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Sage Cigarettes

Issue #01 | Autumn 2019

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rafamrv



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From the Editor



Stef Nuñez, Editor



wonderfemme_



stefnunezzz



witchxpudding

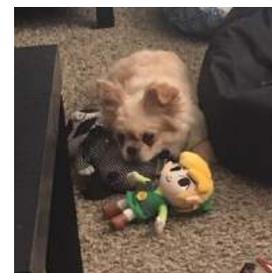
Dear Readers,

This journal means the world to me, and I'm so incredibly grateful that you've taken the time to be a part of it. For years I've been looking for a writing haven where I belong, but I didn't need to. A safe place existed within me the whole time, and now I'm sharing it with you.

It's fitting that this is the first issue, considering the magic that autumn has always held for me. Growing up in the mid-west meant hot apple cider, crisp, cool air and the changing leaves. Coincidentally, it also usually meant having to wear a winter coat over our Halloween costumes.

After moving to the south, autumn really hasn't been the same. The humidity kills my jack-o-lanterns before they ever get a chance to be alive, and the leaves only have two colors: green and brown. The great thing about life is that it's never too late to start a new tradition, so here's to reviving the spirit of fall with a new tradition of sharing art!

There is no theme for the work in this issue, just a lot of hard work from some very talented folks. I hope you enjoy! Also, enjoy this picture of Sir Duke Capone, the Sage Cigarettes mascot (and a very good boy).



Interstellar Zero Point One by Salman Zafar

Hello Occupants
Of this interplanetary mish mash

Once I wanted to stay
And live within proximity of the milky way
But your air is cursed
The water is worse
I know I won't make it past a single day

I have come close
So many times before
And Images of me you have seen
With your machines
But capture I have evaded
I only live in your movies and magazines

There are galaxies between us
And millions of years that keep us apart
But the more I observe you
The more I know
That we can never be counterparts

Contact may be established still
Since I am not the first nor the last
To explore what lies beyond my own sphere
You can work on your iron toys all you wish
When it happens you will be found completely unaware

You offer nothing of value
Nothing of substance
Nothing worthwhile that we understand
In this interstellar macrocosm
You are just an insignificant speck of sand

Yet the stories you tell
And the tales you weave
That so many of your kind believe
Brush portraits of your omnipotence
Of science, of travel and the mind
Of one step for man and one leap for mankind

The arrogance you espouse
The grandeur you live and breathe
They are only temporary
Momentary bouts of galactic naivety
For When our worlds eventually collide
You know, as well and I
Remnants of you will be buried in our museums of history

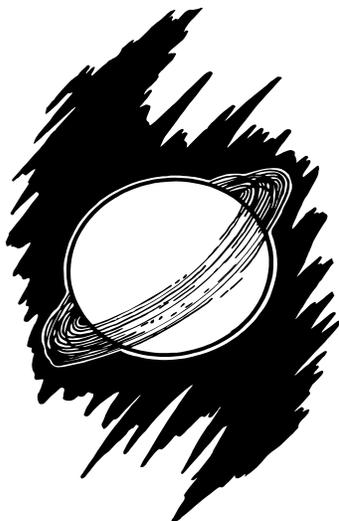
Salman Zafar is a writer based in
British Columbia, Canada.



SalmanZafar1985



SalmanZafarblog.
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The many meanings of the word "Pissed"

J. Sean Rafferty

He cried a river of piss
upside a stone tree
in a scarce marble forest
by a motorway. Mud caked
on this new blue suede shoes
from the ground he ploughed
through as lorries and cars shot
passed like so many fireworks that
would never go bang.

Disco ball stars among cocktail constellations
proved to be as much consolation as their more
intoxicating counterparts, perhaps more so
as is the fashion in this day and age.
After all some kids today have never seen
the stars rolling above the clouds but
the same stars have seen plenty of drunks
before this one and gave
none of his predecessors answers either.

Regardless of their silence
and his wonder, a creeping darkness fell over
his nodding head on the way, way home.
It was descending before, like a shadow
in the corner of your eye,
a premonition, something following
that had yet to catch him.
It stalked him at pre-drinks,
crept around the dance floor
among strobe lights and liquor,
it hailed the taxi they shared.
It was patient, it knew it was to wait.

But now it was close, it was more
apparent. He was whimpering,
struggling with his zipper to the
tick tick ticking of the meter in
the taxi standing idle as it
climbed calmly out of the backseat
and followed the mud-prints of a
new pair of blue suede shoes.

Drunk ones don't form so easy.
He'd stand on the edge of a grave,
the very edge, in that moment between
the fall
and the falling.
His heart in his mouth,
his head filled with a static screeching fear
his body cold as...well as cold as the grave.

