

Poetry

Can you Breathe?

Joy Liu

What rule of law?
What justice?
Have you answered to either?

The three words you hate to hear the most,
not the large ones above,
But the ones you hear on the streets,
do not discount your jobs.
Your lives matter,
but they matter too much.
And jobs are not colors.

I do not care for the weight of your badge.
And I doubt your intentions,
But if we must care about yours,

What about hers, for sleeping in her own apartment?
or his, when he went on a jog?
or his, when he went to the store?
or his, for walking away from a fight?
or his, for standing on a street corner?
or theirs, when they took naps in their cars?

Does your badge mean so little
That you can only shoot?
That you allow lynching?
That you shoot seven times?
That you choke indiscriminately?
That you must take away their breaths?

I know it does, but you
And those like you
And those who side with you
And those who defend you in court
Seem to think that it means more.

Perhaps it should, once you learn
how to do your goddamn jobs
And protect.

Protect the people around you
And those who side with you
And those who defend you in court.
But also,
Protect those who are not like you
And those who do not side with you
And those who defend themselves from *you* in court.

You seem to need help remembering
where exactly the weight of your badge comes from.

The loss of their lives
And the loss of their loved ones
And the blood on your hands
is the weight of your badge.

They are more than a name.
They are more than a name in the news
on a court document
on a sign
on a mural
in a poem

Say their names.
Honor their lives.
Remember them.

They cannot breathe.
Who made it that way?

Can you breathe?
I think you can.

Gaia

John Goodpasture

Let's write a poem
And my words will be like a rush of water
Which comes to a gate and becomes frozen between the bars
And you will hold a flame to the ice
As it melts you will collect the words in your mouth
And speak them

Let's write a song
The music will swirl and flow in my head
And finally take shape with a space fit for words
But the lyrics won't fit into the hole I made
So you will take a knife and carve away
The edges of the music

Let's make love
And your body will become the Earth and mine the Sky
I will love the mountains and pastures and oceans
And you will love the sun and stars and moon
We will create our own gods and goddesses
Until we sleep

Passing

Rita DiSibio

sprouting seed in
false spring:
chest flat
hair back under
a baseball cap

the waitress bounces
prey-like
to my table
she observes
*is there anything else
I can do for you*

ladies?

white winter wind
cuts into
everything
green and my
retreating eyes
seed cannot
survive

she seems to
slither away
but no one
else sees
predator
no one else
freezes
I choke on

*can I say I
do not caged
by attention
accusations like
being included
I bury my
self seen not
as a
lady?*

ritual is the sacrament of a god

Rita DiSibio

black widows
crucified
on the moss infested altar,

pupil goned eggs,
still rotting
on the church's ash's memories of psalms,

these escape the children hidden behind the veil of servitude;

the crown of thorns tricks children down
to consummation,
their blood water turns to holy wine

and trickles
into the communal chalice;
is there comfort in a rosary

the child asks, *is there comfort in a rosary?*

my child, that
is no longer a rosary,
and I know you still pray but

it stopped being a rosary before I stopped praying too;
we sink anyway, buried
underneath our own funeral pyre cross,

but incense will not exorcise us from what we did not know was wrong.

even if the mantises self resurrect
from the eyes of their self prescribed pentagrams,
ask them if they heard singing

in their coven of tongues;
we can only invite them to listen
while we hang our goat skulls

and make nests.

Consider it Fixed

Lucy Conner

Under the weather
And the weather is gray.
It feels hot, and cold.
Two tablespoons of honey.

To second guess is
To consider the truth
But no need to worry
Two tablespoons of honey.

Unreasonable questioning drives us insane
But is it ourselves or them that's causing this pain

A moment of good
Will likely pass, so believe
Good will never last.
Two tablespoons of honey

And they taste so sweet,
But are gone so fast,
Two tablespoon of honey
That will never last.

The moon is absent and the sun is missing too
And everything we knew happens not to be true

So alls a bit off,
But just stay still and
Consider it fixed with
Two tablespoons of honey.

