looking up at the stars just beginning to appear, Ruth knew that this wasn't an ending. It wasn't even a beginning. It was a promise, quiet and steady, something that would grow in its own time, in its own way.

And that was enough.

Zary Fekete grew up in Hungary. He has a debut novella (Words on the Page) out with *DarkWinter Lit Press* and a short story collection (To Accept the Things I Cannot Change: Writing My Way Out of Addiction) out with *Creative Texts*. He enjoys books, podcasts, and many many many films. Twitter and Instagram: @ZaryFekete Bluesky: zaryfekete.bsky.social

Louisa Prince

Broken Vows

Emily stared at the lopsided 'A' that dangled from the ground-floor unit's door. Unshed tears blurred her vision, distorting the outline of its tarnished brass.

She stood in silence, paralyzed by echoes from the past—faded voices hung mid-air.

For better or worse, for richer and poorer ...

Each word clung to her like the beads of sweat forming above her brows, providing no solace. Instead, they morphed into petrified rock—a

“Sun highlighted the largest frame of her wedding day.”

heavy anchor weighing her down.

A vivid image from another scorching day emerged—Emily stood, clutching her waist, clad in her nightgown amidst the crisp odor of fresh paint, facing the wild gaze of a man in turmoil—her husband.

“I’ve got it under control,” he’d said—and yet three weeks later, they were hanging a shingle on a ‘For Sale’ sign outside their house.

The creak of the heavy external door jolted Emily from her trance—two hours until Mark returned home. With a ragged breath, she smothered a sob and reached out

her trebling hand, turned the handle, and pushed open the door.

Once inside, the freshness of baby powder that engulfed their living space washed over her like a wave. Emily glanced around at the framed mementos on the wall, mesmerised when the afternoon sun highlighted the largest frame of her wedding day.

To love and to cherish ...

She shifted her attention, and her eyes followed the trail of scuff marks that lined the floor near the kitchen table. A reminder of where a highchair once sat, its departure leaving a sorrow so deep her bones ached.

In this small place, we did ... but I guess that was an illusion.

Her brother’s voice, with its low rumbling quality, penetrated the fog of self-pity forming around her and she peered up into stormy grey eyes.

“Does Lisa have Cathy?” She asked.

“Yeah, she took her home to settle. Hope it’s okay, she packed a small bag—along with the cot and some toys,” he said.

“Good.” Her voice cracked. “That offer for us to use your spare room while I sort things out still stand?”

“Of course.” He paused, his nostrils flared, and heat reflected in his gaze. “So, were you right?” He asked.

“Yeah, he’s at it again,” she

murmured, her hand tracing where an engagement ring once sparkled—hocked for cash—the simple band that remained deemed not valuable enough.

Emily brushed past him, not waiting for a response, darted down the short hallway and disappeared into the bedroom she shared with her husband. Her throat hitched as vanilla scented candles intermingled with a lingering musk that was Mark assailed her.

... from this day forward ...

Heavy footsteps behind her mirrored the heaviness in her chest. “You sure about this? You’re not gonna wait until he comes back to confront him?”

The confrontation with her husband loomed like the distant growl of an approaching storm. One best avoided—at least for now.

“He’s left me no choice. I can’t go down this path again—I won’t.”

Her mind drifted to watching the cashier reverse purchases, and how the bundle of returned items put aside grew. Like water from a dripping tap, with the removal of each essential item from her shopping cart, Emily’s resolve faded—along with the last remnants of her fractured relationship.

“What if he wins?”

Fists clenched, she swung around to face Dan, her slender frame vibrating like a billy boiling over a campfire’s flames. Dan backed away

with his hands raised and palms out.

“He won’t. And even if he does, what then? How long before he takes an even bigger risk?”

Her attention shifted back to the bedroom and her brother retreated into the living space. Bathed in the soft glow of late afternoon—like looking upon it for the first time—everything was her.

Movement at the foot of the bed caught her eye, where a black and grey tabby stretched its paws and let out a wide yawn. The blood pulsating beneath her skin slowed, and Emily calmed while she stepped closer and took a seat next to the cat. Her hand extended to scratch behind its ear.

“Hey, what do you think?”

In the half light of the room, a pair of clear green eyes met hers, shimmering with an eerie glow. Her hands sank into the soft luxurious fur, while a cyclone raged within her. Until a series of trills filled the air, resembling notes on a scale, and she peered down at the animal beside her.

“I know, you’re right,” she whispered.

She rose and shuffled towards the inbuilt wardrobe, nothing compared to the walk-in she once had, and stretched to clasp the worn canvas straps overhanging from the top shelf. With a groan, she strained to lower the cumbersome duffle bag, its weight revealed in the thud as it hit the ground. Her priority was Cathy—expressive caramel eyes framed by long, curly lashes, with a riot of black curls adorning her small head. Their only source of joy, and a miniature version of her father.