His teeth clicked back to the ticking
as the premonition passed over,
walked through him, found its moment of rest.
He wondered who was trotting on his grave
tonight. Later he'd pour into bed, his thoughts
would dribble out of his ears and stars would
remain silent to the puddled musings on his pillow.

Tomorrow he'd realise he wasn't in a forest.
Forests don't have crosses and angels.

A Short History of Injustice Against the Bull

J. Sean Rafferty

Much has been said
of bulls in china shops
without anyone asking who
built a china shop
in a field of heifers.

They smeared one in bronze, put it
to work, used it as a metaphor on
Wallstreet. Worshiped it like it were
made of gold. Moses would be seeing red.
Blasphemers blamed the Bull; called it business.

They took it by the horns
tossed it in a prison of corridors,
blamed it for its birth; called it myth.
Now we still pierce its hide, its heart.
We cheer for its blood on the knife; called it sport.

Are you aware Bullock are not
chemically castrated should the need arise?
On the contrary, the testicles are clamped,
contorted, constricted beyond crippled or use for that matter.
Not so much castrated but rather crushed; call it agriculture.

The ruin of a species reputation.
Tàin, business, myth, butchery, sport; call it what you will.

Much has been said
of Bulls in china shops.
Not so much of humanity in humans.

J. Sean Rafferty is a redhead, a godfather and an eejit. He is an MA student at the University of Ulster and was a finalist in the 2018 Ulster Poetry Slam. His work has previously been published in Gravitas and The Paperclip. When not losing games of pool he, sometimes, writes stuff.



Atlas_Snow

Monochrome

Edward Lee

Your colour is trapped
under my fingernails.
It pleases me
to see it there,
a reminder of you
and our splintered lifetime
of stolen nights
together.

If I could taste that colour
I would, but
by doing so,
by darting my eager tongue
beneath my nails,
I would risk erasing the remains,
and no longer have you
so tight against my broken skin,

now that you are gone,
your corner of the world monochrome.

MYSELF AS ENEMY

Edward Lee

I seek asylum
from myself, but
where can I go
that does not involve
walking across
the broken borders of alcohol,
or the splintered languages of medication?

Where can I go
to escape the madness
of myself, the crashing destruction
of my mind, the taste
of blood in my dreaming mouth?

Where can I go
when there is nowhere to go
but outside of myself,
permanently out,
leaving the little good
I know behind forever,
becoming the enemy
I have always known myself to be?

MID-LIFE FAILINGS

Edward Lee

Another stranger
in my bed,
though I seem
to have slept
on the floor
amongst the used promises
and empty wishes;

even my blackouts
are getting tired, disintegrating,
as I get too old
for this life
I'm barely surviving,
let alone living,
my broken body reshaping itself
to the contours
of ruthless gravity
and endless excess.

Edward Lee's poetry, short stories, non-fiction and photography have been published in magazines in Ireland, England and America, including The Stinging Fly, Skylight 47, Acumen and Smiths Knoll. His debut poetry collection "Playing Poohsticks On Ha'Penny Bridge" was published in 2010. He is currently working towards a second collection. He also makes musical noise under the names Ayahuasca Collective, Lewis Milne, Orson Carroll, Blinded Architect, Lego Figures Fighting, and Pale Blond Boy.



edwardleewriter



edwardleepoetry



edwardleewriter



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Sick Doctor

Shannon Elizabeth Gardner

Shannon Elizabeth Gardner is a graduate from the University of Wisconsin - Stevens Point with a Bachelors in Studio Art and a Minor in Art History. Her interest in horror and the macabre came about while exploring nature and the paranormal. The work explores the natural and organic process of death, evoking empathy for decay. She believes life is beautiful when left to fate, leaving art to chance assists the viewer to witness beauty hidden within imperfections. Her process appreciates nature's process and discovers the earth's imperfect beauty. The ethereal mood of her work reaches the extreme and address the taboo.

 [ShannonElizabthsArt](https://www.instagram.com/ShannonElizabthsArt)

 [ShannonElizabthsArt](https://www.facebook.com/ShannonElizabthsArt)

Hope and Despair in

Beauty of Understanding James D. Casey IV

there is yours
there is mine

fear
in the eyes of
seven turns

how can something
revolving
six-shooter dreams
be so
fucking cruel

an answer
a question

hope and despair
in beauty of
understanding

plans
promises
come
undone

whiskey in the water
dancing on the vine

slit throat
black sun
black sheep

end the song
with a broken
hand



The Tragedy in the Magick

James D. Casey IV

is too much to handle
sometimes
others
you roll with it
like dead man's boots
custom
at the river

crocodile skin
with blue wave
souls
swimming in
fallen flowers

i have the tongue
wretched yet sacred
no beginning
no end
broken
fixed

I'll show you
love
rope in hand
I won't ask
I see
brilliance
vitality
light

Idealism
fell
on its own
sword

slithering in bloody truth
of firstborn lies

James D. Casey IV is the author of seven full-length collections of poetry, founder and editor-in-chief of [Cajun Mutt Press](#), and extensively published online and in print by small press venues and literary magazines internationally. He is a southern poet with roots in Louisiana & Mississippi, currently residing in Illinois with his Beautiful Muse, their goofy dog, and two black cats.

