

LITERARY MAGAZINE • ISSUE NO. 2 • OCT. 2023

LIT SHARK

magazine

THE SHARK WEEK EDITION



FOREWORD WRITTEN BY **PAUL GASEK**
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER SHARK WEEK 2016-2018



CONTENT

Dear readers, we always want to support you and give you the information you need to have the best reading experience possible. Please note that Issue 2 contains some content pertaining to mental health, child loss, and animal death. There are also multiple allusions to sexual activity and a few uses of expletives. Thank you again for your support. We hope you will enjoy our second issue.

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THE SHARK WEEK EDITION

SOMETHING TO SINK YOUR TEETH INTO

"LIVE AND LEARN"

FOREWORD WRITTEN BY PAUL GASEK

Live and learn. . .

My first encounter with a real, live shark was in 1973 aboard the 42' line trawler F/V Bob & Bill out of Chatham, MA. We were 40 miles SE of Cape Cod in the Great South Channel.

That first year in the offshore world, I was seeing a lot of new things for the first time.

The shark was hiding just out of sight under the boat as we hauled gear out of 200 feet. The old Novi boat was pretty low to the water, and you could see the cod coming up, rolling in the tide, blowing bubbles out their vents from the abrupt pressure change.

Up they came, pulled on a deep-sea elevator to the side of the boat, where we picked them off the line as they came aboard.

Suddenly, there he was, eight feet long, thin bright blue body, and fins that seemed too large, too long—all eyes snapped to him. . . In a flash, he bit a big cod in two and cut the line.

We cursed him for that; caught him and killed him. 50 years later, I

feel so differently. I love seeing him now and that *unbelievable* blue.

My own journey with sharks, from a shark killer to a shark lover, has had many analogs. None more dramatic than Rodney Fox.

In fact, the first shark film I ever wrote, *The Fox and the Sharks*, was about Rodney on the 30th anniversary of his famous, almost fatal great white attack in South Australia. The film was a tale of transformation, from vengeful victim after his attack, to a champion of shark conservation in his later years.

Right after his attack, Rodney was featured in some films, like *Great White Death* and *Attacked by a Killer Shark*—shark snuff movies, as he himself admits.

Then came *Caged in Fear* and later Peter Gimbel's *Blue Water White Death*. White sharks were still scary, BUT there's a change of attitude. Instead of scary and worthy of death, they were scary but worthy of curiosity and wonder.

30 years later, we see the older, wiser, former victim reveling in the presence of sharks, running experiments to better understand them, swimming with them, and making the argument for their protection.

National Geographic bought our film, renamed it *Hunt for the Great White Shark*, and it became a best-selling home video.

Rodney's evolution, from fear and loathing, to awareness, wonder, accommodation, and appreciation—that growth is more called for today than ever before. We need an evolution of attitude toward sharks specifically, and the natural world in general: to live with them, not simply in spite of them.

It's why I'm glad to be here, on the Foreward for *Lit Shark*.

One of the most powerful influencers for positive change is thoughtful media.

*

In 2005, I was hired as an Executive Producer at the Discovery Channel. There were a few of us EP's and, come Shark Week, part of the deal was we each had to run a shark show or two. That's how I met Jeff Kurr and the amazing flying white sharks of South Africa, and many other producers and scientists in the shark world.

I realized then that the public can have a relationship with sharks based entirely on media shark products—films, videos, articles—without ever having seen a shark.

This makes shark filmmakers and broadcasters the stewards of the public's relationship with and regard for sharks. If those products are more about being scary (because scary gets ratings), people are going to get a warped idea of sharks—and act accordingly.

So, I made an effort to ensure that at least my shows kept the sensational blood and guts to a minimum and instead pumped up the information and science.

In 2015, I was tapped the Executive Producer of all of Shark Week. For three years, my brief was to inject science into Shark Week, which I did. Every show had a scientist attempting to answer a question about sharks.

I am proud of all those shows—and they rated well. Joe Romeiro and Radley Studios made a show titled *Shark Vortex*, which was all about the mackerel sharks—white, mako, and porbeagle—and their ability to raise their internal body temperature to hunt in colder water. All amazing sharks.

*

Since then, I've been writing and consulting on shark shows for Shark Week and Geographic's Shark Fest—and have gone back to commercial fishing part-time. I love being offshore . . .

Just yesterday, we were in Nantucket Sound, bottom fishing for fluke, when suddenly, Captain Bill yells, “Shark!” and he pulls up a half a fluke, bitten off behind the gills.

We look over the side—and there’s a chunky six-foot porbeagle shark, just right there, four feet away in the water, doubling back.

Tony is trying to get his fish in; no such luck.

The shark took it—and was hooked.

A lot of energy going on, bent pole, whining reel, Tony going WTF... The line parted, and off went the shark; at least the hook is a small fluke hook and will dissolve eventually.

We all know about sharks from media—they’re everywhere . . .

TV or computer is the way most people engage with sharks. But that relationship with sharks is cultural, not actual.

When you actually engage with a live shark, it’s always a surprise, sometimes a shock. It comes out of nowhere; suddenly there it is, big and confident . . . A magnificent creature . . . an individual.

The energy coming off the animal is like a strong spell, and only when it goes away is the spell broken. But the effect remains—and pre-conceptions fall away.

I recommend it! You’ll grow . . .

PAUL GASEK

Executive Producer of *Shark Week* 2016, 2017, and 2018
Winner of the 2011 Emmy Award for Outstanding
Reality Program for “Deadliest Catch”
Nominated for Outstanding Nonfiction Series in
2007, 2008, 2009, and 2010

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**THE
SHARK**

RESCUEPOETIX

STICK TO SHARK WEEK

I'm not a fan of salt water, sand or seaweed
they tend to show up in places they have no business in
six months later, that wayward grain or dark thread
makes itself known, rubbing the wrong way, now in my head

A pocket-sized memory, eliciting waves of gray and white ...
Frothy whispered beckoning "Come... the water's fine", *Yeah, right!*
Summer can't leave fast enough, maybe because I can't swim,
seems to me a whole lot of pressure to posture and be deep in

Respecting mother nature, her force, and strengths
Love the idea of sharks, ancients from unexplored depths
Enigmatic, sci-fi worthy, stories of myth and reality
I've come to realize that with them comes a duality

Often misunderstood, considered monsters, billed that way,
often sensationalized, not sure why, it's in their home we play
Caught by motion, scent, drive to thrive and dominate
I can love them on land, away from where they stay

We watch for them, they watch for ... food, mistaking thrashing
on the white frothy playground and waves that come crashing
Toes dug deep in the wet mud of sand; I respect them from there,
without shade, on land, not going to swim there, couldn't if I tried

I can love them from afar, but feed them?
I don't see the need
Instead, I'll stick to watching Shark Week on TV

RIE SHERIDAN ROSE

JUST KEEP MOVING...

They say a shark must keep moving.
If they stop swimming, they die.
There in the deep ink waters
they swim as if their lives depend on it.

And it does . . . they say.
Sharp fin rising in telltale fashion,
announcing their presence in
placid waters—fair warning to the masses.

“Out of my way. I cannot stop
to say Good Morning or
look at pictures of your baby or cat.
I must keep moving.”

If they make an occasional meal
from a human too arrogant
to get out of the way,
why is it their fault?

We may learn many lessons
from the tragedy of sharks.
The fierce nobility of constant movement
is their defense against a bitter life.

Just keep moving,
hoping against hope
to come out the other side
without losing one's soul . . .

JULIE A. DICKSON

MEG

Sister,
always lethal
a shark to me
teeth bared
a caustic word
small nip
or gaping wound

left floating
in a blood pool
red careening
from gashes
inflicted
in anger or
just insatiable
appetite

to devour
vanquish
all in her path
ironic, Meg
true to her name
invokes fear
but fierce
protector at times

sister, attacker
Meg traverses
life like a realm,
dives deep in the sea
dark forces
rises up when
unexpectedly
she strikes

JAMES B. NICOLA

FISHERMAN

Today he caught a baby shark.

He offers me a cigarette, as I jog around and around the pier, for the friendliness and the chuckle; I've told him almost daily for seven years or so that I don't smoke. We laugh, chuck fists.

I've seen him catch a couple halibut, the flatfish with both eyes on the same side; a ray or two, flatfish with eyes in front, on top, whatever you want to call it; some crabs, although the specialized crabbers down the pier have more luck with their baskets expressly designed for catching crab; dozens of eels; and hundreds of other fish. Blood from the hook and slime from the scales stain the wooden pier for a day or two, sometimes a week; I can tell as I slip in the slime underfoot, which is practically invisible.

He takes them home. I guess to eat. I guess it's one way to eat. If they're for a restaurant, a Chinese restaurant, I hope he knows there have been mercury warnings posted here in the past. And it's the Hudson river. Who knows what's in the water? Ditto if they're for his family.

When I was a kid I used to go fishing before school. Fourth grade and fifth. A freshwater lake in the middle of nowhere, albeit by railroad tracks. Bass and perch. Occasionally pickerel. Bluefish and catfish were rare. I'd keep 'em alive in a basin out back with a hose on 'em trickling all day. Then after school I'd spread out the newspaper on the picnic table. My next-door neighbor would see me and spread the word and a crowd would come. Then I'd take the fish, one after another, look 'em in the eyes and start. Always lots of blood from the knife, slime from the scales, staining our minds. The neighborhood girls would squeal, of course, but stay, and keep coming back. At age eight I was Somebody since I could scale a fish.

Today, I know of a baby who will never lord the seas. The baby

I saw flapping away on the pier, on the blood, on the slime.

I wish the fisherman spoke more English, or I Chinese, so I could ask him what he did with the fish, and if he felt it was safe to eat them, if anyone ate them.

He knew the two words “baby” and “shark” today. I wonder if he knows the word “eyes.” Said to be the mirror of, or window to, the soul.

The eyes of a baby dying are not easily forgotten. The eyes of a baby shark, gasping for air. The eyes of a dying baby shark, gasping for air, I fear, will never disappear.

I wonder if he saw the eyes.

I am not who I was.

Regrets? No: Light.

Yesterday

I felt

I was

the fisherman.

Today

I feel

and am

the fish.

MATT HENRY

NAEGLERIA FOWLERI

Roughly five percent
of all sharks
live in fresh water

where brain-eating amoeba

thrive, waiting to crawl
into your brain
and begin feasting.

A world on fire
will serve to aid
in their multiplying,

and with a mortality rate
of over 97%

it'd be wise to
stay out of the lake.

We are lucky
that the world is on the precipice
of "irreparably jagged"

as we awake
to hazy, smoke-filled dawns
during the hottest summer ever

breathing in the
particulate matter

then fall asleep
to anxious dusks
and gnashing teeth

not breathing
through every apnea.

BARBARA ANNA GAIARDONI

jaws disengage
from the ordinary
world

WILLIAM HENRY VENABLE

THE SHARK

Captured! Along the beach those shouts reveal
 The fisherman exultant victor! Hark!
 The Karcharos, from out his crystalline, dark
Blue lair by red of flesh and lurking steel
Bewrayed, hath ravined down with his last meal
 Death as a gobbet. On the hot sand, stark,
 He gasps and shudders agonizing. Mark!
With horrible grin those bloody jaws appeal
Unto his gloating murderers.—No more
 Those serried ranks sextuple of fanged white
Shall scare the shallows and appall the shore,
 Never again wreak havoc and affright,
Ranging the Gulf Stream, weltering in gore;—
 Poor Shark! Man-eater! learn of Man, to fight.

RET TALBOT

CHASING SHADOWS

In the book Chasing Shadows, the authors wanted to make sure that the reader got the shark's eye point of view in addition all the important science, history and culture surrounding the white shark. The book, at its heart, is a conservation success story about restoring an apex predator (the white shark) to an ecosystem (the western North Atlantic), and in each chapter, the authors profile a shark as that shark matures. The first half of the book follows a male white shark, and the second half follows a female. In the final chapter, which is excerpted here, the male and female shark have mated, and the pregnant female is heading out into the Atlantic, where so much about her (and her species) remains unknown.

October 1, 2026—41°45'08.2"N, 69°54'53.9"W (New England)

The seventeen-and-a-half-foot shark swims east away from the shallows, her shadow sweeping ominously over a sandy bottom that recedes from her as she heads for open water. She's a survivor, approaching fifty years in age, and she has the scars to prove it. Each tells a story—the claw of a gray seal, a mating scar.

It's autumn, and the water is again cooling. She's heading east-northeast away from the New England coastline. She's moving with apparent purpose, with the precision of an experienced sailor who has taken a bearing and headed to sea with confidence. Of course, her ancestors had been doing this since long before the first human set out to sea. This is her realm. As the coastline disappears behind her, her finely developed senses adjust to new sounds, smells, and vibrations.

She dives effortlessly and glides over the bottom for a time be-

fore tilting her pectoral fins and slowly gaining altitude. She finds where the warm sea-surface layer meets the cold water from the depths, and she settles in there for her journey.

She's on her way.

43°26'50.3"N, 53°57'21.7"W (Grand Banks)

The shark is pregnant. She is not, however, matronly in anything close to the human sense. White sharks, unless reduced to a caricature, elude anthropomorphizing. Unlike so many bony fishes that produce masses of eggs and sperm, hedging their offspring's bets against a hostile environment and distributing their young over huge areas, the white shark will produce a small number of eggs and a smaller number of pups. Each pup will emerge as a miniature of its parents and will be entirely on its own from the moment it's born. Since the shark's mother will not nurse it, look out for it, or protect it, and because the shark pup will not "play" with its

siblings or socialize with relatives and others of its kind, it will have to rely on its body and instincts alone. Its mission will be to reach a place of relative safety away from predators, where food is abundant. But that is still a long way off.

As the mother shark swims, her babies are developing in her womb, which is technically two wombs—or, more precisely, two uteri. In each uterus, roughly half the embryos hatch and feed on unfertilized eggs produced by the mother's single ovary. Becoming one of the ocean's apex predators is a subject Disney hasn't explored, for obvious reasons. The embryonic sharks even swallow their own teeth. It will be more than a year before the mother shark gives birth. Until then, she needs to feed often and avoid males of her own species.

On her eastward journey away from New England, she encounters the Gulf Stream and rides its arc farther east and deeper into the open Atlantic. She stays within a hundred feet of the surface some of the time, and sometimes she even ascends to the surface.

But increasingly she finds clockwise-rotating eddies of warmer water that spin off the Gulf Stream, and she rides these like elevators into the depths. These depths are a place where temperature fluctuations are extreme and both salinity and the denseness of the water vacillate. It's a dynamic environment, and, despite the darkness, it's full of life—home to the largest biomass in the world's oceans, which is why she has come here along with swordfish, big-eye tuna, and beaked whales.

Most of her descents are during the day, and she reaches depths exceeding 3,000 feet, where she remains for half the day or more. These are the twilight depths extending from 650 to over 3,000 feet, known as the mesopelagic zone, where only a tiny percentage of sunlight penetrates. It is a vast, understudied chunk of the ocean thought to be chock-full of deepwater fishes and squid, enough to draw the attention of the white shark. In this way, the white shark moves freely throughout the North Atlantic, vertically exploiting resources not available to most other species. Her unique adaptations make this possible.

She is magnificent.

39°26'38.5"N, 31°33'34.0"W (Flores Island, Azores)

On her trip east across the Atlantic, the pregnant shark visited depths where water temperatures fall into the midthirties and no light penetrates. She possesses a layer of mirrored crystals behind her retinas that makes her more sensitive to low-light situations than many other animals, but in these midnight depths, she must rely on her other senses to forage and navigate.

She is now, however, back near the surface, not far from Flores Island in the Azores, 1,100 miles from Portugal and more than two thousand miles from Cape Cod. She has successfully navigated more than halfway across the Atlantic using, in part, the earth's magnetic field.

The Azores are the most isolated archipelago in the North Atlantic—volcanic islands sprouting from the intersection of the

North American Plate, the Eurasian Plate, and the African Plate. They straddle the Mid-Atlantic Ridge and are a migratory crossroads between the eastern and western Atlantic as well as both tropical and Arctic waters. The shark once again adapts to the ecosystem she's entered—an ecosystem she shares with more than twenty species of whales and porpoises, four out of seven species of sea turtles, and tuna, billfishes, and over sixty species of sharks and rays.

June 3, 2027—38°41'11.1"N, 45°41'27.3"W (middle of the North Atlantic)

As summer approaches, the large shark will leave the Azores and head back west across the Mid-Atlantic Ridge toward the east coast of the United States. It's unknown where she will have her pups. Nobody knows for sure why she dives as deep as she does, or why she stays down so long. Is it related to feeding or reproduction? These mysteries and others contribute to the mythology that surrounds her.

Wherever she goes, she is only viewed fleetingly, but the stories that emerge from those brief observations are embellished, as they have been since the first man saw the first white shark. A fleeting glimpse of her bulk drifting under a boat becomes an aggression. Unseen teeth are imagined. Her eyes become "impenetrable and empty as the eye of God."

Humans fill the void with imagination originating in an instinctive place of fear. Stories aggrandize the myth. Her unyielding, crescent-shaped caudal fin propels her deeper into the human psyche, causing us to overlook the genius of her migratory journeys.

We should marvel. By the time the Vikings learned to navigate the North Atlantic between continents, the white shark had been making just as long a journey for millennia. At the time Champlain relied on an astrolabe, cross staff, and de Medina's tables to reach New England, the white shark was making similar passages with

enviable accuracy and precision. Silently. Purposefully. Mostly invisible to sailors on the water. Yet when she's seen, she's labeled "monster" and "man-eater."