Listen to the rudimentary rhythm of
A song that sings of a paradise up above.

A fantasy world,
A life after death, we
Won't escape, without
Two tablespoons of honey.

Because with honey we thrive,
It's how we survive
Two tablespoons of honey
To keep us alive.

The Fallout of OUR Gravity

Isabella Frank

The ones who burst you into the cosmos! Straight out of nothingness, protectors from evil as foretold yet not selected by you, They were once fresh and new like you were at the start, mere starter seeds eventually driven mad by potions, They selected you from a random, meaningless assortment, stronger, saplings, who might've fared better,

They selected each other from brief spark of magnetic attraction, into each other's orbits, Ice Ages have ravaged each other's fiery core, until nothing but ash!! soot! and muck!

Their attraction weakened,
needing a fix to rekindle their magma cores

They've overdosed

on elixirs said to re ignite wildfires! But instead made them addicts for more,

and more, until yet again their left empty! Emptier than when they stated, addicts to being needed

Their polarity for each other's beings has shifted, inverted, flip flopped upside down, and left you stuck in both of their gravitational pulls, their heavenly attack spaceship shooting their explosive asteroids to your Switzerland while aimed towards each other,

blind to the damage on your fortress,

idiotic wars! meaningless battles! on your soil! And you try and keep your core safe and protected, endlessly forever chanting to yourself of how one day someone, anyone might notice that Hiroshimas story is getting played again and again! All over the soft coating of your soul, tearing and ripping you down! But yet they say you're not a part of their battles, not a part of their war, separate from their inextinguishable hatred for each other! They say you are safe, and they only care for you, not themselves, but

They blind figures who've claimed wisdom, act as if they are newly formed pure new seeds in Their universe, real wisdom never granted to them, infinitely sightless to their reality, They who have been here more years than they even know, claimed you,

and you try and covertly help both sides, secret spy illegally working for the other, because they both yours! And you are theirs! But their misguided whims take over the calming oceans meant for you! not stopping to think of repercussions! not stopping at all, they run and run and run from themselves! and from each other, they try and run but stay within each other's galaxy,

While

you are left behind, and in between, they are sending out troops employed to keep you safe, but the Distracted troops run across, straight past you, into enemy territory, and they pass you up, And now your borders are bare,

naked, and unguarded as you are as wondering when they will run out of war to declare, and when you'll run out of care, wondering if your core might turn like theirs, below freezing, wondering and wandering trying to find someone to notice your invisible internal craters, children of destruction, losing count of how many you now have, hoping another might be able to let you know how fallout has played out on your polluted atmosphere

While you tell yourself you'll never be complicit to another or to the genetically modified

Placebos, prescribed by so called medicine men, with proof of their higher intelligence, CIA, FBI, KGB knowledge and wisdom, wisdom the conspiracy theory written by other medicine men telling us angelic beings how to orbit, when, where, why, explanations through veiled windows of smarts thankfully yet to penetrate your biosphere, but for others its worked, they've polluted and infested and degraded and eroded your progenitors biosphere, they pass on the medicine supposed to cure, that truthfully only keeps them stuck to Need. Need of more! And more! And more!

They who burst you into the cosmos, with counterfeit wisdom, keep you prisoner in their nuclearized orbit, forever trapped between warring childish states, because where else in the infinite universe could you be, they are yours, and you are theirs, but where are you?

And you, sitting

perched atop boundaries of

war,

a scoreboard for fraudulent victories from your bogus protectors, wasting away the eons! Until one day hopeful Polaris, who's led celestial navigators for infinity plus shines bright enough to lead you out of the gravity, and you hope Polaris will also come for your child-like protectors, because they've been in a state of war too long, decades that have tuned to centuries, and centuries into millennia, and the millennia have reverted back into days, and weeks, and the eternal wheel turns over and over,

Polaris star we

We are here!

Inspired by "Howl" By Allen Ginsberg

The Space

Margaret Summerside

I am tired.