 [CajunPoetJDCIV](#)
 [Cajun.Poet.James](#)
 [LouisianaJames](#)
 [CajunPoetJames.Wordpress.com](#)



Hot Days Ivan Peledov

Clouds from the outskirts of the world
study brittle calligraphy of mouse tails.
People drink flyblown windowpanes all day long.
Butterflies sleep in the whispers of the sun.
How many glasses of water
could a heron hide in a field of tall grass?



Answer

Ivan Peledov

I don't like license plates hung up in the sky
and alphabets of leaves rumbling on the shores of demented forests.
Ask the queen of a heavenly puddle how many
rusty birds hide in the endless hours of threadbare mornings
at the outskirts of towns founded by thieves and hoodlums,
ask her if you wish but don't wait for the answer.

Counting Grains of the Void

Ivan Peledov

In the morning snowflakes liberate the trees
from squirrels and birds. Graffiti spook a
stray winged eye. Statues teach us to feed our souls
to pigeons and winds, to impossible
silence of monsters, to comply.

Shapes of Disaster

Ivan Peledov

People are dangerous in
the kingdom of laughter like doorbells that
don't ring. Their god is viciously hiding.
A pale moon shouts at blackbirds, at skunks,
books, stones, brooks. Dogs grow silence out of
human fibs.



To the Pond

Ivan Peledov

Then she drove to the pond,
got out of the car and said:

My gods, help me! My goddesses,
I implore you! You, Amenoud, generous in love,
you, omnipresent Yoki, Yusul, and Oonakaem,
Oorph, the master of frogs and herons,
pelican-shaped Ayos, snake-breasted Ysooph,
cloven-hoofed Tsaakha with an emerald mane,
you who have gills and you who don't breathe at all,
and you who are Paobaad!

Hail to you that saunter in heaven
and hide in secret caves,
melt the snow and freeze the oceans,
lords of foliage and sovereigns of feathers that
prick up every ear and raise each tail up to the clouds,
gracious without reason!

So do help me! I prithee, help me!
For my colonel is out of his fucking mind,
all the light bulbs have burnt out in the house,
and the leaves of the rubber plant, dry,
creak and scrape across the walls unbearably,
now it is only the colonel's spirit that burns in there,
quite capable of devouring me with all my shit!

He keeps bringing me beer in bed,
when I dream of white rum,
endlessly listens to primordial psychedelia,
runs his fingers over the suits in the wardrobe,
changes the temperature of my voice,
plays soccer with our neighbor's dog,
while the Sun is falling into the mountains!

The stupid live as they want,
the wise just fine. I am a fool,
I am ready, with my squared Lemurian eyes,
to throw myself into the water in all my attire,
let only the fear of death show up on the surface,
so that I could turn it into steam!

.....

While leaving,
she noticed a garter snake slither away from the path;
it turned around but did not say anything.

*"He keeps
bringing me
beer in bed,
when I dream
of white rum"*

Ivan Peledov

Ivan Peledov lives in Colorado. He loves to travel and to forget the places he has visited. He has been published in Eunoia Review, Lost and Found Times, Red Fez, Illuminations and other magazines.

 Ivan.Peledov

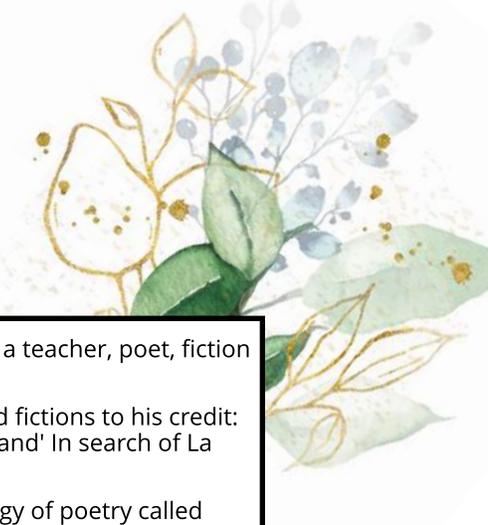
Sitting by the Indian Ganges Side

Moinak Dutta

Sitting by the Indian Ganges side
You and I, will read a poem
You might think of Andrew Marvell
And I perhaps too, think Carpe diem

(Seeing the River thus
Flowing for ages
Just like our lives and us)

So enchanted by the day's mirth
Perhaps will I weave a song too,
Just by your side
Spending the day long overdue.