She is "like a locomotive with a mouthful of butcher knives," says Matt Hooper.

"But that shark isn't evil," Benchley chastises. "She only obeys her own instincts."

ALYSSA HARMON

UNDERWATER BLANKETS

do you ever sink deep enough underneath the water
and take a second to look up at the fragmented sky—
an underwater blanket that is more
comforting than your childhood bed,
the rainbow light flickering
in the ripples of water;
the beauty is almost enough
to make you want to choose the surface.

KB BALLENTINE

WATER KEEPS ITS SECRETS

There's no safe harbor
in the middle of the sea.
No map of each wave's
crown and trough as wind snatches
spindrift and my breath.
What the sea seizes,
it doesn't always give back.
So many ashes, so many bones
left to litter the depths.
A universe of humming darkness
I can't comprehend.
Do I dare?

Do I dare dwell where leviathans roam
in hopes of meeting a mermaid,
of circling sea horses?
Let me join the sisterhood of seals
and risk breaching the surface
to greet it all even when storms
tug and pull the tide,
sky wide with rain.

CHARLES WHARTON STORK

FLYING FISH: AN ODE

How must it be to swim among your kind,
Dull with the cold and dreary with the dark,
Enclosed above, beneath, before, behind
In green uncertainty, from which a shark
At any time may dash
And doom you like some huge demonic fate
With lust insatiate?—
He cuts the water with a seething gash;—
What use to dart aside?
Those great jaws, grinning wide,
Will close your frolic as the long teeth clash.

But I forget your gift; the bonds that hold
The others of your race are loosed for you,
For you alone. The silver dolphin bold
Shoots like a spray-haired comet from the blue,
But may not poise or flit
As you do—. What if but a minute's space?
Hardly a longer grace
Has poet, saint or lover. Nor a whit
Less sure to sink are we;
Our wings of ecstasy
No loftier, no longer joy permit.

Yet joy it is! to scorn the dread of death,
To dwell for shining moments in the sun
Of Beauty and sweet Love, to drink one breath
Of a diviner element—though but one;
To reach a higher state
Of being, to explore a new domain;
To leap, and leap again,
Unheeding the gray menace of our fate
That follows till we fail:
For—fishes, men and all—
The grim old Shark will have us, soon or late

The singer invites the audience to shake its collective body, to dance, to carve crazy circles in the atmosphere, to change the weather. Oh, hive mind! The dancer knows what the fire ant knows. I trust Otis Redding more than I trust the government. For three minutes, I experience real change, and then I experience it again.
The wine may be cheap, but there is enough for everyone. Love comes and goes like a horn section, answering, punctuating, accelerating the same breath that it lets us catch.

EMILY BILMAN

INKLINGS

An absence, ethereal as the wind,
but corporeal as a wound, regains
my body before I begin to write.

Intuition, an unknown glimpse
accessed through wounds, is
reminisced from the rathe knowledge

of the primal forest that gives rise
to the malleable life-force. The text,
an inner garden's palimpsest

seeded into the garden, blends song,
symbol, and sinew. Wound-pores
shape the conscience binding us.

TRICIA CASEY

A SHARK TALE

For as long as I can recall, sharks have been thrilling to me. I saw Jaws as a kid but, oddly enough, it was the next-door neighbor's pool I was afraid to swim in, perhaps the most controlled swimming environment we know. Never the ocean where we are surrounded by beauty and peril, seen and unseen.

I grew up three blocks from one of the most beautiful beaches in the world—Kailua Beach on Oahu. The only shark I ever saw growing up was a baby hammerhead that washed up on the beach at Kualoa Beach Park one summer while at Girl Scout camp. We'd just come in from paddling an outrigger canoe into deeper waters. I was ten and instead of being gripped with fear, I looked out at the water and wondered where its mother was. I know more now. Nearby Kaneohe Bay is one of the world's largest breeding grounds for hammerhead sharks. In May and June, female hammerheads give birth to 20 to 40 live pups each and then leave the area, and their pups to fend for themselves. It was one of those pups we saw that summer. There are, quite literally, thousands upon thousands of Hammerhead pups in the bay at that time. Which can attract larger sharks.

During my Junior year of high school, a woman by the name of Marti Morrell was snorkeling with a visiting friend just about 100 yards from her beachfront home near Lahaina on the island of Maui when she was attacked by a 15-foot Tiger shark. The water was only six or seven feet deep and they were just outside of the reef which can offer some protection from larger fish. Her friend was only brushed by the shark as it swam by and she swam toward shore screaming for help. Nearby swimmers paddled out to try and assist but multiple Tiger sharks had joined in on the attack. It was too dangerous and, sadly, too late.

Every story of an encounter with a shark is dramatic, even

when it isn't. These creatures are, for most, the stuff of nightmares. The ocean is unforgiving to those of us who live on land. We are already at a disadvantage the moment we enter the waters where we ultimately have little or no control over what happens. Add to that, the visceral fear of drowning or, worse, being eaten alive, and we have a foundation for drama. Marti Morrell never stood a chance. It wasn't a test bite where she could be helped to shore with what would certainly have been life-threatening injuries. The sharks took both her legs, an arm and more.

What came afterwards is what kept my attention. The responses from the public, the tourism industry, government officials, scientists, and native Hawaiians were a cacophony of passionate disagreements. For some time, the State of Hawaii conducted a shark eradication program about every ten years to take large predators found within Hawaiian waters, trying to control fears and the risk to swimmers and, by extension, the tourism industry. At the time of Marti Morrell's death, it had been 13 years since the last eradication program. State officials were increasingly aware of sharks' importance to the ocean's ecosystem, not to mention the input of scientists who insisted that these hunts were ineffective. Additionally, sharks have a cultural significance to native Hawaiians.

'Aumakua are the ancestral spirits of parents (makua) and their children (keiki). 'Aumakua are believed to inhabit either animate or inanimate objects including living creatures. For many families, their 'aumakua inhabits a shark. To arbitrarily hunt sharks is to risk killing an 'aumakua's physical form. While some sharks were taken in the months after Marti's tragic death, the program was dramatically scaled back and, eventually, eliminated as researchers proved the futility of eradication but, more importantly, as shark attack victims came forward and advocated for protecting the creatures.

This series of events was transformational for me. I absorbed everything I could get my hands on related to sharks. This was the very early days of the internet so it was newspaper articles, books, and searching microfiche at the library. Shark Week on Discovery became a holiday of sorts for me. I watched shows over and over again and began to know facts and

theories about sharks that made me look pretty good on *Jeopardy* from time to time. And as access to information opened up to us, I searched for more and soaked it up. But why? I was certainly fascinated by the topic but I also marveled at the hubris of humanity in trying to control the uncontrollable, a creature in its natural environment where we are the ones out of place.

In 2004, we moved to New Hampshire, an hour away from the ocean and the furthest I've ever been from it. The ocean here is so cold but I try to dip my toes in at least a couple of times each summer. It's not just the cold that keeps me in the shallows though. Ten years ago, Great White sharks reemerged in the waters off of Cape Cod thanks to the blooming numbers of protected gray seals. The sharks' return led to the founding of the Atlantic White Shark Conservancy (AWSC) and the debut of Cape Cod on Discovery's Shark Week. There have been a few physical encounters between sharks and humans, including one where a young boogie-boarder died as a result of his leg injury.

I am unabashedly fascinated by the ongoing research and exciting findings by the scientists both professional and citizen. For nearly ten years, I've been aching to go on a cage dive to see sharks. I had an opportunity to do so seven or eight years ago but I chickened out. In the meantime, I kept watching the shows, reading the articles, and digging online for more. I started following the work of AWSC online and through social media. And I kept thinking about that cage.

On a sunny day in May 2021, in the midst of the COVID pandemic, I acknowledged that my marriage had been quietly falling apart for years but I hadn't been in a place to deal with it. Doing the math, I knew that in about four years, my youngest would be preparing to graduate from high school and we would be on the verge of becoming empty nesters. And I would be on the verge of turning 50. The pandemic, working from home, and the quiet that enforced lockdowns and social distancing provided, left some space in my busy mind to ponder what had become of the me I had been so long ago. My passions felt muted, my many interests largely set aside, friendships untended, and personal health and well-being long-neglected.

Both of my natural parents had died in recent years and my younger sister was lost to us due to severe mental health diagnoses. I was lonely and felt like I'd lost control of my life's direction.

That day I started "50 before 50", my bucket list of goals, experiences, and learning that I wanted to accomplish by my 50th birthday in August 2025. There are small, silly things on it that wouldn't seem to warrant a spot on a big list like this but they were all part of getting back to me. Here are some of those items:

Read 50 Books. In four years. No problem, right? But I hadn't read an average of a book a month in years, something my mom would be shocked by if she were still here. I was always a voracious reader, until I wasn't.

Get a Brazilian Wax. You laugh but I was always curious but too scared of the pain. And then I recalled the ectopic pregnancy that almost killed me 20 years ago. Or the appendicitis three years ago. The physical pain of losing my mom and then my father. So I did it. And now I do it every month.

Get a Tattoo. Again, I was afraid of the pain and could never decide what I wanted on my body forever. I got my FIRST tattoo last summer in England along with my then-15-year-old-daughter and it's a discreet little shark. And I love it.

Learn Gaelic. That is one tough language but it's beautiful and I've taken a few semesters. I'll keep at it. It's part of my heritage.

Lose 100 Pounds. It's not about a specific goal weight but about being healthy, happy with my body, and physically capable of taking on the adventures on my bucket list. I'm 55 pounds down and counting and I have started to love myself in a way I haven't in a long, long time—if ever.

Start Up Yoga Again. I started yoga 17 years ago. I stopped about

12 years ago as my career took off and my kids became more active, choosing the pressures of a busy life over my own health and wellbeing. And make no mistake, it was detrimental. I remember how good yoga made me feel. So in September 2022, I started up again at the same YMCA I've always gone to. And I am absolutely stronger and more flexible. My recovery from other physical activities such as running, which I don't enjoy until I finish, is better. And the peace and quiet in my mind when I practice twice a week is a welcome respite from a noisy world and a noisy life.

Get SCUBA certified. I went SCUBA diving once in college in Hawaii with a certified dive master. It was amazing. I got seasick floating on the surface when we went up to change our tanks and it cut the dive short for me. For years, I avoided boats and anything on the ocean other than swimming. Seasickness is awful. But there are some pretty great ways to combat it so I start my lessons in September 2023.

Go on a Shark Adventure. I've done three now and the fourth one is later this month for my birthday. I went out with a AWSC scientist in October 2021 on a small boat, guided by a spotter pilot and we located a dozen Great White sharks in waters off of Cape Cod just 10 - 15 feet deep. Not one of those sharks was tagged so I helped record them on a GoPro for identification. Recently, the AWCS scientists released a population study announcing that approximately 800 individual Great White sharks have visited the area in the last four years. I went on a free dive in June 2023 off the North Shore of Hawaii with 10 other passengers. I was the second one in the water and immediately observed dozens of Galapagos and Sand Bar sharks swimming about 20 feet below our boat. Later a Scalloped Hammerhead and a small Black Tip shark made an appearance too. It was, hands down, the most amazing thing I have ever done and not for one moment did I experience fear or anxiety, even when a six-foot Galapagos swam up to within about eight feet of me, looked me in the eyes and swam away . . . Later this month, my son and I are going on a cage dive off of Cape Cod.

Adopt a Shark. In August 2022, through a charitable contribution, the first shark tagged by Dr. Greg Skomal that summer was named White Shark Tricia. She was an 11-foot beauty whose tag was placed that month. The following winter, four months of satellite data was downloaded, showing where WS Tricia had been. I won't see the twelve months of 2023 data until winter 2024 but in July 2023, this goddess came back to Cape Cod from wherever she wintered, passing four times with the requisite 50 yards of one of the buoys placed around the Cape between May and December of each year. Anyone with AWSC's Sharktivity App can find her there now. The buoys are pulled up at the end of "White Shark season" because the Nor'easters here make it impossible to leave them safely there.

Dive Tiger Beach in the Bahamas. About an hour west of Grand Bahamian Island is an area in the ocean where a sand bar brings the depth to just about 20 feet with astonishing clarity. And it is there where divers can interact with Tiger sharks, as well as several other species, up close and personal. Tiger sharks are among the top three most deadly in the world. They are beautiful, complex creatures and they are where my fascination with sharks began, 30 years ago, with the unfortunate demise of Marti Morrell. You must be SCUBA certified for this experience, hence my earlier goal. This is the pinnacle of my "50 before 50" list. To interact, in immediate proximity, with my favorite shark.

Get published. Over the years, I have been encouraged so many times to consider writing. My accounts of parenthood and other ridiculous moments in life, as well as the ability to tell a story that draws in a crowd, is what fosters this encouragement by friends and family alike who would forward my accounts to strangers for their enjoyment, coming back pleading for more. I stopped writing about 16 years ago, soon after my second child was born. This is, in my mind, the scariest item on my bucket list. And here is where I reveal a secret I've never told anyone. I have always wanted to be a writer. I chose practical professional pursuits and did not give in to the luxury of developing my writing into something more polished

and built for consumption. What if I'm no good at it? What if I don't have the discipline to master it? What if no one likes it?

The last two years have given me a fresh perspective on my approach to life and how I live it. I have always claimed to be open-minded. But I was passively open-minded where I needed to be actively so, pursuing and exploring, open to opportunity and absurdity. And I needed to allow myself the freedom to absolutely fail trying, again and again. I have learned to be more forgiving of myself and others. I have been practicing giving up the control I so fiercely wrangled throughout my life and letting life happen freely and spontaneously. And I am embracing the things that call to me and thrill me, even if they are scary.

For me, it all started with sharks.

**THE
SEA**

MANDY SCHIFFRIN

THE DIVE

A smack and a muted whoosh;
a shock cold water-rush;
a rivulet of bubbles
roaring in my ears.
This is a synchronized
surrendering of body and air;
a dissolution in the wash;
the bed rising to my fall.

This moment is paid for
by a thousand others:
years of belly-flops and
oceans swallowed whole.
They are coded to my being,
as intrinsic as DNA;
divinely encompassed
in this one, perfect, dive.

This should feel unnatural -
it did, once -
to breathe in the water, and
forget I'm not a fish.

CAROLYN MARTIN

DRIFTING TOWARD MAUI

The guide was clear—
at 1 p.m. determined tides
pull Hapuna waves off-shore.
But I forgot the time.
Forgot my fins.
Forgot you dozing
in the shade
when dreams to swim
toward reefs I'd never seen
pulled me from my sleep.

Later, you would say
an orange bird worried you
awake and flew your eyes
along the sea-sky line.

You'd say you didn't feel
the burning sand or see
the turtle art tattooed
around the lifeguard's arms
or understand his too-calm scan
of the headland's curve.

You'd say you had to beg,
She's sixty and alone,
before he'd abdicate
his throne and slash
his board into the surf.

While I—already grown afraid
of missing anything I've yet to see—
was almost out of reach,
adrift with angels, tangs,
and butterflies,
oblivious to tides
propelling me away
from shore, away from you.

CAROLYN MARTIN

SNORKELING WITH JESUS

Keawakapu Beach, Kihei, Maui

Don't even think of it! Walking on waves
without a paddleboard is embarrassing.
Anyway, we've agreed it's your undercover day.

Over here. Let's settle in the shade of this plumeria.
After years at the Jersey shore, I've learned
a careless burn isn't worth a tan's vanity.

If you hand me your mask, I'll show you how
to stop it fogging up. A drop of Spit® swished
around each lens will clear the visibility.

Wait! Before you put it on, tuck your hair
behind your ears. Don't miss any flighty strands.
You want it sealed tight so water won't sneak in.

Now fit the snorkel in your mouth and breathe.
Yes . . . it sounds weird and, beneath the waves,
acoustics will be more intense. But focusing

on breath will help you meditate as angels, tangs,
unicorns, butterflies, and—I'm showing off—
humuhumunukunukuapua`a go swimming by.

No, no! Don't put fins on yet. Wait until you're floating
in the waves. See that guy who pulled his on
onshore? Another drunken crab scuttling in reverse.

A wetsuit? Are you kidding me?
Boss Frog's is three miles away and I've checked:
Maui's water is as warm as Galilee's.

You're right. The graying coral is disheartening.
Some fish boycott the reefs and locals blame
chemicals lushing-up miles of golf course greens.

No . . . it's not a good idea to annihilate country clubs.
Tourism would take a hit. Besides, eco-scientists
are working to solve the problem without violence.

One more thing before we head out:
if you should spot a turtle entangled
in fishing line—I cried last week
when several struggled by—clap your hands,
say a prayer, do whatever to set it free.
Beneath the waves, no one has to see.

DEBORAH KERNER

I AM BIRD

I'm attached to sunlight I will scatter
myself in order to live sheltered by it

I won't remain intact in actual events
I'll be frayed my feathers disheveled

having imagined a softer world I look
under many things behind things
feeding on seeds, tiny bugs and worms

fluttering the feathers of my
wings time evaporates it shifts so
quickly day to night sunlight to
moonlight

it is seeing patterns of leaves as
the sun passes through them that
brings me to wake morning
emerging green I bathe in cool
waters the rain has just left
behind

the tree invites me to rest on her
branches when I fly there I know I
watch the world from her point of
reference content to see it without
the need for subterfuge

ASHLEY KNOWLTON

ZIP ODE 95531

craggy sea stacks sit off the coast, protruding like
bobbing humpback whales with big
knobby heads, ogling the land,
waiting for the
sunset

MANDY SCHIFFRIN

THE STARFISH

Life begins in waves;
in the strands of weed,
in the cool of rocks.