I am so tired.

and there is just one space left in the bunk

No more than a cot on the floor,

equal to the cockroaches of the corners and lesser than the spiders of the ceiling

But I crave it, I yearn for it

I picture the weight of my useless body

Crushing the small space as I drift to another universe

But there is a man there

He stands next to the space

looking at its emptiness,

its availability

My eyelids droop, my legs hardly able to close the distance

between myself and the man

“Excuse me” I whisper to the man, “may I use this space?”

“Oh, I’m sorry, no” replies the man “I’ve already claimed it”

I look around, my dry eyes searching

Weary as I turn back to the man

He seems to have forgotten me

Focused again on the space

Still he stands

My head reels, my limbs filling with sand

Why will he not lie down?

I fantasize

Of how I would use the space, properly and fully

How I would surrender to the deepest sleep

Succumb to the delusions of slumber
The body that space deserves is my own
Yet the space is empty
Yet the man stands

“Excuse me sir, but are you going to use this space?” I desperately slur
“I am” says the man
And the man stands

“I’ll pay you” I plead “how much for this space?”
Again, the man seems to have forgotten I am there
Staring at the space
“please, how much?”

“I’m sorry”
the man replies
“I’ve claimed this space”

He stands.

A Hamartia, Perhaps.

Kelton Jay Hevelone

I.

That untrue Lust – the vile, infernal beast,
thou art the bane of my internal keep.
When I was young and knew of thee the least,
in me allow'd thy thief to travel deep.
Thou robb'd from me my agency and love –
a tragic loss to that within which sings;
the carnal fervor yearns and calls thereof,
to hold and touch – such pangs with voice do ring.
So lo! Oh what would I forgo! To call
within again that fair and novel taste,
to know with eyes so bright and soul withal
that I may love without some sens'd disgrace,
and liberate myself from wretched halls
and unabridged be most deep enthrall'd.

II.

One day I woke within a fever dream.
I clear'd my eyes and saw through hazy screens
of fog and mist a younger man so preen
yet so bedeck'd in constant misery.
I ran to him but distance did abound
from that between, and too no shout nor sound
could reach befallen ears – were only drown'd
by that abyss of time that did surround.
Instead, I sat, observing fate play out.
He fell down rabbit holes, so fuel'd with doubt
that he may ever find a love devout.
When done, he lay forlorn, esteem without.
If only he remain'd assured on course,

would I not need to sing the same remorse?

III.

How trying tis to bear that brutal load,
the nightmare demon known by name as 'shame,'
which stalks taboo on sex, of whose sole aim
be that to have one's sense of self erode.
The jail, whose walls sustain the silence of
estrangement, knows but only shrieks in vain,
when falling on deaf ears do none attain.
"Such discontent is frankly violence, love,"
the demon says, up perch'd upon my soul,
but fuck you, wretch, I know from deepest depths
within this cave, that shadow cast not death
does mean, but rather light and growth extols.
Thou, blackguard! Off! By gods, I rid of thee!
Thereby educe forsaken normalcy...

The Hammock and the Sailboat

Dylan Gowins

Do hammocks dream of rested men
So they may rest as well?
Well, rest assured! As dreamers tend
To be the best to sell!

“Ev’ry man a king! And ev’ry dame a queen!”
I’ve heard it near and far between,
But never have I seen
As many crowns on heads
As there are counts of beds.
In meadows, moaning, daylight foaming,
Herds of wolves and sheep are roaming
To witness this: An endless bliss
Of conflict climaxed to a hiss.

The curtains lifted, eyes all shifted
To see the soil neatly sifted,
Showing scenes of men ungifted;
Climbing trees
To catch the breeze
Into the winter wind, he drifted.

The judge, jury, executioner,
The dark-cloaked electrocutioner,
The thin-lipped circumlocutioner,
The blue-eyed resolutioner,
Does he too, dream of far off lands
Where wishers wish as faith demands
And faith, as far as faith could stand
Stands sternly, as is faith’s command?