Emily reached over and lifted the

framed photo off the nearby dresser, and her fingers brushed over the glass. She studied the image beneath. Her daughter’s radiant smile beamed back at her, and memories flooded her mind.

They had rejoiced upon discovering they were expecting. She remembered the ultrasound and galloping horses as the wand scanned her abdomen—tracing the printout with her finger—the goofy smile on her face while a sense of wonder enveloped her.

Wiping away a stray tear, she placed the photo into the bag before she opened drawers and stuffed her clothing into the musty bag. Tonight, she’d gather what she could carry and leave the rest for a later time.

With a sharp intake of air, she peered down at the half full bag before moving to the wardrobe. Hangers clinked against the metal rod as she sifted through its contents, her hands lingered on the smoothness of a dinner suit belonging to her husband. She drifted back to when he last wore it. Memories of a white linen tablecloth, light flickering from long tapered candles and the scent of a dozen long stem roses surfaced. She peered at the jacket. He was her first love, the one she had always dreamt of marrying—the man she had imagined growing old with.

Until death, do us part ...

A vow she’d made long before the slow creep of addiction claimed him, grabbed hold, and shook their world apart. Yet she’d been at his side through two failed attempts to shake free from the habit, done couple’s therapy and started a family. Echoes of pretty promises to

change cascaded through her thoughts—fool me once—recollections of opening the door to

“Her daughter’s radiant smile beamed back at her.”

debt collectors swirled in her mind. He had cracked their foundations that time, gambling when he should have been working.

With nimble fingers, she continued to sort through the wardrobe until she’d extracted and packed everything belonging to her. Empty hangers dangled from the rod in silence, the absence of what once adorned them like a silent testament to the rifts in their relationship.

I will love and honor you all the days of my life ...

Gone was the man she’d vowed to honor, replaced by one consumed with greed who chased a dollar down a drain and expected everyone else to follow. *I’ll not follow you into the abyss.*

It wasn’t just her—there was a child to think of.

No amount of talking would fix things this time. He had exhausted her reserves, and the damage was irreparable. Dan’s deep voice interrupted her thoughts.

“Need help, sis?”

Dan stood at the door, a safe harbor in a stormy sea. He would help her get back on her feet, start again. It wouldn’t be easy. She’d have to return to work early. No longer able to afford the luxury of unpaid maternity leave.

She crammed the last few items into the bag, pushing its bulging

sides together before pulling the zip closed. Turning, she handed it to her brother.

"Can you put this in the living room?"

"Sure, but is that everything?"

"It'll do until I know what's happening," she studied the room, now enveloped in the dusky atmosphere of twilight. "For now, it's just the essentials."

"If he's desperate, he might pawn anything of value you leave behind."

"It's too late," Emily's voice wavered. "We sold anything of value online when we downsized—even mum's dinner set."

She winced at his sharp intake of breath.

"But that was in the family for generations," he said, his words laced with a tone that stung like a lash. "You should have come to me if you needed cash."

In complete silence, Emily made her way to the small bathroom, struggling to contain the waves of regret his harsh words provoked. Her nose wrinkled as she flicked on the light, and a faint odor of ammonia wafted from the litter box.

"If you want to avoid Mark, we need to go now ... I'll be waiting in the living space."

Her brother's footsteps echoed in the other room while she opened every drawer and collected items

from the bathroom cabinet. With a swift motion, Emily plunged the room back into darkness and moved into the lounge and placed the toiletry bag on a coffee table.

Nearby, a notepad sat beside the landline, a multi-colored pad with unicorns painted in the corners. She flicked it open and wrote, *I can't go through this again, sorry.*

Emily took in the tidy black ink that scarred the cheerful surface.

... this ring as a symbol of my love ...

The gold band glinted in the waning light as she slipped it from her finger and placed it on the note. Unable to look down, she turned around and headed back to her bedroom, before she lost her nerve.

"Emily took in the tidy black ink that scarred the cheerful surface."

Upon entering, a lone tear rolled down her cheek as she moved to where a pet carry case sat in the corner. She scooped up the cat and placed him inside, returning to the living area where her brother held extra bags.

"I packed some toys from over there, in case Cathy wants them."

"Thanks. I'll arrange for everything else when I speak to Mark."

One last glance around, with the toys gone, a few items remained. A couch she'd always disliked, the forty-five-inch TV he'd insisted replace their old thirty-two-inch one despite her objections. The compact table and chairs in one room, a gas-lift bed with bedside tables, sat in the other.

"Once I list what I need, I'll clear it with Mark ... do you think you'd be able to collect it?" She asked.