Till the star is out
of its depth; stripped and
exposed by the tide;

bereft of haven,
little by little
drying out in the sun.

Pentagrammatic
rage without solace,
living in the air.

But no one evades the
painful crawl back down
to the sea and sky.

Certainly not I.

JULIE A. DICKSON

OCEAN EMBRACE

Beached, her face void,
wind-blown sand covers
contours, dry lips part
silent farewell, open eyes
bluer than sky, wave crests
pebble-strewn torso, fragrant
flotsam; cirrus streaks on blue
give way to nimbus, darken
sea to azure, ocean embrace
claims still form caught in
current, flows out to sea

JAMES B. NICOLA

WASHED UP

Though it was only one myth of the birth of Venus that said
 She was born conceived not out of
 love but springing full-grown from the sea,
I combed the strand to try to find what aspect of salt water
 the mythmaker must have had in mind
 that it should bear Love, or Beauty,

collecting Ocean's detritus: jellies' stingers, anemones,
 chipped shells, a smashed-in nautilus, the
 filmy foam like ambergris.

The waves beat like a metronome on Largo, rushing,
 reversing, rewashing with a polychrome the
 stones and sands. And everything

destroyed or dying in the sands looked beautiful. As
 suddenly it washed away. I washed my
 hands, my legs, my head, then all of me—
that She might reach my soul, my heart—by leaping in a
 swelling roar. Instead She tore me half
 apart washing twisted limbs ashore.

But in the breaker I recall the violent rinsing off of half
 a sorry life, egesting all my past in one
 great gurgling laugh.

When stragglers, who are out to comb the beach as I
 have been, find me they'll say my body,
 swaddled in foam, glistens, almost beautifully.

ROBERTO SABAS

CONE OF SILENCE

Adele's insides were swelling. What caused it didn't matter. Suffering rendered that knowledge irrelevant. It hurt to move, even to breathe. Heat suffocated her, not just the swelter inside the tent, where she lay on a stretcher, but also inside of her. Past the point of wishing pain away—pain was her universe—she yearned simply to stop being.

As he watched her, Nathan, the team's biologist, recalled the event. He remembered not telling her to drop the snail she was holding. She didn't know it could extend a barb-tipped thread to inject fire through her exposed skin. A living bauble, the cone snail was best left alone, along with the stonefish and the tiny blue octopus. He had held back the truth.

Holding the pretty shell, she was lovely—picturesque, and perfect. He wanted to preserve that instant in his mind, when he'd finally broken her bonds. He was the expedition co-leader and she was a sonar technician, yet she had made him unsure of his standing. She had power over him and he hated imbalance. When they broke up a year ago, he felt smaller than a snail. But he knew her weakness—she loved beauty, wherever she could find it, especially in the sea. In this remote stretch of the Marianas, beauty was a warning: keep away from its owner.

Chihiro kept vigil with Adele also. The slight woman, whose delicate air had entranced Adele, was focused on easing her dying lover's discomfort. Chihiro was both the team's medical officer and its organic chemist. She had extracted the snail's poison hoping to isolate a protein group which, when combined with anthocyanin from a native butterwort species, might have yielded an antidote—if she only knew where to look. Outside, in the night's passing storm, such an expedition would be folly. Instead, she

concentrated on holding the oxygen breather steady for Adele. It was hard to do that with Nathan looming over Adele.

Things had soured badly when Nathan found out about Adele and Chihiro. Both women picked up on his jealousy without even having to discuss it between themselves. They tried to steer clear of him whenever possible.

Now, the big man was droning in a sing-song way, telling Adele to hush, to hang in there. If she could metabolize the toxin, she would live. Chihiro wanted to slam the oxygen tank into Nathan's temple. It was cruel to raise false hopes. One in a million people had the genetic string to process the neuropeptides in Adele's veins. Chihiro knew that he knew this—it made her want to yell. Why hadn't he briefed everyone about the risks in these waters?

Adele nodded at Nathan, giving Chihiro some hope. But when she said that Nathan's face was blue, undulating, and wormy, hope fled Chihiro. Hallucination was a bad sign of chemical change. Chihiro smelled sweat and musk emanating from Nathan. She saw his tongue flick in and out, as he bent over Adele. His attempt to soothe played out weirdly on his lips, twitching his mouth into grotesque semblances of concern. He reminded Chihiro of a nervous priest giving last rites.

The storm lashed out at the island. Everyone tried to ride it out, praying trees would not smash their tents flat. Even if the radio hadn't been damaged by the elements, it wouldn't have mattered. A hundred miles by sea was a long way to go for help in this weather. Chihiro rued the idea that she might witness her lover's death. All her countless hours as an emergency physician hadn't prepared her for this. She fought back tears.

No one knew of Nathan's deep anger for Adele. Those who knew them thought that they had broken up years ago. Being soft-spoken, he seemed reasonable. His calm voice betrayed no resentment. His sudden brusqueness toward Adele wasn't given much thought: he was focused. In their excitement, the returning crew hadn't heard Adele cry out as the snail stung her palm. No one had seen Nathan pluck the mollusk away and fling it behind him. When the mainland pathologists issued their toxicology report, it would echo

Nathan's account of how Adele had accidentally brushed the snail with her hand, searching for equipment she had dropped in the water.

Chihiro wondered about Nathan's agenda as a leader. Was it the money that had ruined him, made him haphazard and unreliable? Pharmaceutical companies paid more for fast results. But even such a team of experts needed basic ground rules. Otherwise, they'd get hurt in their rush to analyze the miracle plants they discovered in the depths. A diver had been badly cut down there, but when he later reported that the seaweed had quickly healed his wounds, their sponsor doubled the incentives. Nathan stopped droning and looked at Chihiro, finally realizing her presence.

He told her to look after Adele while he went next door to talk to the other team leader. Maybe they were going to discuss how to bury her. Chihiro dampened a cloth with drinking water and held it to Adele's lips and forehead, causing the woman to stir.

"It hurts so much," Adele whispered.

"Shhh. Just rest. I'll find something for the pain," said Chihiro.

Adele mumbled a reply. "He—tried to—" Chihiro strained to listen. Speaking once more, Adele said, "... kill me."

The shock of this news almost paralyzed Chihiro. She sensed someone behind her—Nathan. He tried to brain her with a large rock, but missed, smashing Chihiro's shoulder, sending her to the floor next to her equipment. He was about to bring the rock down again, when he felt a sting. He saw a syringe needle stuck in his thigh where the femoral vein lay. He screamed and bore the rock down.

In the daylight, they extracted from the tent two dead bodies and attended to a living one. They said she was truly lucky to have such good genetics. A bed of kelp floated by as Adele wept.

LORRAINE CAPUTO

RETREAT

I.

Leaving behind the
miles of families
Their shouts & giggles
 clacking of paddle ball
 yakking on cellular phones
Sunburned, potbellies
 overhanging shorts
 fat thighs jiggling
Basking on the beach
 bathing in a deep blue sea

II.

& walking along stones
 revealed by the
retreating waters
Mussels clinging on rocks
tightly closed, awaiting
the sea's return
The smell of kelp & weeds
soft underfoot
The crunch of shells
as my eye catches
a rose-colored scallop

III.

As my eye catches
a sea lion pup
in the shallows
Hissing, barking at a
boy who
nears him

Strength weakening within
each defense against
these cruelly curious humans

The sun burning

The *guardafaunas* say if
it's here it's because it's
sick or injured

The sea further away

No, they probably won't
send someone out
even to see . . .

Were you sent to this other shore
by your elders
in fear of some illness?

You lay deep into the
cool seaweed
The sun burning
your shoulder fur brittle

your skin drying
Your black eyes
look towards me

Did you wander across this gulf
in curiosity?
Did you lose your mum
on a swim out?

Your strength waning

What can I do?
I have no umbrella
to give you shade
I have no bucket
to wet your searing skin
What can I do?

What can I do?

IV.

Tidal pools
rushing currents
towards that sea

Retreating

I sit on the greened
rocks of a basin
My feet in its cool depths
listening to the water
flowing towards

A further sea

The Patagonian sun burning
nearing the southwest
horizon

V.

& when the high tide washes in
around your lifeless body
Already pecked by birds
eyes gone
Flesh bloated, speckled
with eggs lain by flies
Pieces torn by dogs
poked by young
boys' sticks
You will become the fodder
of some large fish
Your bones settling to
the cold depths
of this South Atlantic

VI.

The crunch of fragments
of pearled shells
& of rough sand
The smell of algae
its carpet soft
beneath my feet

The twitter of birds
seagulls nearing your body

The wash of the sea
now hundreds of meters
Further out

VII.

Is that a
wailing bellow
I hear?

DEBORAH KERNER

TURTLE SPRING

next morning
life springs into action
a dog barks

in early spring it swims
in canyon pools along
with turtles

releasing color once
again light refracted a
light mist

drifting off the banks of
a vernal pond
ducks coots black birds

egrets herons stalking
in early spring frogs
sing the moist earth air

LORRAINE CAPUTO

SOLITARY SHORES

Come the low season
dunes drift around
the boarded-up hotel
& restaurants

A silence of surf rolling
to the taupe shore, scarlet
crabs scuttling, bargello-ing
the wet sand
Pelicans & frigatebirds
skim the ocean Verdigris,
its waves heaving
deep green

In the debris of
seawash &
seashells crumbling
from petrified cliffs,
those crabs scurry
over & through
the carcass of a
sea lion

The tide flows in far & shallow,
leaving behind a pale
green foam wavering
in the breeze
Colonies of whimbrels
peck the moist arena

with their long
curved beaks

Beyond a square rock arch
heaps of ebon striated stone
rise ragged from the
glistening strand,
capturing tidal pools
alive with anemones,
tendrils swaying in the fill,
the retreat of each wave

CAROLYN MARTIN

WHALE WATCHING SPOKEN HERE

Depoe Bay, Oregon

Spring break rain,
migrating pods,
and one uncanny gull.
There! a watcher shouts,
beyond the red buoy,
off the crabber's bow.

I grab binoculars,
confuse white caps
for pluming blows,
wild waves for bluish backs.
Nearsighted eyes cannot conceive
enormity.

But, I can see that bird.
Unperturbed, he doesn't care
the *Samson* needled through
the harbor's eye, escaped
black rocks to chase fluke prints
above the gray whale's dive.

He seems amused
attention's paid to thirty tons—
a tail, a breach, a distant plume
passing twice a year
his daily stretch of wild coastline,

the shifts of rocky beach.

Regal. Zen. Immoveable.
He can't conceive he's just a gull
and dreams his dovish dreams.
Reincarnates perhaps.
A coastal spirit courier.
A rain-free olive branch.

Five minutes down! the watcher times.
Track south a mile or two.
We ignore the hordes who chase
immensity. We watch wild winds
whip close to shore and fly
into the driving sea.

CRAIG R. KIRCHNER

JOKE'S ON JONAH

Whales communicate, they have a language. They say it has to do with the size of the brain and I'm thinking even a small-minded orca is well stacked. They coo their young, woo during courtship, click for navigation, and sing for enjoyment, perhaps for art's sake. Different pods have different dialects. There is also body language—moves and gestures that show compassion, dominance, and curiosity. There are warnings of predators and obviously discussions of the best places to eat. They probably tell-the-tell at evening gatherings, the stories of the legends—Moby D. and cackles about Ahab's leg.

The opening act on open mic night—a stand-up routine on Jonah being swallowed, carried around three days in the belly of the beast and then God said, “Regurgitate this prophet and let the degenerates of Nineveh repent.” Clicking and bellows from the audience, and then an Ella-Fitzgerald-like cow singing the greatest hits.

There is probably a poet-per-pod, haiku the most popular form, and maybe chat forums discussing, parenting, politics, blow-hole etiquette. I doubt, however, there are racist tropes or grunts for hate. There are whistles and pulses for fear, the most resonant being, for sure, the fear of man and his plastic pollution.

PETER A. WITT

APOLOGY TO THE SEAS

On behalf of my fellow humans I apologize
for trashing your surface and your depths,
for feeding plastic to your varied inhabitants,
unduly roiling your crested waves.

I see no end as the earth's population
swells, the tide of humanity swelters
to survive, waves of migrants crash onto
shores of unyielding neighbors, your orcas
respond by attacking ships in mid-ocean.

It is sad, truly sad, what we have done to you,
the waters of our lives, as we sink further into
no return, our future suspect, as your crests crash
in anger, your tides rip at the land, your waters
rise to sink our cities, your seething currents drown
our folly, as our sons and daughters ask us
the final question—

you knew, you knew, and yet,
you chose to do nothing,
Why?

MARIANNE TEFFT

THE NIGHT I DREAMED OF DOLPHINS

I knew you were coming

The night I dreamed of dolphins

Walking with your father
Beneath moonlit veils of Spanish moss
So unlike the icy drapes
That cascade from northern roofs
I had gazed with joy and awe
So many years before
As those sleek coursers
Sine-curved up the Broad River
That night I stood on boulders
Staring into a sea the color of pecans
From a depth where even my night-mind
Knew no air-breather could ascend
I watched a dolphin fly toward the surface
Mesmerized by that determined arrow
I stared as if into a hand-mirror
When the dolphin stood tall on his silver flukes
Held me for an indelible instant
In the full sunshine of his gentle smile
Then bent his strong neck
And kissed me on the cheek
Un-pleating my body in one move

I sat up
Sure like tropical dawn
That bursts from dream to daylight
And I knew as I have never known anything
Before or since
You were coming
The night I dreamed of dolphins

LYNETTE ESPOSITO

AT THE OCEAN ALONE

My bare feet touch the water.

I am ecstatic to be alive,

to stand on the edge of this shore

caging this magnificent animal

that sways its giant self, a melody of breeze

and salt,

as it comes and goes from me

like an old friend.

The sun glistens on the ocean's flowing hair,

a crown of such glory hovers there.

I cannot look without a wish, my dear.

that you were here.

VERN FEIN

sirens AND SIRENS

What better thought can a retiree
muse about close to the end of the road
than what Heaven might be like,
which I did one dreamy day.

I rested on my back patio
when the sharp scream of a siren
made my heart clutch, as I knew
something bad had happened—
fire, accident, hospital.

That blasting sound signals trouble
and I figured there'd be no sirens in Heaven
as I'd be blissfully lounging
and no wail would pierce the air.

Then I thought of those other Sirens,
women who lured men into perdition.
They won't sing come hither songs in Heaven,
neither will men spin wiles
at innocent, young, beating hearts.

With a nodding thought about
whether motorcycles or football
would roar in Heaven, I dozed off
with time still left to dream.

LORRAINE CAPUTO

SKYLINE

A city of boats
on the other side of this
bay, their shimmering
not penetrating the deep
black waters, the deep black night.

ASHLEY KNOWLTON

BELOW

curling tentacles
 twist and knot
as they hover
 along dark sea rocks
that spackle the bottom,
 deep
 down
below
our
 slender
 feet
that gently sway, disrupting
 the water's current
as we sit on the edge
 of the dock

MARIANNE TEFFT

CEPHALOPOD LOVE

It is sobering to think
I am much less smart
Than a spotted cephalopod
For I have never learned
To change my color and texture
The way an octopus will do
When he needs to camouflage
Among the perils of his environment
These eight-limbed invertebrates
Know to smooth their dimpled skin
To slide into niches and crevices
And tint their flesh to match the audacity
Of their marine climate
In dire straits they will wrap themselves
Inside an inky veil of obfuscation
They can rewire their brains to brave chilly waters
But I cannot find my way to negotiate
A calculated frigid shoulder
Or read icy signals of a love grown cold

MCKENZIE LYNN TOZAN

A SLEEPING OCTOPUS CHANGES COLOR WHILE DREAMING

*“O God, I could be bounded in a nutshell
and count myself a king of infinite space,
were it not that I have bad dreams.”*

—Hamlet

I can see it up there, high in the corner
like a spider hosting its web.

This is how my dreams always play out: dark animals
suspended from the ceiling or sky.

They hover above what I deem escapable.

Bodies like fever dreams, they lurk
in the four ceiling corners of my bedroom.

Out of reach—compared to my body, bruised
& battered blue, hands & hips cramped

from chronic illness, my mind pulling away
from the memories I’ve locked into a field. I look up

& I can see the octopus, taking over the room
with its eight wandering legs, coating

the crown molding, anything but spider-like.

I imagine it finding a way out through
a vent, or the hole in a spiderweb that becomes

a door, but instead, it waits. Eyes closed & beak
humming. Dreaming, its body wakes with color, drifting

from deep blue to coriander to maroon
to salt. It dreams & becomes the only thing in the room

with color. World gone gray, it becomes the thing I watch

while the room falls around me. Its beak hums
over the dust.

SANDRA NOEL

I AM THE WANTING BLUE

I want to whorl my weed in sea pools,
sweep salt-crust from high rocks.

I want to sign my name up the bank,
nosh on clover, leave souvenir shells.

I want to slam up the street,
shock rain-wash with tide silt.

And you, I want you.
I want you to know my rhythm of wave,

my body of waters wants to sea-witch your water.
Let my spice-brine seep slow.

Be water with me. Come home.