Do caskets dream of sick old men
For simple company?
To rest by tandem beat within
In perfect harmony?

A wise old monk
Got in a funk
And climbed up off his fence.
He looked around
Until he found
A lack of exigence.
His world reborn,
Correctly torn,
Without significance;
No will to be,
He says that he
Has been contented since.

I asked him once the secret
To his enlightenment,
“Should I run free and naked
Or join a covenant?
“Should I fight to reach the top
Or kiss the ground below?
Should I capitalize the crop
Or yearn to feed the crow?”
He answered so, if you must know:

“If ev’ry saint’s a sinner,
The sinner also learns
To heat his peas
With antifreeze
Until his dinner burns.

“If ev’ry man is destined
To work instead of sleep,
He’ll do his best
To earn his rest
Until he’s six-foot deep.

“If ev’ry dog could bury
The sum of ev’ry bone,
The poor old pup
Would finish up
By burying his own.

“And ev’ry man’s a sailor,
And sails by windings blown.
When lost at sea,
He’ll find that he
Must learn to sail alone.”

The meadow’s long been empty,
The kingdom didn’t last.
The sinner learned to eat his peas,
The monk has long since passed.
The hammocks dream up nightmares,
The dog can’t find his bone,
And sailors only sail in pairs
And kings live on their own.
The jury’s reached deliberation,
It’s time to end the long vacation.
It seems you reached your destination
Long before participation.

So sail on you single sailor!
Sail on to catch the breeze!
Sail on to sunsets long since past!
Sail on the endless seas!
Sail on till you’re sick of sailing,
Until your heart doth swell!
Into the ruthless winds prevailing
So you may rest as well!

Blues Hole

Bruce A. Kaufman

Blues hole, the doors
empty, ravenous, groaning

not knowing
 blue
desire, to fill the whole
planet with significance.

Iridescent midnight note
blurs bells' ears on
 rainy windowpane,
a box unfolding
in the synapses.

So long since
falling through the sky,
 now deficient,
forgetful of dreams, though
dreaming.

Prankster sings Prine's key
to expand reality,
 rose petals erupt
in June under a flower
moon.

Root to skull lights with bolts
of four-dimensional fabric,
 safer at home
with Albert's problem child.

The Sway of TV Murder Porn

Bruce A. Kaufman

Dreams of hot
 amber
trapped for cons
Sunday.
Couch
hard bound
summer solstice 2020

Spaghetti dinner

comes, futures
pullulating chicken feathers
ultraviolet white

Trump's
 trail of tears in Tulsa
 and white terror

and J.J. Cale:
"she don't lie, she don't lie"

Up now, awake,
sleep off

School's Out

Bruce A. Kaufman

Green thunder rips space
time a whole new worm
hole as black as clouds
full of ice pounding out
hot July microbursts.
Doesn't matter what you wear,
the dog leads the lion
how we came here, alone,
absurd, but for summer—
time's end when Old Main's faux
bells toll brick red, and blue
terrapins sun on logs fat
with clocks seeping seconds

Catnip Dreams (for Lane)

Bruce A. Kaufman

“you’re not Melville,”
she wrote, “and that’s a compliment.”

Damn. Sure about that?
I am a comma, comma chameleon
on a four-day drive
like a Merced, as Chuck said, overheated
engines run on to no end, no good,
no rest-stop
for the bleary.

Sheer volume
and vocabulary coalesce
into clear light,
witless, asleep
underground, under night,
my old work-desk dreamed by a window
where came words to play.

Cat napped on my lap, dictated thoughts
from folded files

Raft to the Other Shore

Bruce A. Kaufman

“Life is a killer,” said Bill.
Yet would not murder
a spider for the light of its eight
eyes.

Outside of life, this becoming
trick of death, an alien flower reveals
an organ of sight,

formless attractor, the middle eye
rejects a Spider God, eleven-
headed, eight-armed, twenty-two-legged
hustler

dancing on the corpse of a concept,
as crickets and seventeen-year
cicadas fiddle and pulse,
propagations,

saturate the sanctuary
of a hundred thousand freight trains
in my skull. Down a waterspout,
bottom out to the well again,

spiders are my friends,
me and brother Jim and the bees together
again.