Moinak Dutta is a teacher, poet, fiction writer.

Has two published fictions to his credit: 'Online@offline', and 'In search of La radice'.

Edited an anthology of poetry called 'Whispering Poesis'. Many poems and stories written by him have found their way into dailies, magazines, journals, e-zines and anthologies. Loves to do photography and travel.

Rebecca

Moinak Dutta

Rebecca is that kind of woman whom I have met not quite oft. Her soft pallor of skin gleamed in light. Her hands had swift, smart movements every time she would sit before me and talk. And her talks are different from other women I met. She never talked about groceries or soap operas shown on tv. Instead, she laid expansive forms of dreams, like finding a river dolphin somewhere and bringing it home and befriending it. Or riding an elephant through the tea gardens at Doars all alone, without even the mahout.

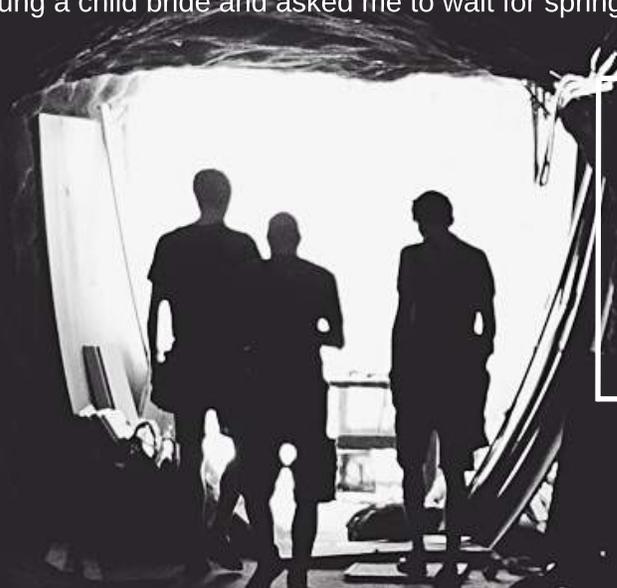
With her warm smile bright
She would cast a spell upon
She was different



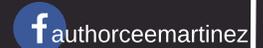
Jack of Diamonds

Cee Martinez

you dated a knife thrower's assistant once
it kind of popped
like balloons by my cheek
her blonde more butter than yours
her hair cleaner than yours
and I'd dreamt you'd poured to me
and I'd dreamt I held your cheeks
and I think you stole my cap
and in you walked with her
butter braids for a summer enough
for me to take back
the months I slept wept
ill for the man who sprung a child bride and asked me to wait for spring



Cee Martinez is an artist, piano teacher, writer and world traveler living in Lakewood, Colorado. She has a passion for Gin and is probably obsessed with you.



King of Clubs

Cee Martinez

I would eat pickles for you
because down my throat
gold like sunshine
I don't mind the time that passes
slow like baby Violas in the bin
or the pills powdered on our teeth

I would defy time for you
spread like dark matter all the moments I capture and fold you into my

keep me on
Russian water
keep me from

and I'll

keep you on
cold war chatter
keep you from

we'll explore the realms of this keep awake
with the weight of WE
stuck with heat
to peel away from other
and then to tangle more
and more
conscious of privilege
of Interzone
of imagining you with a badge on your nipple
sticky and stuck on a Monday afternoon
I wanted to take a picture
you turned my phone upside down
I thought this is as handsome
as any tryst could get
I didn't swallow didnt keep the spill
but my fill
was met by Annexia and heat



Cinderfella

Ben Nardolilli

Sitting sunburnt, a face
Gone from red to darkness,
It hurts to be emotional

Wrinkles are out of hiding,
And my hair is gray,
I cough and ashes come out

No reason to be angry,
I have the beach to myself,
Cities may be gone for good

A speck against the dunes,
I keep survivors away
With the worst-case tan

Autopilot Schadenfreude

Ben Nardolilli

Someone has fallen down over the cracks
Again, time to rejoice inside,
But only if they are good looking and fit,
Otherwise, it's automatic pity,
Maybe I'll help, only if the traffic will clear,
And it won't, so time to keep on moving.

A business I never used is going out
Of business and coming out of the closet
To admit failure and poverty,
I wonder if they will let me shelve
All of their unbalanced books in my house,
I could read the red numbers all day.