"Mind? I'd insist on it. I don't want that loser convincing you to give him another chance."

He's not a loser, just ill. Emily's words refused to escape her throat. Instead, she moved the few steps closer and touched his elbow. "Not a chance, but in case I've not said it before, you're the best brother I could ever ask for."

Despite the day, a soft chuckle escaped her when he snorted, before following him towards the open door.

Emily paused at the threshold—a whispered meow, the soft hiss of the air conditioner powering down—then nothing but stillness. She fought against the tears threatening to fill her swollen, red eyes.

I can do this ... I have to do this.

Her arm trembled when she reached out, flicked the switch, and plunged the apartment into darkness. The door closed, and the lock engaged with a click.

Louisa Prince is a self-proclaimed late bloomer, living in Melbourne, Australia whose writing often focuses on family and health. An active member of The Society of Women Writers Victoria, her work is forthcoming in *Certain Age Magazine*, appeared in *CaféLit Magazine*, *New Plains Review* and was longlisted for SWWV's Margaret Hazard Short Story Award.

Regina 'Rina' Keough

To be her son

“Mother.” His voice cut through the silence as he stepped into the room. She lifted her trembling eyelids — her vision was blurred. All she could see was a silhouette, a flicker of form, but of course she knew who had come.

“Come here,” she said, reaching out with a frail hand, inviting him closer.

He felt himself leaning in, drawn to her touch. It wasn't exactly his place, but he came anyway. The skin beneath his palm was soft. He smiled, remembering how she used to glow with youth when he was a child.

In his memory, she was young. She held his tiny hand tightly and smiled down at him. He looked up at her, counting the freckles and dimples they shared. His mother — whole, unharmed, untouched by time.

Each step felt as if he were walking across the still surface of a

pond, over soft water lilies. The ground shimmered beneath his feet. Everything was still and gentle when he held his mother's hand. They walked side by side, beginning from the same place, moving along the same path.

The weight lifted. For the first

“Couldn't help but compare her to the image in his mind.”

time in what felt like years, he forgot the stress, the pain, the guilt. Beside her, guided by her quiet presence, he felt real again — alive.

A rasp in her throat pulled him back:

“I've missed you... for so long,” she whispered, squeezing his hand. He looked at her — pale, fading, yet with that warm glimmer in her eyes — and couldn't help but compare her to the image in his mind.

“I'm always with you.”

“That's good.”

She smiled. It was real. He knew she loved him.

He smiled with her. Something stirred inside him — a fragile hope. It felt like she was welcoming him. Like she was glad to see him home.

A few minutes passed. Then, in the softest breath, she said:

“I love you, Simon.”

And in that moment, everything else returned. The danger. The grief. The terrible truth.

“I love you too.”

He watched the light in her eyes go out and hoped her condition prevented her from seeing the despair in his eyes, the tears he tried not to show, thinking how selfish it was of his brother not to come at such a moment.

He vainly wanted her to die happy, even if it meant lying, so he let her believe it.

When her pulse stopped, Roy left the room.

Regina “Rina” Keough is a Russian writer, director, and screenwriter. Originally from Saint Petersburg, she works across poetry, screenwriting, and personal essays. Her work, both on the page and on screen, often deals with irony, disillusionment, and emotional loops. While this is her first fiction submission, she has worked for years in storytelling through film and theater.

Jeff Kennedy

Chaos Theory

There are exactly two pieces of furniture in my living room: a couch and a coffee table. The lamp and the television don't count; they're appliances. I still have to dust them, but they don't count. Penny calls it "sterile chic," but there's comfort in simplicity and order. On Wednesday, I do laundry. Friday is trash day. On Sunday, I clean the house.

"Every piece has a story."

I was dusting the coffee table one Sunday afternoon when Penny knocked on my door, completely out of the blue.

"Can you help me get something up to my attic?"

Penny's living room has ... everything. A couch and coffee

table. Stacks and stacks of books. A phonograph and what looks like ten thousand records. A tenor saxophone. A replica lightsaber. Her parents' ashes are in urns on a tea cart from her childhood home. The whole place has the slightly musky smell of old leather.

She pulls down a ladder and I struggle to carry a giant stuffed dog up into her attic. The air is a swirl of dust, and I sneeze.

Penny's eyes light up as she talks about the stuffed dog her father won for her mother on their first date. The charm bracelet her grandmother put together over fifty years, a special charm for every anniversary. The pink blanket that kept her company in the hospital after an emergency appendectomy when she was twelve. It's hard to imagine a more cluttered room. Every piece has a story.

Later that evening, Penny drops by to say thanks, and I invite her in. I'm pleasantly surprised when she

smiles and steps into my apartment. She sits cross-legged on the floor, blows her blonde hair out of her face, and snickers as I slip a coaster under her beer.