Tiger Study

Catherine Garvin

The tiger gives birth.

Amniotic sac yellow and cloudy-
precedes the cub.

The sensation of the mother's tongue triggers the lungs.

Four breaths, *good girl*, applause.

Black stripes drive lines on their heads,
thicker than along their backs.

Paint clumps on the fur around their paws.

Fifty dollars for one canvas for conservation.

Their eyes are blue and wide.

When a tiger licks its paws, it is preparing to hunt.

She steps on the earth tenderly.

These are young deer and they have never seen a tiger.

She crouches lower than the deer.

Her eyes are yellow now.

Yes, at last, I know for sure she is feeding.

Skyline Aversion:

How a gay boy grows up to view the stars above and city below

Anonymous

A skyline standing tall tonight
with windows shining oh-so-bright,
is bathed in tears of those who weep
for seeds they sow but never reap;

Streets beneath still busy as noon
let lonely hearts now sink and swoon;
And sifting through His inky space,
I pray the stars will grant me *grace*—

I wonder if he sees His moon,
or do hateful Clouds crowd too soon?
Is he like the block, wide awake?
Or more alike my dormant state?

Still, I will keep my distance from,
this skyline housing that someone.

newly acquainted

Bailey Wakefield

when i was born, they didn't have a plan
a child need only know the love of her parents, leave the thoughts of ethereal beings for another day
a poor methodology, but effective nonetheless

upon my turning five, they began to worry
competing ideals under one roof are bound to reach a head, and with it came you

at six, we were formally introduced
another identity to add to the list
i didn't understand why you were loved so deeply, but this was far less important compared to the
pleasantries your name evoked

on my twelfth birthday, we were bound for life
i studied your messages and convinced myself that you would make me whole
they told me all was well

i believed them

when i turned 13, you disappeared
you stole my friend and didn't leave a note
i might've understood had you explained, but that's never been a strength of yours
generations upon generations of pain and yet i was still taught to love you unconditionally
we stopped speaking

at 18, i was reminded of you
in a town of one it is easy to stay hidden, but my path led me here
the others knew of your atrocities, your oversight
yet when the gates you built were open, they all ushered in
i didn't understand, but i loved them dearly

as did you

now i am 20, and your foot is in the door

i will never understand you, but i suppose that was never the point

i may not relish in your stories like i did when they were all i knew

i may not say your name, as my tongue is coated in thorns

but i will keep the others close

they are indeed the sole source of light during your periods of great darkness

i wish we were closer

i wish your guidance was built on more than just fables and hope

but my door is open once more

your adolescence passes through you without a wave or commotion

Allen Means

the title, like the warmth and the growing, up to your waist of the moss in the terrarium and the people who watch you outside, and the magnifying of damp dirt and green bottles they find inside your lungs, like the skeleton of garden you are and china chipped, a coping. in the energy you left burnt out in the lime lamp sunlight, prescribed a multiplicity of function, quiet and held together by your intelligent and disfunction, cold intolerable skin.

dependent on the hands that lift you up and tear you down and tap and tap and tap again, rubbing the foundation of watched and blind and all alone, until the glass is nothing but a pretense. falsely. didn't even notice when they stopped coming coming coming by, like they were never there to begin with, ever there to begin with just a body platform for empty cradling and long-legged creatures to coo at you from the out, side crackling grass and spring and overgrown.

KANSAS GHAZAL

Caroline Wiygul

That's my story: the signs were asking me
for things I couldn't give in Kansas.

It makes no sense that I was shocked by the stripmalls and sunchoked
hills because I have seen them before in places not-quite-Kansas.

I told my mother my route on the phone and she knew
it wasn't right and I was surprised on my drive by Kansas.

I was—
My history erased itself in Kansas.