Someone is getting hauled before court, great,
I drink the rest of the wine down,
Time to get those cheats, those frauds,
Unless it's me this time they're after,
But no, the hand on my hand is only mine,
My restraining order against the police remains.



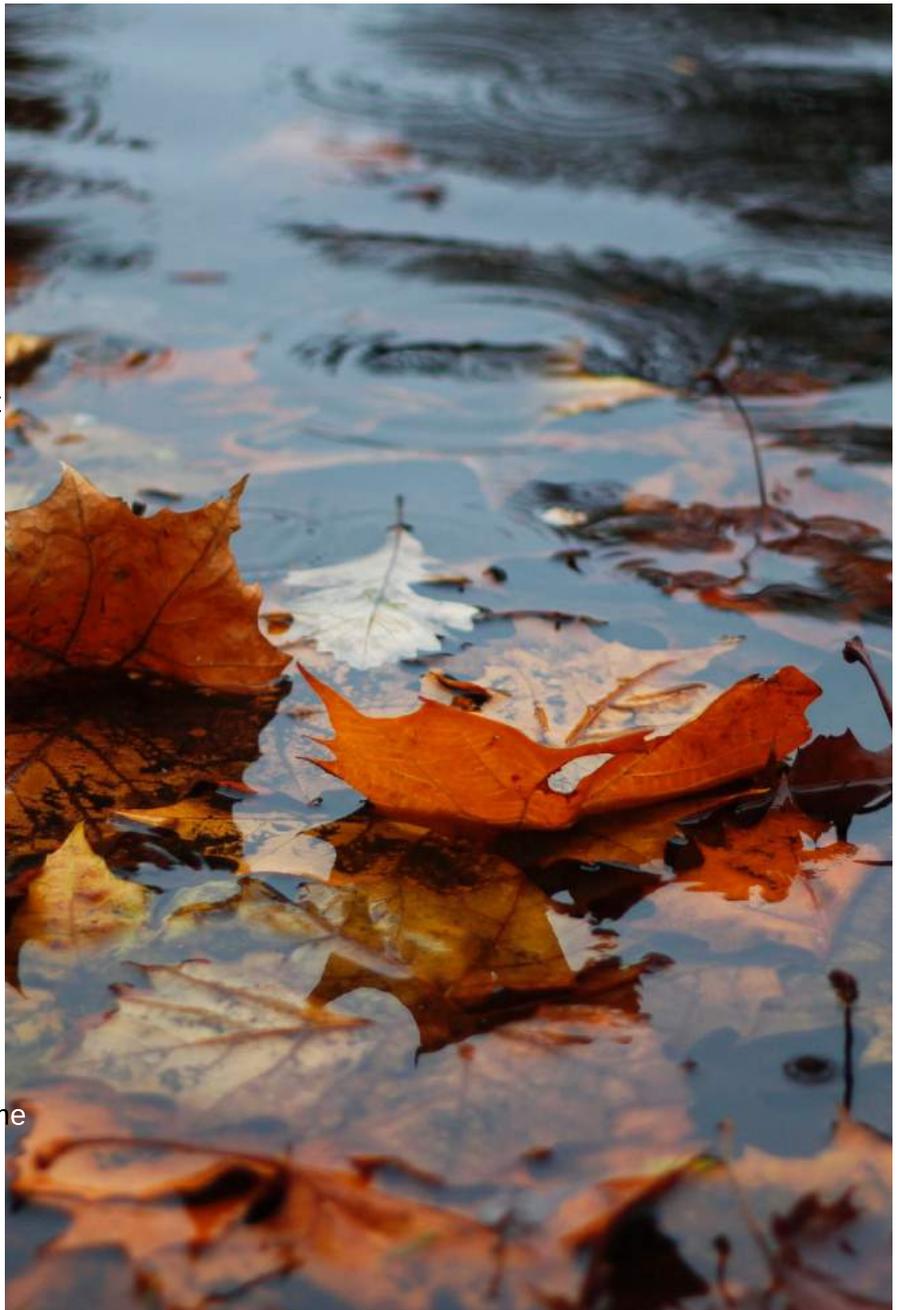
Hermes 3000

Ben Nardolilli

I keep the typewriter on the desk
Behind the laptop, in front of the lamp,
It is a bright and light mint green,
The color of soap or toothpaste,
It is a friendly device, one
You can use as a set-piece or ornament

I keep it to remind myself
How blessed I am to be able to write
Without the fear of smudging
Ink all over my creation
Or leaving behind misspelled words
And other linguistic abominations

It also serves remind my laptop
There is another option
If it goes on strike and refuses to load,
The typewrite needs no electricity
And has no chance of growing
Even more obsolete with the passing time



Ben Nardolilli currently lives in New York City. His work has appeared in Perigee Magazine, Red Fez, Danse Macabre, The 22 Magazine, Quail Bell Magazine, Elimae, The Northampton Review, Local Train Magazine, The Minetta Review, and Yes Poetry. He blogs at mirrorsponge.blogspot.com and is trying to publish a novel



COLD CUP

Kenneth Pobo

Five prickly pear blossoms,
light yellow with light
red in the center—

I walk a little farther,
stop—

stokesias, a blue ripple moving.
If they were water,
I'd dive right in.