Penny looks into my eyes and I'm suddenly a little lightheaded.

"So, tell me about yourself. You're kind of a mystery. What's your story?"

Where do I begin?

I hesitate for a moment, reach under a couch cushion, and bring out Timmie, a thread-worn stuffed bear I've had since I was three. If anyone remembers Timmie, I'm sure they assume I threw him away long before Mom passed away a few months ago. There's a faint smudge of her lipstick on the shoulder of his patched, yellow sweater. Every few months, I watch old cartoons with Timmie. It's always seemed like such a weird little ritual. Nothing I talk about.

I'm not sure why, but I have to tell Penny.

Jeff Kennedy is a lifelong author and playwright. He is a member of the Dramatists Guild and past Thurber House and Erma Bombeck essay contest winner. Jeff's short form writing has appeared in publications such as *Maudlin House*, *Everscribe Magazine*, *Flash Fiction Magazine*, and *Bright Flash Literary Review*.

Poetry

Stephanie Holden

Bird Song

At five a.m. the avian chorus starts
So fervently you'd think they had not heard
That men subdued the earth and killed the birds
(Too many hit the skyscrapers, etc.).
Now these descendants of the dinosaurs
(The last great owners of our pendant world),
Not having learned their present lowly place,
Sing out, while all is still, as if it were
Their species' dawn.

Earth without bird song
Would seem some other world entirely—
As strange, without the frigid change, as Earth
In ice age, or its great primordial fires.
And yet today, so many spend their hours
In little worlds where birds aren't heard at all,
As oblivious to their empty skies
As were the dinosaurs to their demise.

Stephanie Holden is an attorney living in the D.C. area; she has a B.A. in Humanities from Yale and a J.D. from Columbia. She is writing a novel.

Randi Neville

Narcissus

Spring is when
the air smells
of narcissus,
and you wonder
if the Earth
gazes upon itself.
Does she drown
in her own pools?
Falling deep
into cenotes
full of mystical promises
of a world beyond this one.
Does she know
the depths
of her glory?
Her canyons carved
of rivers' force,
her redwood towers
of ancient times,
her mountains,
stealing breaths,
aloft aloft aloft
in the atmosphere?
Or is she blissfully ignorant?
Life spinning forth,
unknowing herself.
Unaware of the life
she's given:
the promises of rainbows,
the quench of dew,
the striking scent of petrichor,
all aldehydes, spiky in the nose.
Can she hear
the echoes of life
abundant in her?
Can she hear when
we sing her praises?
When the smell of narcissus,
verdurous but soft,

tickles the air,
maybe then,
she knows.

Randi Neville (she/they) is a disabled queer writer originally from Conroe, Texas. They are currently working on their first novel and continuing their poetic journey. Their interests include watching pro-wrestling, watercolor painting, and being the world's best aunt. They are previously published in *Coffee People Zine*, *Every Body Magazine*, *Haunted Portal Magazine*, *The Ana*, and forthcoming in *The Listening Eye*. They currently reside in Houston, Texas with their family. Find them on socials: @RandiTheAuthor.

Malcolm North

TO THE GODDESS WHOSE NAME IS LOST

In memoriam: Pt[-]yh of Amqarrūna

The words of her hymn are broken
upon artifacts of altars
and fallen orthostats.

Shattered stones of her sanctuary,
once solemn and sacred, now scattered
among tall weeds and rubbish.

Still these solemn stones sing softly,
praising perpetually former glories
ever faintly in fragments, engraved
in the forgotten tongue that filled
hallowed and hoary halls.

Still these sacred stones sing softly
incipits inscribed in
the detritus of defunct divinity,
tho none recall for no one hears
their clipped and canted calls.

Still these scattered stones sing softly,
tho her name is not spoken,
lost in the lacunae
of lonely lapidary
lyrics ...

Dedication to - [...]
exalt her glorious -- [...]
and remember forever --- [...]

Malcolm North works in archaeology and likes to hang out in museums when he's not reading and writing fantasy fiction. He has previously published in *Swords & Sorcery Magazine* and has a forthcoming story in *Crimson Quill Quarterly*. He can be found on Bluesky under the handle: @malcolm-north.bsky.social.

Jer Hayes

Give me the heart of Van Gogh

your slender fingers are one of your best features, signalling your slinkiness,
peninsulas, your stretching elegance, out of reach, you said that Van Gogh said the
heart of man is like the sea, I am oceaned, in rough waters, & I lie, my heart is not the
sea, I seek the shores where I can find you, do the waves not long for the beach?
islanded in stillness, then drifting, a castaway & cast aside, storm-savaged,
wind-whipped; I wanted to be calmed with you again, but the tide must pull back, I have
sailed through your long fingers, and cannot return.