**THE
SELF**

BETH MATHISON

CHILD ON A SUMMER BEACH

fine sand between my bare toes

waiting

I breath in the fresh air

waiting and

with a loud sigh

warm water pushes against

legs planted firmly on the beach

all powerful and foam and bits of sand and shell

roaring now,

prickling against sun warmed skin

breathing,

breathing the sea exhales,
drawing its water
back into the deep,
my feet sinking slightly
with each long breath
until I become the sea
and the sea becomes me

DEBORAH KERNER

BOY

a boy slowly walks across a vast
grass field he touches the strands
as they sway around him to his
waist he sees a ladder and climbs
it to the sky which is blue with
many bursts of cumulus clouds
they are not blocking the sun

music of a delicate
flute is nearby
reassuring he pauses to
listen before he
reaches the apex of his
ascent

he is not dead he is
curious to experience
something beyond earth
before he gets too sad
and loses his ability to
love his inexperience
propels him to imagine

once grounded in the
immensity of the sky he sees
radiant nebula embedded in
the blackness of the space
beyond the blue of earth's
atmosphere

stunned he is careful not
to let the ladder lose its
stability he is ready
for sadness to spread
through into the full
bearing of his being
without regret

ALYSSA HARMON

FIBONACCI SPIRALS

my

anxiety

is like

a pineapple seed,

the nautilus shell at the

beach, it's the most powerful hurricane, the entire

milky way. it's just nature's way of reminding me that i'm not alone.

DALE E. COTTINGHAM

POSTING THE POST

The heat stopped by, and well,
stayed, settled in, became
a normal. Meaning our troubles
have new flavors: licorice, tungsten,
and for the Hell of it, glass.
What did we think we were doing,
we ask ourselves, not realizing
what we're doing right now is what we're doing.

Which means that in this comic strip
the fog cleared for a moment, and I could see
it is real life. So, before leaving,
I'll post this on the post.

MAGGIE BAYNE

THE RETURN

The late afternoon sun bore through the passenger-side window like a beam through a magnifying glass. These were the perfect conditions for igniting dry trigs, but not conducive to comfortable automobile travel.

“I’m burning up over here,” Denise shrieked. “For God’s sake, turn up the air.”

The long-suffering driver, recognizing that he was defeated, leaned forward, stretching his hand to adjust the temperature inside the little red car. *Whirrrr*. An arctic blast instantly flooded the front seat, providing abrupt relief. The discomforts experienced by desert visitors in July were legendary and late afternoon was an especially unpleasant time of day.

“Are we almost there yet?” Denise prodded. “I want to get out of these sweaty clothes.”

Grant, the driver, had experienced a long day, too. His sunburn was itchy, his throat parched and he had spent the entire day squinting beneath prescription sunglasses to navigate the bleak desert highways. On top of everything else, the passenger’s continual whining was wearing him down. From Houston to Albuquerque and beyond, Denise’s bitching and moaning confirmed for the two of them how miserable this trip had been.

Planning this adventure began during the Thanksgiving holiday several months earlier. Grant and Denise had been sitting by the fireplace reminiscing about how warm the same holiday always was when they lived in Phoenix. Thanksgiving Arizona-style was observed in short sleeves with dinner often followed by a long walk. Phoenix had provided a pleasant lifestyle—exciting, vibrant, hopeful, fresh. But having lived there for so many years, Grant and

Denise were not opposed to leaving when career moves dictated.

By the time Grant and Denise moved away, Phoenix was experiencing the inevitable by-products of being a popular Mecca: uncontrolled sprawl, choking traffic, foul air. Like so many other popular destinations, factors that lured newcomers eventually obliterated the fun. Phoenix had become just another city with all of the “usual” problems, far less the exotic oasis and playground it had been in the 1960s.

So, they had left the desert, choosing to experience four seasons and normalcy in the Midwest. Their lives were now relaxed and a good deal more civilized. Autumn in the Midwest was always lovely: a dazzling season accompanied by soft breezes which brought the prospect of another somewhat more ominous season. By the time Thanksgiving arrived, winter was on its way.

It was this deep November chill that spurred pleasant memories of Arizona. Once talk began about seeing the Valley of the Sun, they both grew enthusiastic about that prospect. But commitments had restricted that their return occur during summer months, not the optimum time to enjoy being outdoors or visiting old haunts. July temperatures in Phoenix hovered above 105 degrees. Grant and Denise decided to make the best of summer’s heat. Besides, they already had plenty of experience with the desert.

Precautions were taken to ease their journey through the desert during the worst time of the year. Grant had the car serviced, changing belts and hoses, those pesky rubber devices which could snap at the least opportune moments. Like veterans of battle, they recalled the sorts of things that could go wrong while traveling, determined to avoid such pitfalls.

“Really,” the passenger began again, “How much longer? Aren’t *you* tired, too? Can’t we just stop for the day?”

“I want to reach Scottsdale tonight. It’s only another hour or so. We have those reservations and can take it easy tomorrow.” He needed to focus on something more pleasant, like a good night of rest. Certainly, any attempt to soften the present moment’s miseries would not hold up with this audience.

On through the late afternoon's blazing, blinding sun the car sped, its windows shut tight against the unbearable heat, a temporary shelter from the abusive conditions on the outside, mere inches away from certain ruin.

Each year the media retold tales of doomed travelers, who fell victim to a flat tire or broken fan belt in the desert, only to become disoriented and later casualties of the heat. Their bodies would be discovered where they tried to escape to find water or help. Man was allowed to live in the southwestern desert with Nature's permission and on Nature's terms.

Only about another hour, Grant had promised Denise, and kept that thought to spur him on. Even with the comforts provided by the car, Grant was keenly aware of the scorching sun reflected from the hood, sending up visible ripples of heat from the surface, tiny rays bouncing off the red paint. Across the road ahead, frequent mirages of water appeared, giving the impression of a recent cloudburst. Of course, upon reaching each puddle, there would be no water at all, only a further reminder of the heat's mastery.

Some distance outside of Scottsdale, there began to appear scattered signs of encroaching civilization. The occasional convenience store with adjoining strip mall, sprinkled subdivisions cluttering the horizon with their still raw yards. Buildings dotted the barren soil, like dice tossed with no thought to placement or permanence.

Grant noticed a large gas station/convenience store/snack shop coming into view. "I'm going to top it off," he announced to the passenger. "How about something cold to drink?" His thoughts at announcing such an idea were completely selfish.

"That sounds good," came the response. "Enough of this!"

Grant pulled up to the pumps, filling the tank, then leaned in the driver's window and asked, "What would you like?"

"A big Coke with lots of ice. Thanks."

The store contained racks of chips and munchies, sunglasses and Styrofoam ice chests, all big sellers in the desert. The fountain section was marked off with yellow tape and appeared

to be closed.

“Ten gallons at pump 6,” Grant declared. “No drinks available?”

“Cans in the verticals,” came the reply. “No fountain ‘cause there is no ice.”

“No ice? Why not?” Grant asked.

“Because of the water,” the young man behind the counter said sarcastically. “Because of the water, man.” The cashier appeared exasperated at the stupidity of such a question, sighing deeply while ringing up Grant’s gas purchase.

“What do you mean, ‘the water’?”

The young cashier looked up lazily, as if he were about to state the obvious. “Because there *isn’t* any water, man. Where have you been?”

“Sorry. I don’t live around here anymore. Is there a problem with the water?”

“Yeah, man,” came the reply. “There isn’t any. Big story in these parts.”

“No water? None? I don’t understand.”

“Real shortage, man. No rain all year. Started out with rationing and now here we are in July and there isn’t any water. Don’t you watch the news, man?”

“Guess I missed that story.” Grant picked up his change and returned to the car, not eager to share this new information with his passenger.

Denise was peering through the windshield, apparently anticipating a large Coke with ice. When she saw that Grant was empty handed, her disgust was visible.

“Where’s my Coke?” she barked. “I was looking forward to my Coke.”

“The fountain was closed. And I didn’t think you would want a can. The clerk said something about there being a water shortage.”

“Water shortage? Where?”

“I don’t really know. Guess we’ll find out.”

They pulled into traffic and headed on toward their

destination, eager for the day's trip to end. Grant began to envision their comfortable suite at The Pharaoh, a sumptuous resort constructed shortly before they moved away. The image of that hotel, with its spectacular grounds and lavish amenities, had danced in his head ever since they began to plan the trip. Grant had announced to Denise, "If we are going to visit Phoenix, then we are going to stay at The Pharaoh and do it up right."

Each of the travelers had begun to anticipate how lovely it would be to check into the resort, perhaps take a dip in the pool and linger over a tall, cool beverage. As these most pleasant of thoughts seemed likely to become reality, Grant noticed a dark, gauze-like cloud sitting low on the horizon. At first, he believed this plume indicated a desert brush fire, common on dry terrain, particularly during the summer. He observed that the plume did not rise or spread but remained stationary. Its color was khaki brown, tingled with green and appeared veil-thin, translucent.

Peering from beneath the sun visor of the car, Grant pointed to his passenger. "Look at that. Is that smoke? What do you think could be the source of that cloud?"

"My dear," Denise said. "You have been gone from here too long. Don't you remember how polluted the air was becoming? It's just junk in the air, car exhaust and dust. We always saw that gunk when we would fly out of Sky Harbor Airport." She looked at the cloak of particles above them, observing its dark color and lifeless motion. "But it seems to have grown worse since we left. I don't recall anything quite so disgusting. To think that people actually *breathe* that stuff!"

"Sometimes the air would look foul," Grant recalled. "But summer rains would usually cleanse the atmosphere, even temporarily. That is quite a sight."

At the corner of Pima Road and McDonald Drive, a large shopping center had sprung up in their absence. "Look, Denise," Grant shouted as they approached the corner. "Remember this location? There was nothing here but bare land. I think it was part of the Pima Indian Reservation. Yes, I'm sure this was the spot. Now there is a shopping center."

Denise looked up, less than enthused, and noticed the large center with popular anchor stores and bistro eateries. “What is that?” Denise observed. “It looks like a fountain.” Clearly what she pointed out was a fountain, a tall granite structure. But no water spilled from the tiers. “Maybe it isn’t hooked up yet or something.”

As they drove deeper into Scottsdale, Grant noticed an uninterrupted string of cars creeping along the streets. The procession of vehicles moved slowly, winding through the signals as one long multi-jointed creature. “Guess it must be left-over rush hour,” he remarked to Denise. “Sure is heavy traffic.”

Grant turned into the driveway at The Pharaoh resort and approached the main building. The grounds were lovely, filled with desert landscaping, luxuriously decorated. Now that twilight was approaching, the palm trees were illuminated with colorful floodlights. The main lobby was a tall structure of rust-colored stucco and white columns, resembling a grand hacienda, majestic in the wilting heat.

As Grant and Denise neared the desk to register, they noticed a large placard near the Concierge desk. It read: “Pool closed indefinitely due to water shortage.”

Grant retrieved the pen to register and remarked to the desk clerk while he gestured toward the sign, “Say, what’s this about the water?”

“Yes, sir. You see, there is a shortage of water throughout the area right now. It has been in the news lately. I’m surprised you haven’t heard about it.”

“Sure haven’t,” Grant responded. “But then we aren’t from around here. Is it serious?”

“Yes, sir. There is little water to spare. Most swimming pools are closed and residents are asked not to water lawns or wash cars. Here at the hotel, we are asking guests to reduce water use. Our restaurant is closed, just temporarily.”

“Really? The Egyptian Room? That is one of the reasons we wanted to stay here. The food is supposed to be wonderful.”

“Yes, sir. Five-star rating. But there is not enough water available to keep all our facilities open and the restaurant seemed

expendable. Sorry for the inconvenience.”

“Is there anything else which will not be available?” interrupted Denise, now growing irritable after her long day in the heat.

“The golf course is closed until further notice. Its upkeep required too much water during the summer. Perhaps by next winter the water supply will be more abundant. I understand that if the water situation continues, electricity will soon become scarce. The power plant west of the Valley apparently uses water to cool its turbines. In a few more weeks, there might be a true electrical shortage.” He smiled nervously, to reassure the visitors. “But hopefully, that will not occur.”

Grant leaned toward the clerk, as much to prevent Denise from hearing the conversation as to indicate he was getting the inside track of information. “Just what caused this shortage?”

The clerk leaned forward slightly and said, “The water situation began when we received no rain over the last year. We never get a lot of rain. But this year, without any rainfall, the lake levels were down.”

Grant recalled that Phoenix received most of its water from a chain of small lakes northeast of the Valley. Through a series of canals, these lakes provided most of the water used by residents.

The clerk continued. “There was minimal water available in a couple of the lakes, but testing revealed the levels to be polluted by a rapidly-increasing bacteria count. So, releases to the Valley ceased and we have been dealing with drought for the past few months. It’s difficult, especially when most summer recreation here requires water.”

Grant thanked the clerk for his input and the bellman led the weary travelers to their room. The suite, located just off the main lobby, was indeed luxurious, large, and extravagantly decorated. Denise’s face brightened when the bellman opened the door.

“Oh, my,” she couldn’t curb her enthusiasm. “This is lovely. Grant, look at that view.”

The view from their south-facing window was

impressive, displaying the breadth of the Valley of the Sun in every direction. The Valley appeared bright, clean, sleek, and shiny. The sun reflecting on the stylish high-rise buildings always reminded Denise of a new automobile with recently-applied paint and chrome, gleaming brightly. Phoenix structures were untainted by time as so often was the case in other parts of the country. In Phoenix, few buildings remained to the age of 30. A building of that age would certainly have been replaced with a younger, snappier model.

That khaki blanket was still visible above the shimmering city. Even in the darkness, the mantle hovered tree-top high, a foul substance of uncertain sources.

"Excuse me," Grant addressed the bellman as he was handing Grant the keys, automatically extending his hand in hope of receiving a gratuity. "What is that layer of brown that I keep seeing above the ground? See, there it is by the front palm trees, just above the parking lot."

"Sir, that is smaze, a hybrid of smoke and haze that is always present. I understand that Phoenix used to experience smaze only during winter months when the colder air in the surrounding mountains kept it contained. Now that blanket sits there all the time and frankly, we hardly notice it at all."

"Doesn't it cause problems for some people, breathing problems?" Denise asked.

"Oh, sure," the bellman smiled. "Including me. Some days the weather reports will include health alerts warning against jogging and other strenuous exercise. My doctor tells me that breathing difficulties have increased dramatically in recent years. Many people walk around with special inhalers or wear filters that look like surgical masks. Pretty funny looking," he smiled. "But they seem to help a bit."

These words struck Grant and saddened him. Grant's gratuity-bearing hand was extended to meet that of the bellman, and both smiled at the exchange. "Thanks," Grant said flatly.

"Thank *you*, sir," the bellman answered as he headed for the door. "Enjoy your stay."

Grant and Denise were now alone in the room. They both turned to resume absorbing the view from the window. Before them the mountain-ringed expanse spread, here a high-rise, there a palm tree, over there South Mountain.

Winding through a cut in the mountains and trailing among the buildings was a glowing, slinking creature, moving at a snail's pace. Covered with red lights, it crept along like a giant reptile.

"Look at that," Denise said, indicating the red-lighted creature. "What *is* it?"

"I think it's traffic. Taillights creeping home. Yes, it looks like an unbroken string of cars headed out."

"But it is such a long line. There must be a lot of cars."

"Yes, well, I think there are a lot of cars in Phoenix now. Traffic was becoming a problem when we left and with the continual influx of newcomers, it certainly can't have improved."

Denise sat down in one of the wingback chairs that faced the magnificent window and the view beyond. "Look at how slowly it is moving!" She paused, reaching down to unfasten her sandals. She sighed and slumped back against the deep rust upholstery, stretching her hands forward to embrace the chair's arms. "I'm certainly glad I am not sitting in a car out there, in this heat." A small smile crept onto her face. It was the first smile that Grant had seen in some time, the first indication that his passenger might begin to relax.

"I know," he said. "Say, let's get something to eat. Since The Egyptian Room is closed, we'll have to find a place to eat. I'll call the Concierge and see if he can recommend a restaurant. Go change if you want."

"Good idea." Denise was glad to change out of her traveling clothes that had become wrinkled and sweaty.

Grant picked up the telephone and rang the Concierge. Denise could tell from the half of the conversation she heard that Grant was not receiving good news. "Oh, really." and "Is that right?" were repeated a few times. He hung up the phone and turned to share the information.

"Concierge says that there are practically no restaurants

open due to the water shortage. Even fast-food places are closed. No water. No ice. No nothing. He suggested that we go to a grocery and buy quick fix items, make sandwiches and have pop from a can. That's what most of the guests are doing."

"You are not serious. We are paying to stay at The Pharaoh, and we are supposed to go to the grocery for sandwiches?"

"Actually, he said that several of the grocery stores are closed, too. There is a Safeway store a mile or so from here that is open. It may be busy, so if you don't want to go, I'll bring something back here." Grant knew this scenario wasn't going to play well, so he added, "You can rest and cool off."

"Just use your judgment and get something easy." Denise was tired and dreaded the thought of riding any more today, even for a short distance.

Grant walked through the parking lot to the car. It was about 8:30 now and still not completely dark. He had forgotten how hot the desert can be even after dark, especially in the city proper with pavement and buildings. Grant felt like Hansel stepping into the witch's oven. Deep heat, permeating heat, no sign of breeze. There was a smell, too, in the air. It was the aroma of car exhaust, sweaty people, diesel fumes, suffocating scents of all types. Not the damp of the Midwest at night, the odor of growing corn and fresh flowers. Just hot air mixed with unpleasant auxiliary fragrances.