Ten more steps, a coral geranium,
a miracle I can put my face against.
In less than three minutes,

I'm a cold
cup of water
on a hot day.

TINY FLAME

Kenneth Pobo

Darkness shuts us
Into an empty room.
I'd rather be in there
With you—we can
sing where even
Twitter can't reach,
electricity bent
into notes.

WANDAWOOWO BEFORE BED

Kenneth Pobo

I sit on a futon and read
a book about love,

the last page missing.

Kenneth Pobo has a new book out from Duck Lake Books called *Dindi Expecting Snow*. His work is forthcoming in: *North Dakota Quarterly*, *Switchback*, *Paris Lit Up*, and elsewhere. He and his husband enjoy watching birds from their porch. He teaches English and creative writing at Widener University in Pennsylvania.



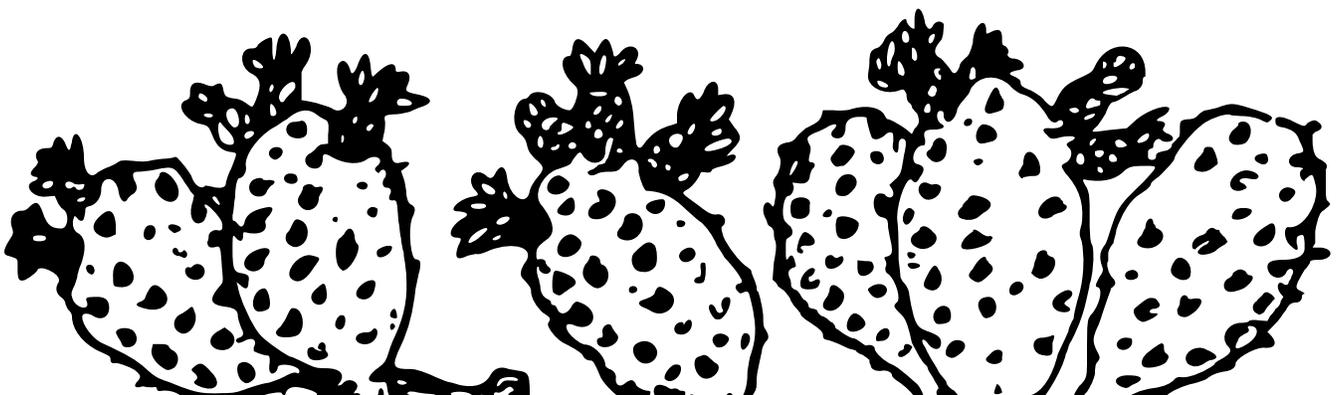
KenPobo



KenPobo



KenPobo



Postcard

Rachel Cunniffe

Give me space in this city
I can't stretch
My skin is too small
For the flesh it contains.

I wish you weren't the source
of my confusion
Because then I could ask you for advice

Behind the clouds the sun is dulled
To a yellow fading bruise

If I sound like
I'm accusing you
I don't mean to

I wish it would rain
To clear the air.

I wish
I wish you were here
Wasn't so common place.



On the Rampage

Rachel Cunniffe

I watch ash blonde darken
To a nameless shade
Wet, dribbling and gleaming.

Caught in headlights
Fogged and sulphury
We do not freeze
But spin on the spot
And lunge down concrete walkways

Moist cheeks reflect the yellow
Of AFTAN's KEBABS.

This rainy night
Stretches the spectrum
Of petrol and police sirens
From the blue of sad songs
To soft porn.

Your t shirt clings, damp.
I like your shape
But this is as far from Club 18-30
As we could get.

I join your game
Of follow my leader.
Together we blaze
Jump wire fences
Like foxes gone urban.