Jer Hayes is from Dublin, Ireland. He is a new (old) writer. His work has appeared in the *Cosmic Daffodil Journal*, *Outside the Box* (OtB), *AEOS Magazine*, *The Martello Journal*, *Flare Magazine* and *Stripes Literary Magazine*. Find him on:
Insta:@sherlockhayes X: @hayes_jer

Ágnes Cserhádi

LOVE'S ELEGY FOR THE CINNAMON FERN

for P.M.

It began with December and snow

your hands spread like ferns
the small of your back
curled
into your knees
between mine
adjusting to the given space.

I breathed in the arc of your mouth

pulled at your tucked shirt at time
unfurling and exhilarate
your spores woken and keening
marked
for one course alone.

Dishevelled

we caught for air
collected our fronds
taking in the hours
apart.

The cinnamon fern is a common species native to Nova Scotia, a winter-hardy, long-lived plant with erect dark-green fronds encircling fertile fronds that mature to a cinnamon brown.

Ágnes Cserhádi's writing has appeared in the *New York Quarterly*, *Poetry Ireland Review*, *Dust Poetry Magazine*, *PN Review*, *Acumen*, and won the Hart House Poetry Contest (University of Toronto) twice. She is associate editor for the Alcuin Society's book arts journal *Amphora*, and founder and editor of *Rufus Books Publishing*.

Oliaku Wisdom Ikechukwu

Serpentine Transfiguration

Before we held clipped wings
of aged gods who, in venturesome respite,
fall too low to the ground,
lives shredded, serpentine
transfiguration in the mud
we were, in whispers, the
coming of the maker's prayers.

In *Ikom*, under the gust
of June wrapped in its
tender seduction, I was a
lilly pod in this garden of sin,
seedling of mother *Idemili*,
until serpentine transfiguration,
pruned in the monsoon season

Until we unthread the fork in dark
and the prodigal mounts
a stranger's name on the
altar of native lips, we are voices
of the homestead drowning the
old gods on hands and knees, begging
for droppings of restitution

like lambs sprawled sinless
on bloodied altars the death
of dreams becoming us,
We are still authors of our despair.

In the evenings we give death
to whom peace is promised,
silence engulfing at the fork,
new gods emerging from the rubble,
swaying like beveled branches in the wind.

Oliaku Wisdom Ikechukwu is a poet and performer who has been crafting written and performance poetry since 2016. His work explores memory, identity, and the sacred in the ordinary. His poem "Christening of Peculiar Things" was published in Issue 1 of *Akpata Magazine*. When not writing, he's immersed in the lyricism of Christopher Okigbo and Chinua Achebe, or lost in the sounds of Benjamin Clementine and Bon Iver.

Arvilla Fee

The Crack

so thin,
barely the width
of a whisker
across the kitchen floor;
neither of us see it
at first—
a slightly faded smile,
one that doesn't quite reach
the eyes.
But the crack grows
longer wider;
I think we both mention it
 in passing
as we hurry to our jobs,
as we lift the daily packs,
backs bent against fraying nerves.
I'm not sure when we stumble home
or witness the chasm
that has grown beneath
our calloused feet,
but here we stand,
 you on one side
me on the other,
unsure how either of us
can bridge the gap.

Arvilla Fee

Spent Summers

our hair limp with sweat,
sweet tea passing our lips,
dribbling down parched throats
the most complicated construct—
cats in the cradle,
our hands entwined with string.
We hum along to Beatles songs
on a scratchy cassette player
as bees sip nectar
from the cups of purple clover.
We know nothing of adulting,
not yet,
we only know fresh white bread,
bologna,
and mustard smiley faces;
we know how rain tastes
on the tongue,
how cool mud feels
after a cloud-burst of rain.
And we laugh and dance
as though childhood
is an endless commodity,
without expiration,
without guilt.

Arvilla Fee lives in Dayton, Ohio with her husband, three of her five children, and two dogs. She teaches for Clark State College, is the lead poetry editor for *October Hill Magazine*, and has been published in over 100 magazines. Her three poetry books, *The Human Side*, *This is Life*, and *Mosaic: A Million Little Pieces* are available on Amazon. Arvilla's life advice: Never travel without snacks. Visit her website and her new magazine: <https://soulpoetry7.com/>

Aqsa Qaddus

Fleeting Moment of Reckoning

Standing on the shore, where sky meets the sea,
Waves whisper secrets not meant to be free
Lightness in the breeze, heavy weight in the chest
A tormented soul, longing for the rest.
In this fleeting moment
Thoughts wandering like an ignorant
Plunging him to the abyss
Turning his existence into amiss.
Tear-jerking memories cling to his mind
Like the grains of sand-
A lingering, painful, and piercing remind
Soul-crushing woes, invisible scars
Deeper than ocean, darker than inanimate stars.
Amidst misery, a long, aimless walk,
With no one around to talk
Eyes fixed to the unknown horizon
Surrounded by uncharted territory and treacherous disguises.
When wandering comes to the end,
He returns to the den of hell
Succumbing to deafening yells
Putting on the mask, doomed to pretend.