In the rearview mirror, the billboards jumped across the highway
on treetrunk legs, rearranging me and Kansas.

Asphalt spun me out and away,
toward the next gas station, toward the miracle of Kansas.

How can I defend myself,
my sacrifice for Kansas?

Can I say that I was there like I was new,
a fresh calf in Kansas?

The truth is that I could see everything—
watching the earth peel away from itself, away from Kansas.

Watching myself in a kiss,
watching myself in Kansas.

Squirrel Country

Caroline Wiygul

Your life takes on a new timbre, the short song with the claps that you put in yourself, the fabric of a blanket that doesn't cover your toes— you sweat and smoke and wear special skin to your birthday party.

You could write your day perfectly. You could press every blade of grass for this. You could diorama everything: your mud under the welcome mat, your breakfast, your head coming loose in the steam of the shower. Your witnessing: the god-light breaking through cracks in the cedar door. And it would still just be you filling up your body.

Oh, but the pushing out exhausts you. The too-short blanket will cover you curled up. Let go of the grass perhaps you do not need to chronicle this. It would be okay for the list to be simple for the list to say just: hummus. It would be okay it would be good even if the song you were humming was one from last summer and not anything you wrote.

The neighbors have a few decades on me. They dance and look out at the rain. Their grandchildren are bright muddy wonders, wandering through their yard country. I still feel small, very much a citizen of where I've been placed.

Touch hovers at my windowsill in the body of a fat squirrel, chatters at me like she wouldn't run if I reached for her. I am coming out of the dream in the courtyard, swimming out from under the ghosts of people's arms. In the waking moment: a ribbon reaching from my ribs to the neighbors and the barefoot music: Colorado is on fire while the rivers storm and swamp their structures at home.

The squirrel has been gorging herself, has been screaming I'm up. I'm up. I've got my sister's eyes in the back of my head. She is saying Okay. Okay. She is seeing everything through cracks in these curtains of rain.

My yard is just touch and scrub—
it belongs to the squirrel, the bulb and bulge of her
cheeks, while my belly is still morning-hungry—
I resent her
yes a little
but that's not why my teeth ache: I want to eat her.

WALKING ACROSS THE CAMPUS HEADED FOR A FIELD

Katie Plain

on the day you decide to morph back into
noiseless habits. On your right is the planetarium
where you went for his birthday once. Before cake,
maybe after. Then, in a moment, you see him. Right there.
You think, surely it can't be. Mistakes occur
every day. The name was spelled wrong, the child
was under the bed the whole time, the salt
misplaced for sugar. But you look up, again. There.
He's on his bike, the one that used to lean
against O'neal, surely. Look up to his
ballcap, and yes, it has the red B. There is a large
spool of paper poking out of his backpack.
You wonder if it's art. If this is art. The art of passing
your past. *Did he see me?* You lean in, whisper
under your bandana. He rings his bell twice.
Perhaps as a heads up for the couple in front,
or maybe one last sound.

Horror Vacui

Landin Swift Chesne

You in mind, I want nothing more
than ocean turmoil
deep enough, wide enough, staunch
which might suffice

this God

-Forsaken
pit of malice in my chest

(hostile arid no
extremophile crawls out.)

This taunting colorless flame:
laps marrow from bone,
or would,
but incinerates
every gift—contrivances, now I call them—

Blush of warm cheek.

Fresh berries.

Sunlit silhouette—

eyes

you give me—contrivance, that's it,

and distraction:

valueless, meaningless obstacles
delaying before the ever-sought, mythicized
effervescent, unrealistic quench!

You in mind, you in mind.

denoting any case other than

Katie Plain

Following the recipe exactly.

Mookie hitting a fastball at noon.

The scars not invading your body.

Will you fault the bodega for their produce?

Boston for its weather tendencies?

The hands that latched the wheel?

You can mash bananas for the muffins,

buy a watch + note the seasons it takes the weather to shift,

pen a thank you letter to the car for wanting to paralyze you,

but not.

The market doesn't have blueberries.