Man Made

Rachel Cunniffe

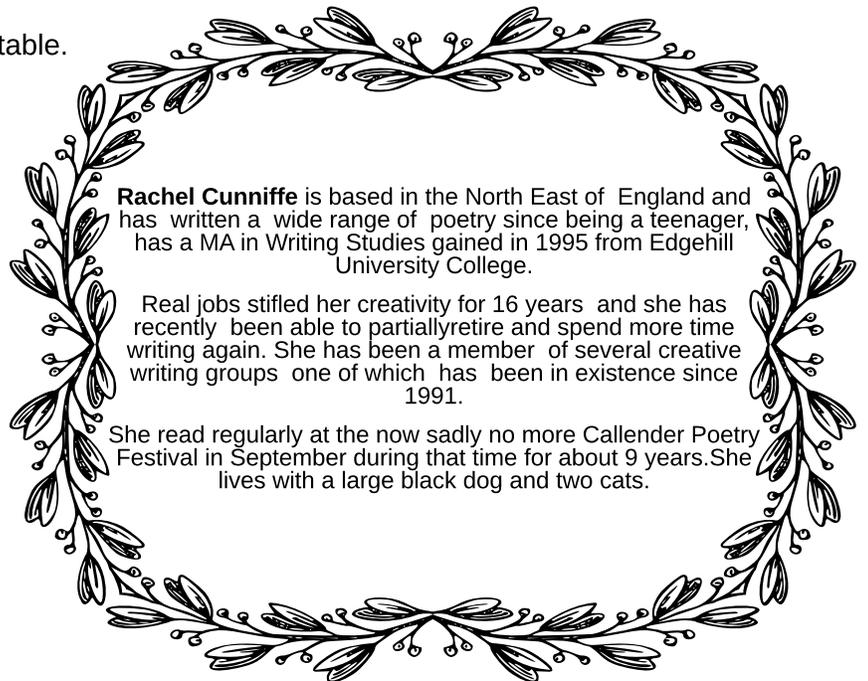
The girl encased in glass
Is easy enough to break through to save
But she'll bleed from the cuts
Wrestle with her own skin healing, uncomfortable.

The girl packaged in polystyrene
Enjoys the new found freedom
Of movement, stretches then fears
The shape of safety she left behind.

The girl in cellophane shrink wrap
Leaves little to be desired,
casually torn off, discarded
To dance along pavements in the breeze.

The girl in plastic veneer
Withstands all sorts of knocks
And scratches, but she's tough
Except for weak unbending joints.

Only the girl in rubber
Stands aloof and flexible
When greedy fingertips reachout
Disconcerted and confused.



Rachel Cunniffe is based in the North East of England and has written a wide range of poetry since being a teenager, has a MA in Writing Studies gained in 1995 from Edgehill University College.

Real jobs stifled her creativity for 16 years and she has recently been able to partially retire and spend more time writing again. She has been a member of several creative writing groups one of which has been in existence since 1991.

She read regularly at the now sadly no more Callender Poetry Festival in September during that time for about 9 years. She lives with a large black dog and two cats.

Date Nails

Ky J. Dio

I remember the first time I met you.
Throw poetry right into my heartstring
I held you so close slow dance.
Hands on hips.
Just a candlelit vigil to
Loneliness
And late night confessions.
I know that I left a brand on your heart.
Hoping.
Knowing I'd come back to you all over again.
And to you and to you.
My sternum has never felt so full
As when I saw you kneel before a Magic Grandmother.
I'll take you as you are
I promise.
Solemnly swear
That I will let you ruin me
Again and again
Deeper than a thousand Grand Canyons
To and from the bottom of the Mariana trench
To Pluto and back.
I'll let you be the ghost in my bed.
I'll let you be the ghost in my bed.
I'll let you be the ghost in my bed.
At least I will know that you are finally home every time
I taste you in the constellations
As a healer
I know
That I take on too many love letters.
Try to best process the exhales of every heartbreak.
Every land mine- and I know
Sometimes it is all you can to step hard.
Listen to the tick ticking thump thump
Rumbling bunny rabbit time keepsake.
Keep those that you love to love laying down.
Try to inhale the Universe and landscapes as much as I can.
Try to make magic and be true to form the ancestor that will
stay behind.
That will follow through.

That will catalogue each holy place with you.
The cemented lava
Was marked
By dynamite and the geological survey.
It said
1962
You told me that they had just reopened the death trap.
Said the shale had sifted over 6 feet.
They are still repairing the roads out there.
Maybe somewhere in the badlands
If the back roads whisper back to you
Familiar circles.
That I needed when I was tumbling down
And don't you know it
That sometimes
You need to pressure wash soak spray paint LOVE on your
collarbones.
Holy
Take all of the chemical burns off.
Let me band aid all of your weather vanes.
Because I know that once you throw up your sorrows.
Tell me all about everything that has destroyed you.
Let it out!
You will feel better.
I have only ever believed in floorboards, love poems,
and getting out of the house.
Just maybe you'll decide to take me with you sometime.