Wilmot Railey

Colored

Clothed with the color of my dark Africa
Black like the clay of the soil.

Her gentle hands wrapped around me,
And in her bosom I've grown thus far.

O Africa, a woman of decent mantra
Her Scion has for long grieved from inside

White hands encroached her dark clay soil
They took my fathers to a land farther

Where they labored, causing Marley to ask:
“When will the pay day be?”

Just like Kunta, they were renamed
Losing identity, leaving a scar on African culture

Later they gathered in Berlin,
Parted my Africa like an elephant's meat.

But Africa, her resilience is unmatched
She'd frowned upon slavery, reclaimed her land.

In glory she'd rise,
Hands in hands she'd prevail.

Wilmot Railey is an emerging Liberian writer with deep passion in using his writings to channel the cause of societal change. with great interest in helping the marginalized and underrepresented, Wilmot uses his poems, short stories, and essays to speak on issues that affect these groups.

Alan Hardy

WORDS

I come back now and then.
It's a question of duty.
I slip into old habits,
comfy chairs to rest in.
Words fumble,
for the fluency of old,
I coax myself into something like it was.
Mumbling my lines,
I fall asleep in the chair.
This house is hers no more.
I accommodate myself to absence.
It's not that things recall her,
photos, or objects she touched,
stand as talismans to her,
just that everything which was hers,
no longer is.
I was hers,
had identity and vocabulary
in her house,
now,
visit an emptied room,
stumble a pace or two,
stutter words,
to get me through,
after her world has ended.

Alan Hardy

COPY

The glimpse of her excites
recollection of her.
The years haven't obliterated her,
invalidated her youth
I walked beside,
or the look of her now,
caressing her skin,
they have, slightly, tightened,
and squashed, and pushed,
and pulled a bit, here and there.
She is the validation of her past, and mine,
makes stronger what for a moment or two
had passed by us.
It's not passion, not love,
it's recognition a face and body
resuscitate glimpses of the past,
her likeness to herself
living proof
the original, the beginning,
that which she excited she excites,
lives on in her, and I in her.

Alan Hardy has for many years run an English language school for foreign students in UK). He's been published in such magazines as *Everscribe*, *Envoi*, *Iota*, *Poetry Salzburg*, *The Interpreter's House*, *Littoral*, *Orbis*, *South*, *Pulsar*, *Lothlorien*, *Chewers*, *Feversofthemind*, *100subtexts*, *Fixator* and others. Poetry pamphlets *Wasted Leaves* (1996) and *I Went With Her* (2007).

JB Wocoski

Burning Bridges

heated words defamed a heart
a bridge a bond incinerated
lock the door hide the memory
unable to calm a heart broken

one last glance at a closed door
no one there staring back out
don't go back in there again
no matter how hard you cry

don't dare open the door
memories lie reality dies
time passes away by the hour
wilted flowers empty vases

unlock the closed door one day
bring back time croaks the hinge
push hard to move it aside
everything sad leaks out

forgotten untouched memories
long burned down by reality

JB Wocoski, a Polish American, retired in 2015. In 2016, he won the Little Tokyo Short Story Competition with the Si-Fi story, "The Last Master of Go". His poetry and stories have appeared in various anthologies and online magazines. He is currently working on new poems and stories. His latest book is a 450-page Poetry Anthology of all his earlier work up to 2019. His short story and poetry books are available on Amazon.

Monoreena Acharjee Majumdar

Trigger

I linger at the edge of my writing
table, my mind growing teeth
tongue biting taste
unlacing cranial boxes of untold stories,
my sketchy breath lines on
my crumpled thoughts

I walk down the path which narrows
at a distance where the sea meets
the rising moon.....

I tread on soft sand seething
foot pricked by shards of shells
memories oblong
a lone crow, my companion to a
celestial opera--
sky turning an unwashed palate
before donning the navy suit embroidered
with stars, slipping into dreams....

Do we go back dying
witness to a truck load of
spring disappearing into the gape
of seasons--
It's summer and sun is
sampling ice creams
dividing parking lots by geometry
vehicles sipping stale afternoon beams
pasting shadows on their experienced curves

I pass the pizza joint across the road
summer in waiting
un-lighted, empty
a lanky teen cleaning the window glass
bubbles of soap thinning in air—

his benign indifference an angry stylus
on my search for words in the depth of
stomped sand tortured by
one acerbic moon

Monoreena Acharjee Majumdar found healing through Poetry following diagnosis of a chronic illness. Leaving her regular corporate job behind she is now a full time writer/illustrator, searching a new identity through her illness, her work leaning on her experiences of the same.