He pulled out into Camelback Road, to join the continuous slow parade of red taillights. Traffic was at a crawl, even now, long past rush hour. The cars were slithering along, one bumper to the next. Only a few cars made it through each light change and then the traffic came to a complete halt. What had happened? Had there been an accident up ahead? But crossing the few intersections on the way to the Safeway indicated that traffic in all directions was equally slow.

At the next stop light, Grant became aware of the other cars. Each appeared to have only one driver, who sat at his or her post staring blankly ahead, waiting to make the slightest progress. He could not believe the complete lack of horn honking or arm waiving. This was a giant parade of single-occupant vehicles,

ridiculous in its appearance, tragic in the result. No wonder the air is so foul, thought Grant as he sat in his car, an air-conditioned capsule protecting him from the environment.

Eventually he reached the Safeway. The parking lot was brilliant with lights and overflowing with cars. The scene reminded him of the shopping frenzy in the Midwest with a predicted snowfall. Scurrying shoppers, heaping their carts, every man for himself. Grant had to decide quickly what items he could take back to the hotel which would be acceptable and somewhat special. Maybe get items for a picnic. He headed for the deli, images of roast chicken and potato salad shuffling before his road-weary eyes. Perhaps a bottle of wine.

As Grant paused ever so slightly to assess his shopping plan, he was hit from behind by an older woman who rammed him with her cart. "Look where you're going, sonny," she hollered at him. "Get out of my way."

Startled, Grant managed, "Sorry." He pulled a U-turn and disappeared down the gourmet aisle, which was nearly deserted. The one remaining deli case held a selection of upscale morsels—chicken and macaroni salad—which sounded delicious about now. Grant and Denise had eaten very little earlier in the day because of the heat and even less saving themselves for The Egyptian Room. Now here he was, in the Safeway grabbing for whatever morsels he could find. Fortunately, he retrieved the last whole roasted chicken in the rotisserie case. It might be fun to sit in their luxury suite and have a picnic of wine and chicken. He was enthused about the spontaneity of such an event.

Grant patiently waited in one of the long check-out lines. People were solemn for the most part, though in every crowd there are some who are never content with the service, the price, something. A couple of check-out lines over, he heard a customer raising his voice to the cashier. The customer was waiving a finger at the clerk, and they both turned their heads generally in Grant's direction. It was a heated but brief conversation; the customer was out the door and the next shopper stepped up.

Grant made his purchases and hurried to the car. The

entire process had taken much longer than he expected and now he had to join the red taillight serpent and wind his way back to The Pharaoh. Denise would be starving—and unhappy. He could hear her taunts already.

Grant was unlocking his car door when the angry customer from inside approached from a nearby car. Grant was startled more by the man appearing out of nowhere than feeling frightened. He tried to conceal his surprise by saying, “Oh, excuse me. I didn’t see you standing there.” He smiled then said, “It is really busy in there, isn’t it?”

The angry customer stood silent, then noticed Grant’s Illinois license plates. “Oh, you from Illinois?” he asked.

Grant relaxed a little, now that he had engaged the man in conversation. “Yes, I am. Used to live here, but it’s been a while ago.”

“Well, now you come out here and flash your money and think you can just take over,” The angry man’s voice was rising, as it had inside the store. He walked toward Grant and said directly into Grant’s face, “You bought the last roast chicken in there, did you know that?”

“What?” The fact that this man was making an issue out of the chicken more than surprised Grant. “I’m sorry. I didn’t mean...”

With that, the angry man retrieved a small pistol from his grocery bag. The parking lot lights reflected on the barrel only momentarily before the man shoved the gun against Grant’s stomach. Just as quickly, he pulled the trigger, returned slowly to his car and calmly drove away. Nothing more was to be done, his task apparently complete.

The flash of pain was intense. Grant remained on his feet, stooping over slightly, his hand grasping the point of entry. His shirt was already wet from the oozing wound and Grant knew he was seriously injured. He stood there, not knowing what to do. The angry man was gone.

In the middle of this brightly lit parking lot, amidst the madness swirling around him, there was no one to ask. No one to help. Grant knew he could not maneuver well enough to find

a telephone. Even if he did, should he call an ambulance? Call the police? Standing there with his life source dripping from his newly-received injury, Grant knew that he had one course of action. It was to get back into his little car and rejoin the slithering trek of cars and return to The Pharaoh. Perhaps he could drive right up to the doorman and get some help. Besides, Denise was there and she was the only person for 2000 miles who cared anything about him.

Grant managed to adjust himself in the seat so that he was comfortable. The pain of the wound seemed to have lessened somewhat, or at least he ceased noticing quite so much. The red flood was a tidal wave now, soaking his shirt, his pants and dripping onto the floor mats. Through his mind flashed concern about how hard it would be to clean up, dreading how upset Denise would be.

Driving carefully now to avoid any sudden movements, Grant pulled the little car into the never-ending stream of vehicles moving past the Safeway. Once they joined the procession, each driver became a part of the whole, like a segment on a centipede, headed along with the rest of the creature to some unknown destination.

ALYSSA HARMON

THE DEAD SEA

i cry enough tears
and create a new ocean
to drown myself in, but
the salinity is so high
that i float back up
to the surface.

CAROL LYNN STEVENSON GRELLAS

TO THE CHILD

Who remembered too much—
never forgetting that tiny sparrow

that fell from space, a thin line of blood
running from its body to her feet

where she stood in its path as if an entrance
to a home trying to rescue it before she knew

anything about dying or fearing the unknown—
until death touched her hand with a feathered being.

To that child who thought prayer was
a way to save herself from sadness,

amen her way into a kind of heaven,
sanctify every thought so sorrow couldn't

penetrate her life as if she could kneel
and bow to hope and hope would

answer with a winged voice. That child
who had a plastic globe hanging above

her bed from a ceiling light overhead
so at night so she could see her own paradise

when the moon shone through the pearl
lace curtains of her window, memories

captured like planets spinning beyond,
separate worlds she could live in that circled
space, a place without air or the need
to exhale. That child who thought any misdeed
was her fault, who did time in her own mind,
like a prisoner without a release date, who
never grew up but killed her life in melancholy
her skin stained burgundy from that very first death.

ELLEN HIRNING SCHMIDT

EQUINOX

“Where is he?” four-year old Lilo asks early this morning.
It’s a few weeks since her grandpa died,
and an equal number of weeks
till her baby sister will be born.

She shows us (her still-alive grandparents)
the treasures from her no-longer grandpa’s house:
“gems”—shiny beads in a glass jar
and a photo of him when he was four years old.

She knows this once
little boy is dead, but
“Where is he?”
She needs to know.

Her eyes wander around the walls.
Two short beats pass,
Then, she asks where her parents are.
She knows they are asleep in their bedroom, but

she’s learned to be watchful,
wary in a world where
those you care about and who care
for you can vanish with no warning.

Dimly aware of this mystery veil
dividing life from death,
she hears the grown ups’ voices, watches
their faces, wonders how grandpa’s disappearance

makes tears slip down their cheeks, lips tremble.
Yet this barely imagined baby lightens their worn eyes.
Reality ploughs into her world,
one unsolved mystery after another.

Later, at bedtime, she says,
“I want the baby’s name to be *Lilo*,”
as she undresses and dresses her bare baby
doll in her own old newborn clothes.

“Or maybe *Sparkles*,” she looks
up at the glow-in-the-dark stars sprinkled
on her ceiling. Her twilight question floats
still left unanswered.

CAROL LYNN STEVENSON GRELLAS

REQUIEM FOR TACO

Because it was dying
 its limbless body lay wilted,
 yet travelled on waves

as it hollowed itself in water
 that carried its soul while it lingered
 with all of us watching,

hoping something would change,
 a gill would flap, an eye would move,
 if only to see it was still surrounded

by light, shimmering over its aquatic home
 like a rainbow through a waterfall
 as we waited together as if we were

a part of something bigger than us,
 which of course, we are, yet so easily
 forget, but somehow feeling that just then

made us root for it a little more,
 as it drifted silent, all of us thinking
 how to explain a dying thing

to a four-year-old, after all, it was just a fish,
 but it was his fish, his little buddy, his friend
 that he'd fed and talked to each day as it swam

around pushing bubbles like a sign it was
listening to him, rising to the top of the tank
for a morsel of food, his tiny fingers

dropping one spec at a time as he watched it somersault
with delight and spin around that fake blue shark
playing the guitar, smiling so wide

its teeth looked like a row of capital A's made
of porcelain, and because it was sleeping
on that very shark as if it were in need

of comfort as it paused unmoving, save the slight
fluttering of waves filtering over its body
I was reminded of how helpless we are

in the moment between life and death, when each breath
makes a difference, and because it would
soon be floating to the top of its bowl,

sideways, one fin up and the underside down
like a dropped petal of an orange flower
drifting above what had been its only earthly life,

all we could do was press our hands together
against the cold glass as he looked at us thinking
surely there must be a way to save it.

DOUG VAN HOOSER

BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE

There's a small bird
outside my window
flitting from one barren branch
to another. He is alone,
or is it he's lonely?
His head pivots, he looks left
and right, up and down,
hopscotches limb
to limb. Seeks what he does
not have, whatever is missing,
stars in a dark clouded day.
Small red crab apple pips do not
interest him. He's not looking
to fill his stomach. Doesn't
he know eating can gnaw at your
hunger, fill the emptiness with
its own emptiness.
You must have a song. Sing it.
Perhaps another with a black cap
will hear it and be intrigued.

PETER A. WITT

OLD BARNs

There's something intensely sad
about old abandoned barns
dotting the landscape of rural America,
some still usable, some in various
stages of disrepair, all subject
to the elements that chip their paint,
dismember their sides one plank
at a time, or expose them to rot.

Some provide nesting sites for birds,
hangouts for snakes, coyotes, escaped
chickens, some are salvaged by city folks
who treasure the weathered boards
and beams for construction elements
in city homes where visitors will ooh
and aah at the fine wood grains,
how old is repurposed to new.

Each wall, each board, each piece
of leftover hay, each latch, each door
has a story to tell, but few take
the time to listen.

So much of history is lost
in the declining barns
of yesterday as we pass
them on the highway
or come across them in
a walk through the woods.

PATRICK DRUGGAN

BELSENPLATZ

A high wind strips
the last of the leaves
from the limbs of the trees.

Lost, I stand cold, alone
at this U-Bahn Haltestelle
I read that name
again and again
it has one meaning,
one thin horror
in black and white.

They walk by holding children's hands
stepping over unseen tramlines
in the golden light
casting long shadows
across a small square,
that is a triangle.

A place, where aspen once grew.

JAMES CONNELLY

WHAT THE NUN TOLD ME

changed the flight of geese rising
from the pond where that boy
went under and drowned,

the way my wife smiles, the grief
we bring to the wakes of children.
It eliminated salvation, forgot the entropy

of the sun, the freezing land. She told me
how to walk around the hospital, to look
inside, to believe in circles, the crocus,

the light off a Datsun's chrome,
blue jays scattering wrens—why, that's
the way, she said. She said pray

for the black elk you've never seen
and bow into victims you would never
have held, study the faces we all

would have stoned. Understand how
the marsh constricts. Memorize how
the river moves. Remember Latin,

the grammar of row upon row of stacked
bodies. She said learn it all and study,
she said pray for that boy and do it now.

CAROL LYNN STEVENSON GRELLAS

OBSTACLES ENCOUNTERED ENROUTE

The day the bees came through a weep hole
in the house, they filled a room with sound,
flying between bulbs that lit the space they thought

was full of sun, a mistaken haunt, a place to settle
down, windows covered in drapes the color of honey,
their faint echo of whirring traffic as they entered

our home, a buzzing aria, a steady stream
of song melodic in its tone, calming as if drone
to drone carried a kind of vibration in the air—

and I was there, unsure who to call or where
to find a beekeeper, someone to rescue what
seemed potential disaster. Where one night earlier,

my grandson slept in that room. His little body
cradled in soft blankets, his skin bathed in the scent
of warm milk, as a faraway murmur disrupted

the monitor when one, two, and three interlopers
began their misguided quest, soon multiplying
to a hundred or more purring things—tiny translucent

wings in chaotic unison, moving across the perimeter
of that room, under the sofa, chairs, along
the floor and onto the ottoman in a swirl of madness.

And just for a minute, I stood in disbelief

and awe, halfway between fear and wonder
as I closed that door, padding the crevice below

where a sliver of light trickled through, one lone
bee still trying to creep past my makeshift
barrier.

KEN GOLDMAN

A FULL BODIED CHIANTI

*The 1957 Chianti Classico Frascati
Tuscany, Italy
A Full Bodied, Daring Red*

In the café they were holding hands and whispering, yet they did not appear happy.

“Then it is settled, Rosa? You are certain you can do this?” the young man asked.

“Certain, Giovanni, as best I can be. I wish only there were some other way to -”

He stopped her words with a finger to her lips. The gesture would have certainly raised eyebrows had anyone seen this, for here was a man who worked many of Tuscany’s vineyards emboldened enough to touch the flesh of Donna Frascati, the young wife of the wealthy Signore Roberto Frascati.

“There is no other way unless your desire is to sell fish in the markets of Rocca d’Orcia for the rest of your life. Roberto is a powerful man, and we can hide our love from him no longer. We act tonight or risk losing all.”

He prepared to pour the young woman another glass of the Chianti, a bottle purchased by the café from her husband’s own vineyards, but she stopped him, covering her glass.

“Then no more wine, Giovanni. Of all nights, tonight I must think clearly.” Her dark eyes met his and she knew he understood. He pushed the bottle aside.

The mandolin player approached their table. Giovanni waved him off. He returned to Rosa, again speaking in whispers.

“It will be extremely hot tonight. In Roberto’s vineyards the men gathering grapes wear moistened towels on their heads. Their work

is made slow in such heat, and several fires have had to be put out. Your husband will not be in good temper returning from his inspections of their harvest, and his thirst will be great. You must greet him at the villa with wine and be certain he has more with his dinner. At midnight I will come. Remember to leave the latch open for—”

He stroked the moisture from her cheek. Although her tears belied a woman’s frailties her voice remained strong.

“I love you Giovanni. Enough to do this terrible thing!”

“It is not so terrible if you do not love the man you call husband. Age has not mellowed him. It has only made him more bitter.”

“I do not hate him. You know that. I can never blame Roberto because I was young and a fool. I saw only the Frascati Vineyards and believed ‘Yes, this is enough for happiness.’”

“And will you remain a fool, Rosa?” He handed the woman a small packet containing a fine powder. “Place some into his wine at dinner. Pour more into other glasses later, enough to make him sleep. Tomorrow he goes to Villa Petrolo to sell his wine. With so much drinking, his drive along the treacherous curves of the Monte Amiata shall be his last. I shall see to that before he awakens. Unless, of course, you have no stomach to do . . . ‘this terrible thing.’”

“I love you, Giovanni. That is all you need to know.”

Giovanni managed a smile. “I need also to know what to do with the remainder of this excellent Chianti Classico. Adriano serves a fine wine here. Such a pity to waste the fruits of your husband’s labors.”

“Adriano shall not waste it, I assure you. He will dress it up in a spanking new bottle and sell it to some other fool willing to pay full price. I have seen him do the same with a half emptied Lambrusco not one week ago. It might explain why the proprietor of café Rivoli is so rich. If ever I decide to leave you, Giovanni, I shall have my eyes set on him.”

Her young paramour might have tenderly kissed her then, but already they had taken the great risk of having been seen speaking together with such intimacy. Instead, they shared a moment of laughter that passed all too quickly.

*

Giovanni had been correct. Stinking from the scorching heat, Roberto Frascati returned from his vineyards that evening in as foul a mood as Rosa could remember. Although her husband had never once struck her throughout almost three years of marriage, on this night, he certainly seemed capable of it.

On this evening, a chilled glass containing a thirty-year-old Frascati Port awaited him, a favorite taken from Roberto's vineyards. Awaiting also was a smiling wife as per her lover's instructions. She had placed the powdered substance, a tasteless and odorless sedative, into the wine, although she took a gamble attempting to fool a palate as skilled as Roberto's.

The sedative soothed the man's anger, and following a large meal of tender veal accompanied by assorted fresh vegetables and potatoes—and punctuated by much more wine—Roberto fell into a thick slumber over his dessert at the dinner table. Fast asleep, the man snorted like a bull. Rosa had her husband's servant place him into his bed, then dismissed the remaining serving staff to their quarters. The man's body heaved and swelled with thick, heavy breaths while, alongside him in bed, Rosa awaited her lover's arrival.

Giovanni was punctual and slipped the latch at twelve. He entered the bedroom without turning on the light, for had Roberto awakened, explanations would have been impossible and the plan aborted. But the man slept soundly and Rosa climbed from the bed to embrace her love.

"He has been like this for hours," she told him. "He drank much this night, and the sedative only hastened the tiredness he felt following such a difficult day."

"Good. The mountain roads will be isolated. It shall be simple to accomplish Roberto's unfortunate accident within this hour. The wreckage will not be discovered until morning."

Roberto farted but did not awaken. Still, Rosa kept her voice low.

“His van is loaded with the wine samples for the Villa Petrolo. It is an hour’s drive, so you must follow the road through Montevarchi as if your intended destination were the Villa.” She located the keys to the vehicle on the dresser and handed them to Giovanni.