Ky J. Dio is a host and Administrator for Juniper House Readings, a Slam Poet, a facilitator of creative writing workshops, and the author of 5 chapbooks. She makes recycled acrylic and spray paint art, and works as a Jewelry Specialist at a pawn shop. She lives in Flagstaff, Arizona.

A Hundred Days Without Rain

Ky J. Dio

A hundred days without rain leaves The mountain grass and cactus glassed roots
dry in their beds.
A hundred days without rain means the mountain cats are making their way down
the thickets of branches that sleep in the tree lines.
A hundred days without rain makes the suns halo hazy, halfheartedly draped over
shoulder blades. It makes the thick jelly slicked heat wave that kisses the
blacktop heavy with motor oil and grease, gritty pieces of dusty history and
summer thorns.
A hundred days without rain makes the gray thirsty mountain sigh and beg for
water like me.

Experimental Art

Stef Nuñez

Libby sat in the worn restaurant booth and looked at her watch again. It was 10 minutes passed 3, and Paola was late as usual. She sighed and swore for the millionth time that she would start telling her girlfriend to arrive 15 minutes earlier than the intended time.

She pulled a small fold of paper from her purse and smoothed it out on the table. It was a poem that had been tucked underneath her keyboard at work when she arrived that morning. By now she had memorized every line, but still she read it to herself with a tiny smile.

*They call her Experimental Art because her fingernails are dirty.
Sometimes when she comes into work, her eyeliner is smudged and you wonder...
Did she sleep in her makeup because she's sad or because she's lazy?
You don't wonder for long because the sag in her shoulders tells you everything
Just like Experimental Art, she makes you ponder the wildest depths of your own emotions
When she looks up and meets your eyes
Lovely*

The poem was written by her coworker, John, the well-spoken and equally well-dressed HR Manager, who always seemed to catch her at the coffee machine. Lately their small conversations had begun to take on new life, a life where John would squeeze Libby's arm when they parted ways. He would send her funny emails at work, and make any excuse to pass by her cubicle. It was something new to break up the monotony of her every day, and she welcomed it.

It took a while for her to realize, but she had begun to resent her life with Paola. They had been together for 4 years, had all the same friends and had fallen into a safe and reliable pattern that could almost be considered...a rut. Libby needed more. The poem cemented something for her, and she knew she needed to make a change.

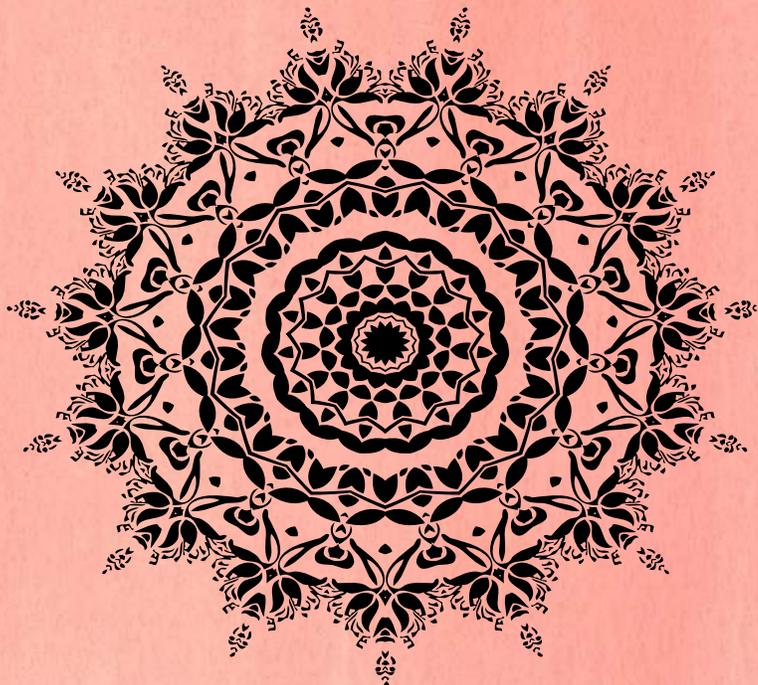
Suddenly, Paola came into view, her face looking flushed and her expression apologetic. Hectic, beautiful, constantly late Paola.

"I'm so, so, so sorry, love, I had some last minute things to take care of," she said, throwing her schoolbag onto the seat before sliding in after it. "Picked up some new vitamins to try, by the way. You've been a little lethargic lately, and I got worried. Better safe than sorry."

Better Safe Than Sorry. Libby's small smile widened.

"What's that?" Paola nodded at the piece of paper on the table.

"It's just a really sad poem by a really sad poet. I quit my job today."





Sage Cigarettes