Isaiah Alexander

burning men

the crevices of your calloused palms
reveal your tragedy and loss
there's a fire in some men that can't be extinguished
you're one of them, a broad burning beacon
your flame ignites and i seek cover
a wild inferno that burns hotter and hotter
i hide behind my veil of water
try as I might, I'll never win
still, i carry the bucket based on a whim
that one day i'll be a saving grace
my water might be able to put out your flame
and the fire in your soul will stay at bay

Isaiah Alexander

year twenty-five

after twenty-four summers of storms—
lightning, thunder, and endless downpour—
sunlight slips in like never before,
flooding my room in golden allure.

i prayed for sunny, brighter days,
then came you: my saint, my blaze.
with fire pulsing through your veins,
you make my summers worth the pain.

your inner glow draws a blue jay near—
the rarest guest after my grey years.

he soars above with Cupid's touch,
drawn to hearts that lust too much,
spreading stardust on ones like us.
our two hearts thump like steady drums,
our blushing cheeks warming up—
hot enough to burn the sun,
to heat the world when winter comes.

Isaiah Alexander is a queer 25-year-old biracial African American and Hispanic poet from Houston, Texas. He aims to merge vulnerability with lyrical structure to create poetry that is both intimate and accessible. As the brother of a transgender sister, Isaiah is also a vocal advocate for trans rights and inclusive storytelling. His personal identity and lived experiences deeply inform his creative voice, and he strives to give shape to emotions storytellers often shy away from.

Elizabeth Barton

Buck Rock

Night lay in the lengthening shadows,
a world that knows not time or the passing
of hours; hidden as a lake under a moonless sky
we passed through the thickening forest. Where
we walked impressions followed, clothed
in a secret past, buried histories
we mistook for reveries.

At a bend in the rising track we paused.
There, the sloping earth became heavy
with scent, redolent of ancient ruins,
a shaft of light falling on the eye of some god
I imagined or perhaps purviewed. A man,
imposing yet protective, informed my mind
and a story slowly and silently unfolded.

He showed me corpses, fallen under the knife,
sacrifice to a god of war. Fully a thousand
years before, a peaceful civilisation lived here;
within granite rock carved halls still stand,
gold-laden, conduits to other worlds. Drawing
close to the shadow of Buck Rock, a presence
fell upon me, otherworldly and alluring,

animating the undergrowth with pulsing thrall,
engulfing gecko-green foliage a sudden wave.
Pungent smells carried on saturated air freed
my senses from bodily confines. Flight was easy,
nerves pathways to the unknown. In gloomy air
I saw a lone miner leading a pack mule, enchanted
by elusive music lingering in dark surrounds.

He stopped in wonder. Listening, the shaft shimmered,
opened to unexpected light falling on gold walls;
endless gold, rapturous, singing his mind
with sympathetic resonance. A kinetic reverie,
thrumming joy carried him into unrecorded epochs,
beautiful and forbidden, a world unfurled
by some secret he, lurching, had stumbled upon.

Elizabeth Barton is an artist and poet from New Zealand. She has poetry published in numerous journals and anthologies including *Vita Brevis Press*, *Literary Revelations*, *Flights*, *Suburban Witchcraft Magazine* and *Spillwords.com*. She is the author of the award-winning pamphlet *Mirrored Time* from *Hedgehog Poetry Press*, and *All Revolutions Begin This Way* and *Auroral*, from *Alien Buddha Press*. Her art is in private and public collections worldwide including the V & A Museum Prints Collection, London.

Simon Collinson

The Fates

She walks
silently tonight
passing by patients
asleep in their beds
seeking out those
with fraying threads
she stops by one
draws out her shears
tick-tock

They say
there are
three sisters
who deal with lives
deciding the time
you each have got
tick-tock

The Fates their name
the dread Moirai
your life
hanging
by a
thread
tick-tock

He was born in July
three summers before the war
named John after his father
he remembers it all
as if it were yesterday
Park Lane reduced to rubble
Streets shattered
covered in glass
growing up in the Dingle
carting crates
tick-tock

Then crammed into Kirby

playing skiffle
carrying sheets of metal
he got married and had children
travelled round the world
had the badges to prove it
then he remembered being alone
feeling tired
tick-tock

One spins your thread
another measures
your thread
finally Atropos
cuts your thread.
fear her
most of all
the unavoidable
for when
she severs
your thread
tick-tock

The sickness advances
morphine in his veins
numbs the pain
he can see her
and smiles.
as she cuts his faded thread.