It is too windy to play ball.

The dashboard fragments in just the right place
to crack ribs.

The First of the Snows

Kenlie Rohrer

Awake! Your frozen summer
That its ponds may scrape
With the floes of fluid ice,
Remnant of a dancer; pieces
Break up and move, a grace
Indescribable, though nature
Makes her way through
Push forward the seasons
Forget your fairies; it is time!
For leaves to crunch and fall
Away, to leave behind the rind
Of autumn; let chill blast
And enter, to speak thru me
Against the icy tips of wind
The river path white; hardened
Over with purity, and a sweetness
Is what but a taste, stewed
Abroad the breast, soft flakes
Of early October snows
Do you not feel its freshness?
A zing! Abed in my footsteps today!

Knitting Through Skin

Kenlie Rohrer

Folds flow and sands chime
Away from hands that hold up time
I cannot bear to seek the dusk
That brings around what formless; husk
Though terrible and strident I glow now to see
A piercing cross, flush in bruising misery
Tidy turning flowers, a spindle of a rose
Cannot dare but creep the secrets one knows
As divine minutes begin and think to clamber
Down the pearled ropes, thimble essence of amber
Drawn up through the strips of yarn magic; torn
A skin I slide on like it's already been worn.

In Quarantine

Kenlie Rohrer

Cotton balloons
Washed far too many times
Knitting around yarn
Books read over
Thoughts turn to dust
Body falls apart and
Sifts to the corners
Birds crawl on legs
With wings made of
Fingers and bodies made of
Too many hands clenched
The sun from the sky
Has gone and the world is
Gray. Color suns in chalk
Around music not in tune
While, and all the while
Staying far, and away.

And Modernism?

Beau Farris

invisible currents that dominate. and cellphones
scoop out a generations empathy consumed by
the endless scrolling of swing sets utilized to
shackle. this dystopia is a comfortable non
descript original purpose abandoned intent
ionally. it's eclectic to render electric networks
as gaslit propaganda. instinct rises rooted in devil's

humanity with unrequited bitterness. imprisoned
devil invites a firestorm onto innocent operators
who merely surrender to the frequency control
ling their blissful lives it's so depressing. a smile
the facade of baring fangs and the once consistent
head developed or regressed into fueling a hellscape
visible to eyes molded from smoke. modernity isolated

the uneven lines of hair on the back of a head appear
ears are muted and eyes are filtered and the creaking
a chipped rocking chair or the concept of sand are
in a vacation house in slums of Nairobi. content
ment is unlikely to be satiated like this so a corna
hand with horns pushes vertebrae from a skin suit
tempting ash footprints and desire to advance against

marrow. a grin foams out from cheeks so intrinsic
to existing it's laughable. heavy elbows and knees
partake in joint custody of a body racing a mind
tethered to perspective ignited by anxiety. resent
ment is manifested as the inferno incinerating ass
ets that cauterize whole environments with apathy.
ears are spears and eyes are in flames yearning to boil

The Itch

Beau Farris

your heart feels itchy sometimes
like a palm covets for a smooth rock
something tangible that has immense
weight. and when thrown, leaves total euphoria

but—your heart is not a person
it doesn't have a mind to tell its non-
existent hands what it wants to touch and throw
it just wants

you'll need a buzzsaw to crack open your
ribcage. because you're infatuated with some-one
who you don't really love
and it kills you. what you've
built to protect you heart stabs your lungs

you'll realize the hole in your heart
is your heart
the emptiness felt is your heart silently screaming
what your soul is meant for
you just need to listen

and when you finally scratch that irresistible itch
you'll realize that you didn't really scratch an itch
if you consider your heart, it feels like a warm hug
embracing the entirety of what's important: you.