Pulling the man from his bed, Giovanni managed a weak smile. “Such a pity to waste his fine wine in the mishap. Ah, well, no plan is perfect, not even ours. Grab the legs and help me carry him.”

It would have been less difficult hauling a Brahma Bull down the staircase to the van, but the couple succeeded. The serving staff’s quarters had gone dark and the two were not spotted. With their plan proceeding nicely, Giovanni took the risk of kissing Rosa in the pale Tuscan moonlight.

“Rosa, there can be no contact between us for many days. Act properly shocked when you receive the news. Now go to bed and think only of me.”

Rosa watched the van pull away until it was out of sight. She took her lover’s advice, but sleep proved impossible. Tossing and turning, she pictured the events developing between the man she had married and the man she loved.

Now Giovanni is pulling the van to the side of the road, making certain Roberto still sleeps . . .

Now he is hauling my husband to the driver’s seat, releasing the brake, and pushing the vehicle from the tallest peak of the mountain road . . .

. . . and now, perhaps Roberto is awakening to discover he is trapped, the van rolling over and over upon itself like a child’s discarded toy, bursting into flames, and Roberto, he is screaming, oh Mother of God! he is screaming . . .

*

Remaining awake until daylight shone through her window, she waited for the phone call from the authorities that she knew must come. An hour or two passed. Then a third. When the call did not come, she began to worry.

Had something gone wrong? Had her husband awakened and, insane with the sweltering heat and his drunkenness, struggled with Giovanni at the wheel? Perhaps Roberto, speeding down the mountain road to his own death, had come to his senses in time to escape? Or, maybe her lover had been fool enough in this heat to stop the van along the side of the Monte Amiata to quench his thirst with the wine he knew he must destroy? And then, perhaps in a drunken stupor of his own, had he driven off that same road?

Such a pity to waste so much fine wine, that's what he had told her . . .

No, no, Rosa repeated to herself a hundred times over, shaking her head to dispel thoughts too horrible to consider. She made some tea to settle her nerves. Too upset to drink it, instead she paced the floor.

Noon arrived, but there was no call, no visit from the polizia. She watched the television expecting an announcement of the tragedy, but there was nothing. Late afternoon came and went, then early evening during which time Rosa had consumed almost an entire bottle of merlot. Of course, she could ask no questions of her servants nor act in any way different from her usual manner. She had been practiced in deception since her affair with Giovanni had begun, but nothing matched the panic-driven confusion she now felt. Rosa lay upon the divan of the great drawing room of the villa and felt warm beads of sweat trickle down her forehead.

Just after the late summer sun sank behind the western slopes the door opened. Barely awake, Rosa saw only the blurred outline of the massive figure who stood above her.

"Gio—?" She stopped herself before saying more, pretending to turn her lover's name into a meaningless mumble.

"My beautiful Rosa, asleep here on her divano living a life of luxury when she should be preparing her husband's dinner."

At first she thought she must be dreaming, but no, Roberto stood before her and he was laughing. Always he returned home in good spirit whenever he made another important sale to a wealthy client, and Villa Petrolo was among his wealthiest. Rosa understood her husband well enough to recognize his more favorable

temperaments. This evening he was even holding flowers for her.

"These violets were for sale in the Rocca d'Orcia and they whispered your name to me. I could not resist buying them for you." He placed the bouquet in a vase, stooping to kiss his wife's forehead. "You are warm, Rosa. Have you a fever?"

Impossible . . . Impossible . . .

"I feel a little tired, is all, Roberto, and I have had some wine. Perhaps too much." She made her way casually to the window, stealing a glance through the drapery to study the van he had parked near the entrance for the manservant to later secure inside the large autorimessa. Although darkness was falling she could see the van clearly enough. It did not appear to have a scratch. Nor did Roberto in any way resemble a man who had been engaged in a life or death struggle.

Impossible!

Rosa prepared her husband's dinner, waiting for—expecting—something, anything to indicate her indiscretion with Giovanni had been discovered and dealt with. But her betrayed husband displayed no suggestion of anything remiss, nothing at all. Roberto, in truth, had never seemed more pleasant.

That was it! He was toying with her, trying to exact some guilt-ridden confession. It must be! He would take her to bed, showing his teeth like a snarling animal when he smiled, then remove his thick leather belt and beat her without remorse until her flesh puffed crimson with welts! Rosa expected nothing less.

But it did not happen, not that night, nor during any of the days or nights that followed.

Giovanni had told her he would not call for a while, and Rosa did not anticipate hearing word from her lover. But a week passed, then two. She looked in the vineyards for him, stopped several times at the café Rivoli, even chanced walking past the small apartment in which he lived on the outskirts of Rocca d'Orcia. She dared not ask for him, not of anyone, for in a small village there are many eyes and many mouths, and there were none who could be trusted. But Giovanni remained nowhere to be seen. It was as if he ceased to exist.

Maybe that was exactly the case!

Day into night the thought haunted her, of Giovanni shoved from a tall cliff, his body twisted and bones broken, his flesh slowly eaten by birds. Or perhaps Roberto had overpowered his wife's lover, dousing the startled suitor in gasoline and igniting him like a human torch to burn until all that remained was a blackened swatch of scorched muscle and tissue resembling nothing human.

But in the woman's mind there were images so much worse:

. . . of her Giovanni paid off handsomely by a smiling Roberto sending the young man off with a pat on the back.

. . . and of her robust paramour traveling somewhere far away and even now drinking wine and laughing while in the arms of another.

The waiting for answers was agony, and not knowing, torture. Endless scenarios played out in vivid detail inside Rosa's head, each new variation worse than the one before. Days became weeks, weeks months, and still no answers came. All the while Roberto revealed nothing, uttering not a single word of anger nor aiming a suspecting glance in his wife's direction. This only increased Rosa's torment.

Once in the night she called out to her lover in her sleep, "Giovanni! Giovanni!"

She awakened certain that Roberto must have heard, although her husband continued to sleep soundly.

But years passed and the memory of Giovanni faded. There were times Rosa doubted the man had ever really held her in his arms at all, never had been anything other than a wonderful creation of a miserable young housewife's fevered imagination. Sometimes it was easier to think of him in these terms than as a living and breathing creature; doing so, she could fashion her memories in any way she chose. During these reveries the eternally young Giovanni desired no woman other than the radiant young girl donna Frascati once had been, and even as old age threatened her, the woman forever remained that beautiful temptress. When reminiscences did not come of their own accord, a little coaxing with wine always did the trick.

“Giovanni!” she called through wine soaked stupors, and still her husband said nothing.

The more she consumed, the more the wine brought mysterious smiles to the woman’s face, smiles only she understood. The wine whispered to her, shared with her all the truths she needed to know, or more accurately those truths she needed to believe. If the wine stretched those truths, at least it convinced her that Giovanni lived and loved her still, loved her always with all the raging passions of a young man’s heart.

The wine whispered those secrets it wanted the woman to know, and even if the explanations fell short of complete certainty, for the remainder of her days donna Rosa Frascati listened and believed.

NOLO SEGUNDO

ON EATING AN ORANGE AND SEEING GOD

I miss the big navels when they are not in season,
but almost any orange will do when I really want to see God.

But it must be done right, this seeing, this apprehension of the
Lord of the Universe, Lord of All the Worlds, both seen and
unseen . . .

First, I feel how firm the orange is, rolling it in my hands,
the hands of an artist, the hands of a poet, and now the stiff
and cracked hands of an old man—
then I slice it in half and look at its flesh, its brightness,
its moistness, its color—
if the insides beckon, urging my mouth to bite,
I first cut each half into half and then slowly, carefully—
as all rituals demand—I put one of the cut pieces between
my longing lips and gradually, with a sort of grace, bite
into the flesh of the sacrificial fruit.

I feel the juice flow down my throat and recall the taste of
every orange I ever had, even in my childhood—or so it
seems, with this little miracle of eating an orange.

As I finish absorbing, still slowly and gracefully, its flesh,
the last bit of what had been one of the myriad wonders
of the world, I look at the ragged pieces of orange peel
and I see poetry—or God—it's really the same thing,
isn't it?

JANET BOWDAN

LANDBANK, NANTUCKET

When you walk the loop, which we do
despite wanting that sight of beach
because the ocean is three miles and another three
back and among us we have a bad knee,
a problem foot, and an 8-year-old who has two
gears—dawdle and run—you take a path
through fields occasionally mowed so
they'll look like they did when they were farmed
cooperatively; you pass high bush blueberries in
bloom and black cherry trees and trees webbed
with caterpillar larvae just beginning to emerge
so it looks a bit like Mirkwood except open to the sun.
But everywhere you hear birds, even if you don't
see them, and then you come across the high pole
with the osprey nest, and the osprey takes off,
opening her wings to the breeze, calling.
There is a kettle pool 15,000 years old and a sign that this
is the last of the glacial moraine that came just
this far south on Nantucket. Martha's Vineyard,
next island over, is eroding at such a rate that they're
slowly moving the Gay Point Lighthouse 134 feet back
from the cliff side. Signs for the Land Bank
don't explain how this works, only that it's here:
a public trust. We have to live on the interest, so
we need to make regular deposits, keep an eye on
our investments, save, preserve, stockpile these lands.
Our way of saving something as the jade-green ocean
batters fiercely, constantly at the edges of the shores.

PATRICK DRUGGAN

COMING HOME LATE

My city is in ruins.
There are strangers
on street corners.
I am left with dust
and shadows,
moments that time
cannot take.

A thin holiness
of hyacinth perfume
fills the Square
in the drama
of falling light.

It is a memory
of this splash,
a raindrop in April,
among the hail.

EDWARD AHERN

EUCALYPTUS

It was never more than a few dozen buildings around a crossroads, inhabited for only a half century. Eucalyptus. There were more letters in its name than buildings left intact.

I walked its three hundred acres for two hours, peering through busted window glass at the bare interiors of the homes, farms and mining shacks. The dusty heat accentuated the aromas of dry rot and animal scat. Stallion County, Wyoming had taken custody after the last resident passed leaving considerable unpaid fees and taxes. The whole thing, including the unsuccessful farms and mining claims, was for sale at a half million.

My vision for the site was modest. Rehab the few homes I could, tear down and replace the others, and create a feeder hamlet for the tech industries moving into the county. Enhanced electrification would be key. The county power lines were less than a quarter mile away from the abandoned village. An expensive quarter mile, but with full service I'd have a chance.

I doubled back to one of the buildings, long, narrow and high roofed, that had no cross atop it, but that I guessed had been the church. The door was ajar and I took a serious risk and went in. If the flooring was sufficiently rotted, I'd end up in the cellar. The boards held. Anything portable had been stolen or trashed, but the pews, bolted through the flooring, were still in place. They'd tried to make it churchy, with cheap paneling lining the side walls in imitation of oak wainscotting. The hard afternoon sun flooded through glassless windows like searchlights, glaring onto the paneling. And revealing that one of the boards was discolored at the top edge.

"I wonder," I said aloud to no one. I walked over and tapped the board. It felt a little loose. After some jiggering I realized that its tongue could be slipped out of the adjoining groove by pulling it upward. Which I did.

Inside the concealed cubby, preserved from the vandals, were two leather-bound books—a King James bible and a thick journal. The front of the bible listed births and deaths in Eucalyptus. Twelve births couldn't compete against what looked like over two hundred deaths. The handwriting changed every so often, which made me think that as a congregant died another took his place as record keeper. The country records had James Farnsworth listed as the last resident, but his name wasn't in the bible. No one left to write it.

The afternoon sun was setting behind bald stone hills. I took the books with me to my car and retraced fifteen miles to the Eureka motel, which could accurately be renamed Excruciation. The bed suffered from terminal sag, and the windows were loose enough in their frames to give conduct passes to desert insects.

I went on line and looked up James Farnsworth. His young son and wife had died before him. The funeral home notice had quoted him as being "the last, proud resident of Eucalyptus." And probably the loneliest.

After a diner dinner ("Try the chicken fried steak") I retreated to my room, turned on a wheezy air conditioner, flopped into a faux leather chair and opened the journal. The entries were weekly, a great many of which had almost nothing to report. The first and longest entry was the founding of the town, listing many names and the help they provided. Despite the dry tone of the entry a sense of pride had snuck in. They'd done it.

There were over two hundred pages of entries, some pages with ten or twelve "nothing to report" notations before recording a mining claim started, an arrival or a death.

I knew I should be evaluating the prospects for repurposing the village, costs, income stream, scheduling: finally put my MBA to good purpose. But I couldn't put the journal down. There had been many more men than women in the village, but, in those

times, the women were the vessels for the future, and received a disproportionate amount of ink.

I stopped flipping pages and began to read front to back like a novel. By the time I was finished it was 3:30am. Their efforts had been mighty and all consuming, but doomed. Over time no newcomers arrived, the mining claims and farms were abandoned, and the few children grew up and left. Those remaining, now in their high sixties and seventies, dropped onto the pages like rain. There was no doctor, and little money if there'd been one. Eucalyptus' death had been lingering.

I got a few hours' sleep and returned to the diner that morning for reconstituted orange juice and grease. Perched on the plastic seating, I couldn't focus on the numbers that might make Eucalyptus viable again. I gave up and drove back out to the village. Only my own tire tracks and footprints were evident.

I walked back into the church, sat in a pew, and took out a pen. I entered James Farnsworth into the bible and the notebook, where I also wrote that he was the last, proud resident. Then I returned both books to their little shelf and slid the panel back into its slot.

After getting into my car, I pressed my lips together. Leave them in peace. There'd be another town.

ALAN COHEN

DIAGRAMMING SPRING

Now I've got myself caught up in a new project. Diagramming this spring as one might diagram a sentence. Walking the neighborhood earlier today, perhaps two weeks in, past embryo lilacs, a jam-packed orange quince, daffodil, forsythia, hyacinth, redbud, camellia, crocus, early azalea, early cherry, so many flowers making so thin a showing, each out there alone, as on a fashion runway, a long way yet from the robust full spring of memory. To capture, perhaps, the essence of what makes spring spring and what makes this spring unique. A map, a balance—or a spread-sheet, a score; to embody the spring in a mathematical equation, wrap it, plot it on paper, adumbrate, critically evaluate, represent it, so that later, we can take it back, rationalized, quantified, and confront the world with greater understanding. Take into account temperature, minute by minute, squirrels, frogs, hummingbirds and hawks, phloem and xylem, sap and vine, sunlight, breeze, soil, and rainfall. The philosophical enterprise. A way to separate out beauty, truth, freedom, value, and goodness for instance, from the seven deadlies, from money, power, ownership with nature, perhaps, a catalyst or referee in the middle. But also the ways in which sin supports value, and hell heaven without which they could not be. How without power, for example, we have chaos and absolute value diminishes. Without killing frosts no deciduous spring flowers, without the inferno of the sun's core, no heat or light. The sharp separations, the laws, each philosopher has propounded, each set an imperfect fit/imperfect cut for the body of reality. Why do we go on with this doomed to failure, Sisyphean exercise/enterprise, this diagramming, why do I? Just go to sleep says my wife, says my mind, divided against itself. Well it's written now. The vultures circle. Something

arbitrary, something threatening, something hopeful this way comes. I plot the temperatures. I enter the dates when we first saw each flower. I kneel to smell a hyacinth. Daphne perfumes the air. Now I must add sensations, emotions. It's an illness, this diagramming, this thinking. As a cure, death cannot be relied on. Who can know what comes after? I suppose I will just have to go ahead and diagram spring and then hide the evidence maybe under a snow drift, or at the bottom of the lake across the street.

MICHAEL FLANAGAN

AT THE CAFÉ

at the café watching

a white scarf captured

by a zephyr

peeking into each balcony

as it slowly returns to earth

MARIANNE TEFFT

SOMNOLENT DAYS

In these somnolent days
I am drawn to the dappled shade
Not only because the sun kindles the air
To match the warmth of my blood
I feel the urge to grow misty
As light that traces the spectrum
From jade to emerald and chartreuse
I yearn to delight those
Who remark my shimmer
Trembling heart that clings
To the branches of the birch
And move invisible to those
Who lose my story among the shadows
As the beeches do not hanker
To unfurl their canopy
In tandem with their neighbors
And the spruce do not lament
The needles that constrict
To dampen their thirst
I grant myself the freedom
To become the calico cat
Who reclines on the porch swing

NOLO SEGUNDO

A MORNING'S WALK

My wife and I walk every morning,
a mile or so—
it's good for us old to walk in the cold,
or in the misty rain, it makes less the pain
that old age is wont to bring to bodies
which once burned bright with youth,
though now I wear braces on ankles,
braces on knees, and I walk slowly
with 2 canes, like an old skier,
sans snow, sans mountain.

We passed a tree whose leaves had
left behind summer's green and now
fall slowly, carefully, one by one
in their autumnal splendor.

My wife stopped me—
listen, she said—but
I heard nothing—*hush!*
stand still, she said—
and I tried hard to
hear the mystery . . .

Finally I asked her, knowing my hearing
was less than my wife's (too many rock concerts
in my heedless youth), what do we listen for?

She looked up at my old head, and smiled—
only she could hear the sound each leaf made
as it rippled the air in falling to the ground.