*In Memory of John Andrew Bjork
5th July 1936 - 18th February 2025.*

Simon Collinson

Tin Town

Time to say
ta-ta to
Tin Town
for Tin Town
time's up
today's the day
Tin Town's
coming down.

Cutting crew's
coming round
in and out
quick - quick
Tin town
tumbling
ripped
wrenched
torn apart.

Tin Town's
magnolia walls and
gloss green doors
grown old
tired and tarnished
too costly
to repair
so Tin Town's
got to
come down.

Only take
two days
So say ta-ra
and tatty-bye
to Tin Town.

And when they've
finally taken
Tin Town away

then where
will all
the Tin folks go to stay?

Simon Collinson is a writer from England. He seeks solitude, shade and shadow

Christina Chin

Spring Fields

whistling wind rustles
the untamed snowberry
underbrush

a golden pheasant's nest
hidden in tall lalang grass

emerging
from a ground-dwelling
a field mouse wakes

a butterfly dream
transforms into a quail

irrigating the land
a water buffalo tilling
the soften paddy field

a farmer plants seedlings
the start of rice-growing

Christina Chin is an award-winning painter, haiku poet, and co-author of *First Day of the Rest*, #1 New Release Bestseller and #2 bestseller in the Haiku category. She has co-authored several books and is a three-time 2025 Pushcart Nominee, including for *Touchstone*, *Best of the Net*, and *Red Moon*, among others. Chin won 1st prize in the 34th Annual Cherry Blossom Sakura Festival Haiku Contest and the 8th Setouchi Matsuyama Photo Haiku.

Christina Chin & Uchechukwu Onyedikam

The Sunken Soul

river rafting
the camouflaged crocs
on the banks
beneath concealed
boulders

furry and curious
the baby orangutan
clutches mom's arm
the rehabilitation
and wildlife sanctuary

leeches
bleed inside
the boots
swollen with man's
blood

approaching
the hillock chalet
dead-end track
a herd of charging
cattle

Regina 'Rina' Keough

Prepared?

A boy with silver on his skin
stands still, and lets the tears begin.
His cheeks are streaked — a shining trace
of fear, smeared gently on his face.

Behind the stage — a distant cry,
rehearsed with desperation. Why?
The hall is hushed, the silence sings,
like crystal touched by trembling rings.

The velvet seats begin to stare.
The stage is tense. It holds the air.
A single breath might snap its thread —
a muscle pulled too tight with dread.

He grabs a tissue. Doesn't wipe.
Just clenches it, a fragile type
of talisman. His palm now shows
a glittered eye. Not his. A ghost's.

"You must be scared — or they won't feel it."
(whose voice was that? he can't un-reel it —
the one who said it might've been
his mother. god. the man unseen.)

And now he's scared — so deep, so real —
as if one breath might break the seal
around his heart. A single beat,
and he might crumble at his feet.

The lights shift blue. The stage exhales.
The waiting time has tipped the scales.
Like wine gone bad when left too long,
it curdles all the timing wrong.

He stands. His cloak is torn and thin.
His lips still tremble from within.
The words unsaid still burn his throat.
The fear becomes a kind of note.

One step.
Then two.
The hush is near.

And then —
a voice like scratched veneer:
— are you prepared?
He doesn't know.
But nods.
And goes.

Regina “Rina” Keough is a writer and filmmaker based in Athens. Originally from Saint Petersburg, she works across poetry, screenwriting, and personal essays. Her creative focus lies in memory, vulnerability, and the aesthetics of melancholy.

Acknowledgements

We extend our sincere thanks to our amazing writers for shaping Everscribe into an accessible path for remarkable authors. Your unique voices and stories are what make this publication special.

We also want to express our appreciation to our dedicated Editorial Team and Readers, whose hard work and commitment have brought this incredible issue to life. It's a true labor of love, and we couldn't have done it without you.

Additionally, we thank our founder for envisioning a platform for young and emerging writers, as well as our partners for their invaluable support. Lastly, a big thank you to everyone who has contributed to Everscribe in any way. For inquiries or feedback, please reach out to us through our website, socials, or at info@everscribemag.com.

Future Issues

We're thrilled to announce that our next issue, Issue No. 11, ***Custos Verborum***, will be coming soon! Everscribe releases a new issue every 1st of the month, so stay tuned!

Writers can always submit their works through our website at everscribemag.com. Join our community by connecting with us on our [Discord server](#), where both writers and readers are welcome. Stay updated on issue releases, special opportunities, news, and more by following us on [social media](#).

For inquiries or questions, feel free to reach out to us at info@everscribemag.com. We hope you enjoyed reading Everscribe's ninth issue, and we extend our thanks to all the writers for making this dream come true!

Until next time,
The Everscribe Team