Turning to White

Alana R. Horwitz

We're sitting in his hospital room
He says he's not ready to die so soon

He's trying to put on a brave face for us
But we can tell that his body is starting to rust

The doctor says it's not an easy case
And you can see the tears rolling down my dad's face

His voice cracks as he tells us how much he loves us
We can tell he's realized his life is on the cusp

He says it all happened too fast
The look of despair on his face is unable to be masked

He says he still has a lot to live for
He wants to enjoy his life so much more

We keep asking the doctor to clarify
But we continue to become more terrified

I never thought my once powerful dad could become so weak
Nor that I would now be so meek

Throughout my entire life
He always spoke about how my future was so bright
And he was so excited to see what I would become
He would talk about his future grandkids
And how proud he would be that they were his
But now he has an expiration date

Mastered by the decision of fate

I kiss the top of his head goodnight
Not knowing when everything for him will turn to white

And I thought I could stay strong
But I couldn't have been so wrong
Because how can I be okay
When my father, my role model, my best friend
Is slowly being taken away

(On a sunbeam's behalf)

Caroline Cappelletti

Sometimes, a sunbeam spills, like cargo down the river.
Thrilled children swim to play with it
and dive into its red-brown fire because their eyes are not yet aching from the storm.

In June, the sunshine is beach-colored and loved to no end;
loved in its incompleteness,
loved even in the way it dies, punctually, at nightfall.

Children are too young to spell bereavement.
Children are too old to ignore its tilting, happy font. *Bereavement.*
If grief is painted on like time on a children's watch, does it count?

The river, heavy with history, buries her body before she even knows that she's a body
and not a sunbeam.

Now, the children save their tears in case of drought,
so that they can still water the roses
and the rue.

Even if brief, there was a sunbeam.
A small thing, yes, but not a forgotten one.
She was always there, and sometimes not.

Flawless:

A Modern Boccaccio Retelling

Anya Berlova

Preface

The Decameron is a collection of stories written by Giovanni Boccaccio and is regarded as a masterpiece of medieval literature. I chose to rewrite Day 6, Story 1 as a modern poem because it presents an interesting take on the importance of using words well. Furthermore, it is very relevant to current times, when we emphasize the importance of communication. The original tale details an exchange between an intelligent and well-spoken Madonna Oretta and a knight who turns out to be an extremely poor storyteller.

Oretta was the perfect student
Kind, observant, very prudent
Some could say, a bit uptight
Doing homework till midnight

It was on such dull occasion
She received an invitation
To an online dating site
Which gave her a solid fright

But her friends, how they insisted!
And their attitudes persisted
Thinking this was very stupid
She downloaded OKCupid

After that ten days went by
It seemed love would not be nigh
When on Friday, 5 past 8
She discovered something great

The message came from Mr. Knight
Oretta was shocked at the sight

Of his large poetry collection
His love of words: it was perfection

Each time he wrote, Oretta laughed
His jokes, they truly were a craft
His words, they were divine and nice
His stories, detailed and precise

After all that Knight had written
Oretta was extremely smitten
So she insisted on a date
For which she could so barely wait

Cancelling her homework plans
She set out to meet her mans
Very soon, Sir Knight arrived
In a way a bit contrived

The limo added extra flair
Too much? Oretta didn't care
She sat down next to Knight in awe
Having not seen a single flaw

He was perfect, she was sure
And had a wonderful allure
"Tell a story," asked Oretta
Knight replied with a "You betta"

Knowing how well Knight could write
Her expectations were not slight
But then, when he began to talk
Poor Miss Oretta was in shock

There he mumbled, here he stalled
Coughed, and stumbled, spat, and drawled
"Oh dear, I haven't got it right"
"Perhaps this? No, not this, not quite"

After what felt like an eternity
Of something far from taciturnity

Oretta cried, "Enough's enough!"
"This car ride has been very rough!"

"I still have homework... I can't stay,"
"Please let me out, that's all I'll say"
Knight realized what her words meant
And that she was not quite content

Laughing, he got out his phone
(To which, quite frankly, he was prone)
And said, "Perhaps it will work best"
"If we give verbal speech a rest"

And in a way that's unperplexed
They vowed to talk only through text
With this I end this bizarre tale
Where silence happened to prevail