LARRY SCHUG

MUSIC IN SILENCE

This golden morning, there is music in silence.
There is light in prisms in the open eyes of dewdrops
clinging to Indian paint brush and prairie smoke.
Galaxies of sparkling spider webs are strewn
across a universe of blue-eyed grass.
Growing louder as I walk deeper into the bluestem,
a morning prayer is chanted by bees,
And though beyond my range of hearing,
the whisper of the wings of monarchs and Dakota skippers
folds and unfolds while they worship the sun,
a language we have not yet discovered or learned to decipher,
though long ago we may have spoken it ourselves
because we needed to sing in response to a meadowlark's aria,
filling what we came to know as our souls'

ALAN COHEN

METAPHORICAL FLIGHTS

Most of us approach a poem
As we might a dubious staircase
Risk only a little weight at first
Testing for soundness
Trusting only a little of ourselves at a time
Then more
Then, once satisfied, commit
And begin steadily to climb
Seeking transcendence

But a poem is only a net of words
Generous breathing space between them
Not a solid foundation
Invites contemplation
To assess its value
Different for each of us
And only once fully appreciated
Useful to catch
Whatever is most desirable and lest accessible
To any other approach

What we climb only a mirage
A notional skeleton
One of a few syntactical backbones
Crucial but common
To all well-made poems

CLS SANDOVAL

'SELF-PORTRAIT IN TUXEDO'
BY MAX BECKMANN

—an ekphrastic poem

Max Beckmann's self-portrait is full of shadows. Between his unapproachable expression and his perfectly pressed tux, I don't imagine he would be the first man I would chat with at a party. His use of dark, cool tones and slightly broad strokes take me back to a painting of a man in an Irish pub that hung in my childhood home. The pub-goers were mostly background, a greenish-black silhouette of themselves, seated at the bar, drinking. The man in the foreground, smiling and dressed in blue, looked like Jesus. Later, I learned that this was my dad's self-portrait. Over the years, for reasons that were and were not my fault, my father became more and more like Beckmann's self-portrait. I wonder if Beckmann ever smiled in an Irish pub.

SARAH HOZUMI

THE BIRTHDAY CAKE

I can do this, I said to myself. *I can get this done.*

The automatic doors had already closed behind me, effectively trapping me within. A woman with a stroller nudged past me, then a man in a worn jacket, both reminding me I hadn't moved yet.

Sucking in a deep breath of frosted air and wishing I'd brought my jacket, I opened my bag and roved my hand around inside for my glasses. A man holding a toddler's hand pushed past me, then a little kid and her friend knocked my elbow.

Where were my glasses?

My fingers found the edges of them sinking into a crease in the purse, and I yanked them out with probably more force than they would've enjoyed. I wanted to just get out of there, though. If only we had more food at home.

Some of my friends have resorted to online shopping to avoid exactly what I was braving, but I have no idea how to do that. I'm too embarrassed to ask them, too.

It's times like these, I thought while I found a fairly sturdy shopping cart, *I can understand why people want children.*

If we'd had a kid, maybe that kid would've grown up with all the tech-savvy smarts I sorely lacked, and in that alternate universe, I'd be at home rather than out shopping while my food was delivered to me.

Still, my friends didn't hesitate to complain about their kids.

"They set up my weekly online shopping for me, but my God, they were so condescending," my friend Beverly said at Tai chi class one morning. "It was like I'd forgotten how to open a door."

The internet felt like a gigantic metal door slammed shut on me, barring me from anything my friends declared were "useful." Things like ordering clothes online so they don't have to brave the

the clothing stores anymore, ordering food. At that moment, the metal door seemed to be laughing at me. And who made the door? People younger than me.

I swear every generation comes up with increasingly intricate ways to alienate the generations who came before them. In my day, it was television and the microwave. My mom died without ever figuring out how to drive a car.

Now, the youth had come up with a secret, invitation-only society on the computer, and I was left driving with increasingly bad eyes to the grocery store. My husband is already talking about nursing homes for us, but I can't help but wonder if it's society's fault we're already talking about something like that.

If, for example, our little home was close enough to the grocery store that we could walk, I wouldn't need to drive. If there was even a sidewalk connecting our home to the grocery store, then maybe I could just walk it. Instead, the sidewalk around our neighborhood ends right up against the busy street the grocery store is on, and I can't risk tripping on a rock and winding up in traffic.

Sometimes I dream about a little condo built on top of a grocery store, book shop and a doctor's office. We'd have no need for the car ever again.

Someone loudly coughed behind me, and I remembered I wasn't living in a paradise of a condo; I was in the stupid grocery store right in front of the row of shopping carts. I'd just completely frozen there, lost in thought.

I muttered a sorry and pulled out of the way with my own shopping cart. The apology was ignored as a woman in her 40s deliberately elbowed my ribs as she pushed past to get her own cart.

Sharp pain caused me to freeze again, forcing me to watch the offender speedwalk through the produce section with a cell phone in her left hand.

In my wildest dreams, I'd throw something at her, like maybe an apple or, in my darker dreams, a pineapple. Maybe I'd get lucky and it'd get stuck in that ridiculous bun of hair stuck on her head. She'd march around the grocery store trying to act all

important, and there would be a pineapple hanging off her head like a car air freshener.

I pulled the shopping list I'd made out of my pocket, touched the bridge of my nose to make sure my glasses were there, and read down the list. My husband, John, had written, *Please, can't we have some vanilla birthday cake?* with a little smiling face at the bottom of my list, and I couldn't help but laugh. It wasn't either one of our birthdays, but the grocery store bakery really did make nice birthday cakes.

Sure, why not? I thought with a shrug and made my way to the bakery.

They had three birthday cakes on display. John loves dogs, so I chose one with little characters of dogs all dressed up like they had rescue jobs. The dalmatian, of course, looked like a firefighter. John's father was a firefighter, so I figured he'd like that.

Of course, Dr. Sasamoto wouldn't approve of our eating cake for no apparent reason. Last time John and I had gone to see him, he'd patted John's stomach and said, "You need to lose some weight."

Honestly, though, at this stage in our lives, what's the point? I put the birthday cake with the plastic dalmatian puppy figurine into my shopping cart and wondered what life would be like without a little extra cake every now and then. Not much of a life, I think.

Cake in cart, I looked back over my list. At least my glasses were still on my face. I can't tell you how many times I've had my glasses on, focused on something and found my glasses weren't even on my face anymore—I'd put them down somewhere.

1. Apples
2. Chicken
3. Thyme
4. Brown Sugar
5. Onions
6. Broccoli
7. Carrots
8. Beef

9. Milk
10. Granola
11. Earl Grey Tea
12. Frozen Dinners
13. Ice Cream?

The bakery was close enough to the produce, but it still took me longer than everyone around me wanted to pick out the fruits and vegetables. More than once, I'd be holding the produce in my hand, checking it over for spots or bruises, and some huffy person would reach over me to grab another one and chuck it into their cart.

I don't think the younger generations could be any clearer that I'm in the way. It all felt so ungrateful. John and I and all of our friends and family had worked so hard to build a nice life, carve out a little section of the world for ourselves, and now absolutely everyone around us was trying so hard to push us out the door. "Thanks for making things a little bit easier for us, but you're in the way now."

No one looked at us as anything other than annoying. In the way. Too old to be useful. Pathetic. Pitiful.

It didn't matter how hard I tried to puff up my chest and push my little shopping cart with more speed than I wanted; everyone in the entire store was still pushing past me like I was a road block. When did grocery stores become highways like this? I had a hard enough time driving without the pressure of being told to move faster.

If only there was a grocery store for old people. We could all just gather there, take our dear sweet time and let the youth shove their carts through the aisles at blistering speeds at other stores. I could actually enjoy shopping again. I used to.

"Do you need any help?"

The voice belonged to an overly enthusiastic kid, probably a university kid taking up the job part-time to help pay for school. I saw the red vest and the name tag before I fully took in their face. Eager eyes, a smile stretched back almost painfully wide.

I hate employees. They're so unbelievably patronizing to

anyone taking their time in the store; especially to people of a certain age. Anyone over 70 suddenly gets treated like they're 2 years old. I wanted to kindly tell the witless employee staring at me, "I know we're a lot like toddlers, but we aren't, all right? We've been here longer than you, and we once owned this place like you do now."

Instead, I said, "No, I'm fine."

At least this employee was smart enough to just leave me alone after that. Still, I could feel their eyes on me as my hands—my ugly, wrinkled, vein-covered hands—held up the list to my face so I could see what else I needed to buy.

I almost missed a little heart John had drawn at the corner right above *1. Apples* on my list. It was a sloppy little heart since his arthritis is so bad, but it was enough of a heart that I couldn't help but smile. John knew how much I hated grocery shopping. He'd go, himself, if he could walk half as well as I still could. He was probably at home bored out of his mind, watching the news.

John used to love playing soccer. He wasn't half bad at it, either, and he joined a local team in his 30s when we first moved to the area. We also used to go out for walks and bike rides, too. We grew a garden together.

Now I feel like we're stuck on the couch as age slowly siphons off our energy and health. Trips to the stupid grocery store take as much energy for me now as a nice day of bike riding used to take in my 20s.

What adventures do we even have left? I thought as I stuck a bag of brown sugar into my shopping cart.

A lot of my friends have a nice garden going, but ours is so wild, the neighbors are complaining. John hates to even look at the garden since his arthritis flared up a few years ago. He used to go out there every afternoon, tackling the weeds and massacring aphids. Now all we have left is a sad, overgrown apple tree and a couple of bonsai breaking out of their pots. That and weeds. John likes to keep the curtains closed so he doesn't have to stare at what he can't do anything about. I suggested we hire landscapers, but we just can't afford it. If I had even a fraction of the energy I had in my

younger days, I'd be out there, myself, tackling the yard.

With my thoughts on our garden and our bikes gathering dust in the garage, I pushed my shopping cart up and down the aisles, flicking food into the cart as I went. It probably took me two hours to get everything on my list, plus the bonus birthday cake. I think I could've done the shop in an hour, but I was dragging my feet mostly out of dread for the check-out lanes.

I hate check-out lanes with a passion I used to reserve for my brainless neighbors and their frat house. Everyone is suddenly in an unimaginable hurry when they line up to pay for everything, and no one wants to stand behind an old person who has a purse full of coins. I could hear someone muttering "Just my luck" as they lined up behind me.

It's not like I don't try to move things along. I try to keep a running tally of everything on a calculator, if I remember to bring one, so I can try and get out the money before I even reach the register. That way I can just plop down the money on the counter and wait for the cashier to ring things up. Sometimes I forget about the sales tax, though, and I'm left scrambling to pull coins and paper money out of my purse. Nothing stresses me out more than seeing the people behind me folding their arms across their chest, frowns on their faces deepening as I struggle to pay.

My turn came, and I started unloading the groceries onto the conveyor belt as quickly as I could, but apparently not fast enough for the person behind me to stop himself from saying aloud, "Could you move any slower?" Maybe he thought in my old age I couldn't hear him.

"Could you have any less patience?"

The words just flew out of my mouth as I kept moving stuff out of my cart. I don't know who was more shocked; me or the man.

At least he kept his mouth shut after that, which took the pressure off of me for a few seconds.

The cashier, a woman in her 40s who was probably a veteran of the store, barely looked at me as she mumbled the final total. I heard her loudly sigh as I pulled out my coin purse and started putting money on the counter. As I had dreaded, the total

was a bit more than I had thought, and I remembered I'd forgotten to include the birthday cake in my estimate. There's always something to trip me up.

My fingers stumbled through sorting the coins for a few seconds longer before the cashier jabbed her hand out at me and said, "Here, let me." Any suggestion of kindness the words hinted at was quickly smothered by the tone of extreme agitation.

I handed over my coin purse, and the cashier deftly took out all the coins and paper money I needed in a matter of seconds. She rolled her eyes and sighed again as she handed me back the purse and stuck the money into her register.

Feeling embarrassed and completely defeated, I grabbed my bags of groceries without looking anyone in the eye and made a desperate retreat to the exit.

As air laced with car fumes assaulted my nose in the parking lot, I tried not to cry from the encounter. In a matter of seconds, the cashier had made me feel so fully how unwelcome I am in society now.

Just once, just one more time, I want the younger generations to find me impressive. If only someone would think I was still worthy of being alive.

The thought stopped me just in front of my car.

Wait a minute, I thought. *Wait one minute*.

Why was I letting these people get to me? My own body was pushing me out life's door faster than anything else, so why would I let idiotic people help that process along?

I shoved all my groceries into the trunk, slammed it shut, and got into the driver's seat. It took me a minute, my hands gripping the steering wheel, to think about how I could fight back. No way was I going out of this world without a fight.

Five minutes later, I was at the local library. I knew the groceries wouldn't last long in the trunk, so I marched straight up to the librarian behind a desk labeled "General Information" and said, "I need your help."

The librarian, a man who looked young enough to be my son, didn't seem as shocked by my words as maybe I would've liked him

to be. The way I was feeling, I wanted to stand on a podium and declare war against anyone in my way. Instead of taking a step back from me, however, his eyes softened and he got out from behind the desk.

“How can I help you?”

*

John was asleep on the couch when I got home about an hour later. I gently put the birthday cake right in the middle of our dining room table a few feet from the living room and plopped the grocery bags down on the kitchen floor. This couldn't wait.

“Wake up!”

You would have thought I had put a knife to his throat the way John leapt out of the couch with a howl and looked around, his eyes wide. He frowned when he found the owner of the command had been me and sat back down.

“Did you have fun grocery shopping?” he said as he settled back into the cushions and started fumbling around for the TV remote.

“I can't take this life anymore.” I sat down at the dining room table with what I hoped was a dramatic flourish of despair. We'd removed the wall separating the dining and living rooms a decade or so earlier, and for once I was glad we had. I could sit nicely while keeping a steady eye on him.

John stopped looking for the remote and stared at me.

“What do you mean by that?”

“Everything!” I threw my hands up in the air, hoping to really drive home how I felt since John sometimes can be a bit slow when it comes to how I feel. “How exhausting it is to grocery shop, our neglected garden, the fact that all we do all day is sit at home and watch TV. I can't take it. We might as well be in our graves now and save ourselves an electric bill.”

He raised an eyebrow but said nothing. I loved how that even in the midst of my rant about how we lived and how maybe we should actually just die, John was still glancing every now and

then at the cake I had right next to me. The man loved his cake. “What I want to do,” I said as I pushed the cake closer toward him so he could get a better look at it, “is be more active. Do things more outside of this house.”

“By doing what?”

“I was just at the library, and the kind man there helped me look up some local gardening clubs on the computer. There’s one on Howard Street, did you know that?”

“Howard Street? Really?”

“I called the club president while I was at the library, some woman named Bernadette, and she said they had college-age garden enthusiasts who actually wanted to come out and save our garden. They want to do it for *free*.”

If there’s one thing John loves, it’s things that cost nothing.

“Why on earth would they tackle our garden for free?”

“They love plants or something like we used to. They’ll come out once a week and make our yard look pretty. The club has monthly meetings, too, where we can bring some potted plants and show them off, ask questions and get more help if we need it.”

“Sounds nice,” John said, his eyes still roving toward the cake.

“Go get some plates, John,” I said with a sigh and a smile. I watched him lumber into the kitchen and heard him rummage around for plates and forks. “And another thing,” I shouted after him, “I think we should bike ride again! The librarian showed me some bikes where you brake with your feet, so your arthritis won’t get in the way.”

John poked his head around the corner, and there was a boyish grin to his face I hadn’t seen in years. I tried to push down the wave of emotions rising inside.

“What makes you think we’ll need brakes?”

I picked up one of the flower roses made from buttercream frosting and playfully flicked it at his head in response. With a laugh of surprise, he made a weak stab at it with his fork as it sailed by and landed on the kitchen floor behind him.

He sat down beside me at the dining table and studied the

cake now that it was closer up. Another grin enveloped his face, and even if it was only for a minute, it felt like the room was brighter.

“Oh good, I was hoping you’d get a firefighter one.”

DOUG VAN HOOSER

GOLDFINCH GRAND PRIX

Goldfinches, pedal to the metal,
slalom through the golden rod.
Sulfur butterflies swirl in a yellow dust devil, cabbages
dosido.
Heat cracks the earth in a spider web. Grasshoppers
take wing, gnaw on green.

As long as the robins sing
I don't care if they mate.
If the rain puddles or sluices into the culvert. It's the bellow
of a bullfrog,
the buzz of hummingbird wings,
the woodpecker's rap song
that knocks on my door.
Makes my thistle bloom.
Attracts the swallowtails and bees
to feast on my thorned nectar.
The sun sets in a red bloom.
The moon ripples on the lake.
Stars kiss the onyx night.

DALE E. COTTINGHAM

STOP LIGHT

I waited my turn. Will I proceed
in the old way, the one that's given,
that's easy, worn smooth, or will I
take another, rougher, more
against-the-grain road
into the lowlands,
who will I be . . .

Soon enough I'll go on. There'll be
temptations, signs to interpret,
choices between self and others.
I'll be influenced. I'll be right, I'll
be wrong. I'll try to get a glimpse
through the fog. And looking
back, it will seem like a weave,
one thing connected to another,
like a journey one is on,
like a poem,
like song.

THANK YOU FOR READING

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to the publications in which some of these works previously appeared. We appreciate your hard work in getting these pieces out into the world, and we're thrilled to have had the opportunity to share them again.

These entries are organized in the order in which they appear in Issue 2 of Lit Shark Magazine: The SHARK WEEK Edition:

“The Shark” by William Henry Venable and “Flying Fish: An Ode” by Charles Wharton Stork are both available in the public domain.

“Chasing Shadows” is an excerpt from Ret Talbot and Greg Skomal’s full-length work, *Chasing Shadows: My Life Tracking the Great White Shark* (William Morrow, 2023).

“Drifting toward Maui” by Carolyn Martin previously appeared in Carolyn’s collection, *Finding Compass* (Queen of Wands Press, 2011).

“Snorkeling with Jesus” by Carolyn Martin previously appeared in *The Esthetic Apostle*, 2019.

“Retreat” by Lorraine Caputo previously appeared in *Sea Stories* (Autumnal Issue, 2006).

“Solitary Shores” by Lorraine Caputo previously appeared in *Mojave River Review* (Spring-Summer Issue, 2019).

“Whale Watching Spoken Here” by Carolyn Martin previously appeared in Carolyn’s collection, *Finding Compass* (Queen of Wands Press, 2011).

“The Night I Dreamed of Dolphins” by Marianne Tefft was first published in *Panoplyzine* (2022) and was reprinted in Marianne’s *MOONCHILD: Poems for Moon Lovers* (2022).

“A Full Bodied Chianti” by Ken Goldman has appeared as part of a trilogy entitled *The Noah Hypothesis* in the 2005 SpecificWorld.com Contest (Simulacrum) in which it won first cash prize. It has also been reprinted in the *Dark Distortions Anthology* (March 2008), Vino Veritas/Static Movement Imprint/Thirteen O’Clock Publications/Horrified Press Imprint (May 2014), and as a single story in *Otherwise Engaged* (December 2021).



ABOUT PAUL GASEK

Paul Gasek is an Emmy award-winning Producer, Director, Writer, and Narrator with 40 years' experience in broadcast television. From 2006 to 2011, he was Executive Producer and Senior Science Editor at Discovery Channel, supervising the production of hundreds of hours for the channel, including six seasons of *Deadliest Catch* and many of the blue chip Discovery/BBC Science co-productions. Between 2015 and 2018, he was Executive Producer of *Shark Week*, Discovery's longest running series in its 30th year.

The rest of the time, Gasek is owner and director of **Stony Brook Films**, located in Brewster, Massachusetts. He writes, story-edits, and rewrites programming for indie production companies making shows for National Geographic Television, NGWILD, Discovery Channel, Animal Planet, History Channel, PBS, NHK, The Weather Channel, Travel Channel, Beijing New Century Media, HGTV, BBC America, and many others. He specializes in science stories, specifically natural history, climate, ecology, and fisheries.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTORS

Thank you to all of our lovely, imaginative contributors in Issue 2!
Here's more about each of them and where to find them.

EDWARD AHERN—he/him—Fiction

Ed Ahern resumed writing after forty odd years in foreign intelligence and international sales. He's had over four hundred fifty stories and poems published so far, and eight books. Ed works the other side of writing at Bewildering Stories, where he sits on the review board and manages a posse of eight review editors. You can find him on social media under various names: @bottomstripper on Twitter, @edwardahern1860 on Instagram, and /EdAhern73 on Facebook.

KB BALLENTINE—she/her—Poetry

KB Ballentine's eighth collection, *Spirit of Wild*, launched in March with Blue Light Press. Her earlier books can be found with Iris Press, Blue Light Press, Middle Creek Publishing, and Celtic Cat Publishing. Published in *North Dakota Quarterly*, *Atlanta Review* and *Haight-Ashbury Literary Journal*, and others, her work also appears in anthologies including *I Heard a Cardinal Sing* (2022), *The Strategic Poet* (2021), *Pandemic Evolution* (2021), and *Carrying the Branch: Poets in Search of Peace* (2017). Learn more at www.kballentine.com.

MAGGIE BAYNE—she/her—Fiction

Maggie Bayne is a fiction writer who lives in upstate New York. Her life-long habit of writing has shifted to a more serious pursuit since retirement. A dedicated fan of the short story, she has found that a well-crafted adventure rarely needs more than 3,500 words to grab and satisfy the readers. She has had the following published: “The Blizzard” in *October Hill Magazine*, Winter 2022, Volume 6, Issue 4; “Rescuing Addie Stiles” in *Remington Review*, Spring 2023; and “Gourmet Delight” in *ASP Literary Journal* #9, July 8, 2023.

EMILY BILMAN—she/her—Poetry

Dr. Emily Bilman is London Poetry Society’s Stanza representative in Geneva where she lives and teaches poetry. Her dissertation, *The Psychodynamics of Poetry*, was published by Lambert Academic in 2010 and *Modern Ekphrasis* in 2013 by Peter Lang, CH. Three poetry books, *A Woman By A Well*, *Resilience*, and *The Threshold of Broken Waters* were published by Troubador, UK in 2015 and the latest in 2018. Her poems, essays, and translations of Neruda and Valéry appeared in *The Battersea Review*, *Hunger Mountain*, *The High Window*, *The Journal of Poetics Research*, *Tuck Magazine*, *Offshoots*, *Expanded Field*, and *The London Magazine*. “The Tear-Catcher” won the first prize for depth poetry in *The New York Literary Magazine*. She edits and writes poems and essays for a digital ekphrastic publication, www.paintedpoetry.org. Her latest poetry book, *Apperception*, was published by Troubador in September 2020. Her short fiction piece “The Gun” appeared in *Talking Soup* and “The Lottery” in *The San Antonio Review*. She blogs on her website: <http://www.emiliebilman.wix.com/emily-bilman>

JANET BOWDAN—she/her—Poetry

Janet Bowdan’s poems have appeared in *APR*, *Tahoma Literary Review*, *The Rewilding Anthology*, *Sequestrum* and elsewhere. The editor of *Common Ground Review*, she teaches at Western New England University and lives in Northampton, Massachusetts, with her husband, their son, a buttered-toast-thief of a cat and a book-nibbling chinchilla.

LORRAINE CAPUTO—they/them—Poetry

Wandering troubadour Lorraine Caputo is a documentary poet, translator and travel writer. Her works appear in over 400

journals on six continents; and 23 collections of poetry—including *In the Jaguar Valley* (dancing girl press, 2023) and *Caribbean Interludes* (Origami Poems Project, 2022). She also authors travel narratives, articles and guidebooks. Her writing has been honored by the Parliamentary Poet Laureate of Canada (2011) and thrice nominated for the Best of the Net. Caputo has done literary readings from Alaska to the Patagonia. She journeys through Latin America with her faithful knapsack Rocinante, listening to the voices of the pueblos and Earth.

TRICIA CASEY—she/her/hers—Short Memoir

Tricia Casey is a non-profit and higher education consultant who advises clients on fundraising, strategic planning, communications, and operations. She lives in southern New Hampshire but grew up in Hawaii. Story telling has featured heavily throughout her life and began around the fires at Girl Scout camp and at the heels of an Irish-American family whose real-life experiences, especially the sad ones, were always presented with humor and irony.

ALAN COHEN—he/him—Poetry

Alan Cohen's first publication as a poet was in the PTA Newsletter when he was 10 years old. Vassar College (with a BA in English) and University of California at Davis Medical School, did his internship in Boston and his residency in Hawaii, and was then a Primary Care physician, teacher, and Chief of Primary Care at the VA, first in Fresno, CA and later in Roseburg, OR. He now lives with his wife of 44 years in Eugene, OR. His nonfiction book, *Easy in Harness A Productive Approach to Hiring a Good Manager*, will be coming out later this year.

JAMES CONNELLY—he/him—Poetry

James Connolly taught literature and creative writing for forty-eight years. He has published many short stories and 100+ poems. For author info see: *Picking Up The Bodies* @Amazon for description and review/blurb by Martine Espada.

DALE E. COTTINGHAM—he/him—Poetry

Dale Cottingham has published poems and reviews of poetry collections in many journals, including *Prairie Schooner*, *Ashville*

Poetry Review and Rain Taxi. He is a Pushcart Nominee, a Best of Net Nominee, the winner of the 2019 New Millennium Award for Poem of the Year and was a finalist in the 2022 Great Midwest Poetry Contest. His debut volume of poems launched in April, 2023. He lives in Edmond, Oklahoma.

JULIE A. DICKSON—she/her—Poetry

Julie A. Dickson writes poetry of the macabre, nature and from prompts. Her poems appear in *Ekphrastic Review*, *Misfit*, *Open Door* and *Lit Shark I*, among other journals. She has served as guest editor in several publications and on two poetry boards. A Pushcart nominee, Dickson holds a BPS in Behavioral Science, advocates for captive elephants and feral cats.

PATRICK DRUGGAN—he/him—Poetry

Patrick grew up in Glasgow and went to university there. He is a scientist and has worked on diagnostic tests for cancers and infections on and off for the past 35 years. He is dyslexic. He learned to write poetry when no-one was looking. He has been published in *Dreich*, *Culture Matters*, *Black Nore*, the *Full Circle Anthology of Chester Poets*, and in Yaffle Press' *Whirlagust IV*.

LYNETTE ESPOSITO—she/her—Poetry

Lynette G. Esposito, MA Rutgers, has been published in *North of Oxford*, *Poetry Quarterly*, *Front Porch*, *Deep Overstock*, *Reader's Digest*, *Self*, *Fox Chase Review*, and others. She is mostly a poet but also a cat lover. She was married to Attilio J. Esposito and lives in Southern NJ.

VERN FEIN—he/him—Poetry

A recent octogenarian, Vern Fein has published over 250 poems and short pieces on over 100 different sites. His first poetry book—*I Was Young and Thought It Would Change*—was published last year. His second book—*Reflection on Dots*—is due soon. The entire world of poetry is his muse.

MICHAEL FLANAGAN—he/him—Poetry

Mike Flanagan lives in Minnesota with Lady, his mutt of dubious lineage. He fly fishes with no great skill but believes that walking with Lady, fly fishing, and writing short poetry keep him going.

BARBARA ANNA GAIARDONI—she/her/hers—Poetry/Haiku

Barbara Anna Gaiardoni is winner of the First Prize 2023 “Zheng Nian Cup.” Her Japanese-style poems has been published in *The Mainichi*, *Asahi Haikuist Network*, Akita International Haiku Network, The Haiku Foundation, The Japan Society UK, and in one hundred and two other international journals. They are been translated on Japanese, Romanian, Arabic, Malayalam, Hindi, French and in Spanish languages. Co-author of haiga and shahai with Andrea Vanacore, life partner, visionary photographer and videomaker with a long and varied experience. Drawing, swimmer and walking in nature are her passions.

KEN GOLDMAN—he/him—Fiction

Ken Goldman, former Philadelphia teacher of English and Film Studies, is an Active member of the Horror Writers Association. He has homes on the Main Line in Pennsylvania and at the Jersey shore. His stories have appeared in over 970 independent press publications in the U.S., Canada, the UK, and Australia with over twenty due for publication in 2023. Since 1993 Ken’s tales have received seven honorable mentions in The Year’s Best Fantasy & Horror. He has written six books : three anthologies of short stories, *You Had Me at ARRGH!!* (Sam’s Dot Publishers), *Donny Doesn’t Live Here Anymore* (A/A Productions) and *Star-Crossed* (Vampires 2); and a novella, *Desiree*, (Damnation Books). His first novel *Of a Feather* (Horrific Tales Publishing) was released in January 2014. *Sinkhole*, his second novel, was published by Bloodshot Books August 2017.

ALYSSA HARMON—she/her—Poetry

Alyssa Harmon is the author of seven years, a poetry book on heartbreak and healing. Currently, she is working on publishing a second poetry book on mental health. She has a Master’s degree in English Creative Writing from the University of West Florida. In addition to her book publication, she has also published poems in several print and online publications, including

Merrimack Review, *Minerva Rising*, *Shaking the Sheets Magazine*, and *Odet Journal*. In her spare time, she enjoys traveling, reading, swimming, and helping other poets edit their collections. She also has a new book out called *Treading Water!* Find more at alyssa-harmon.com

MATT HENRY—he/him—Poetry

2017 Graduate of Indiana University, Master of Arts in English. Likes ice hockey, guitar, writing/reading poetry, and video games. Dislikes cockroaches and dust mites.

SARAH HOZUMI—she/her—Fiction

Sarah Hozumi has lived near Tokyo for about 14 years and has loved almost every minute of it. To read short stories she's had published, and to read her blog mostly about all things Japan, please visit sarahhozumi.com. You can also follow her on Facebook at [sarahjhozumi](https://www.facebook.com/sarahjhozumi).

DEBORAH KERNER—she/her—Poetry

Deborah Kerner is a poet and an artist living in Ojai, California. Her poems have appeared in many poetry journals such as *Rabid Oak*, *Mad Swirl*, and *Synchronized Chaos*. She shares a modest house with her husband, Richard, who is also an artist. She lived and taught in India. Over many years, her travels to various places in the world have deepened an all-embracing vision of being alive on a radiant planet. Deborah and her husband facilitate week-long retreats for the Krishnamurti Center in Ojai, focusing on the potential for a transformation of human consciousness. A selection of Deborah's poems and art can be seen on her website: deborahkerner.com

CRAIG R. KIRCHNER—he/him—Poetry

Craig has written poetry all his life, is now retired, and thinks of poetry as hobo art. He loves storytelling and the aesthetics of the paper and pen. The parallel, horizontal, blue lines on white legal, staring left to right, knowing that the ink, when it meets the resistance of the page will feel extroverted, set free, at liberty to jump, the two skinny, vertical red lines to get past the margin. He was

nominated twice for the Pushcart Prize, and has a book of poetry, *Roomful of Navels*. After a writing hiatus he has recently been published and has work forthcoming in a dozen or so journals.

ASHLEY KNOWLTON—she/her—Poetry

Ashley Knowlton teaches English and writes poetry for enjoyment. Her work has been published in *Pomona Valley Review*, *DASH*, *Abandoned Mine*, *Cobra Lily*, *Trajectory*, *Mom Egg Review*, *Online Quarterly*, *Neologism Poetry Journal*, *The Waiting Room*, and *Lit Shark Magazine*, with work to be published in an upcoming issue of *Evening Street Review*. She lives in northern California with her husband, sons, and their many animals.

CAROLYN MARTIN—she/her—Poetry

Blissfully retired in Clackamas, Oregon, Carolyn Martin is a lover of gardening and snorkeling, feral cats and backyard birds, writing, and photography. Since the only poem she wrote in high school was red-penciled “extremely maudlin,” she is amazed she has continued to write. Her poems have appeared in more than 175 journals throughout North America, Australia, and the UK, and her latest collection, *It’s in the Cards*, was just released by Kelsay Books. See more at www.carolynmartinpoet.com

BETH MATHISON—she/her—Poetry

Beth Mathison has work published in *The Foliate Oak* (including the 2008 and 2009 annual “Best Of” print editions), *365Tomorrows.com*, *MysteryAuthors.com*, *Drops of Crimson*, *Colored Chalk*, and *The Citron Review*. Stories published with Untreed Reads include the *Mobsters for the Holidays*; *Criminally Hilarious Short Stories* (currently being made into an audio book) and the short story romance series, *Young at Heart*. Beth lives with her family in the Upper Midwest, and during the cold winter months, she dreams of snorkeling in the Riviera Maya.

JAMES B. NICOLA—he/him—Poetry

James B. Nicola is a returning contributor. The latest three of his eight full-length poetry collections are *Fires of Heaven: Poems of Faith and Sense*, *Turns & Twists*, and *Natural Tendencies*

(just out). His nonfiction book, *Playing the Audience*, won a Choice magazine award. He has received a Dana Literary Award, two Willow Review awards, Storyteller's People's Choice magazine award, one Best of Net, one Rhysling, and ten Pushcart nominations—for which he feels both stunned and grateful. A graduate of Yale, James hosts the Writers' Round Table at his library branch in Manhattan: walk-ins are always welcome.

SANDRA NOEL—she/her—Poetry

Sandra Noel is a poet from Jersey, Channel Islands. She enjoys writing about the ordinary in unusual ways, her passion for sea swimming and her love of nature often weaving its way through her work. Sandra has poems featured online and print magazines and anthologies. Over the past year she has been longlisted, shortlisted and highly commended in various competitions. She has poems on buses in Guernsey from the Guernsey International Poetry Competition 2022 and 2023. Sandra is finalising her first collection which will be published by Yaffle Press in 2024.

RESCUEPOETIX—she/her/Ella/Ellas—Poetry

RescuePoetix, the first Puerto Rican woman Poet Laureate Emeritus of Jersey City, NJ and State of New Jersey Beat Poet Laureate (2022-2024), is a bilingual globally published performing poet, advocate, spoken word artist, recording artist and teaching artist. She established her professional artist brand, RescuePoetix™ and is an arts advocate deeply involved in the arts community since 2006 and currently serves on the boards of several arts organizations throughout the USA. More info: <https://linktr.ee/rescuepoetix>

RIE SHERIDAN ROSE—she/her—Poetry

Rie Sheridan Rose multitasks. A lot. Her short stories appear in numerous anthologies, including *Nightmare Stalkers* and *Dream Walkers: Vols 1 and 2*, and *Killing It Softly*. She has authored twelve novels, six poetry chapbooks, and lyrics for dozens of songs. Find more info on www.riewriter.com.

ROBERTO SABAS—he/him—Fiction

Roberto Sabas is an emerging author who has written fiction and poetry, following in the footsteps of his well-read father (who also wrote poetry, unpublished). His publications include short fiction and poems in anthologies by Devil's Party Press, the *News-Gazette*, *The Alchemist Review* (UIS), Champaign Urbana Poetry Group (Crows On A Line), *Weird Tales*, and *Pygmalion Fest 2020* (streamed video reading), *deLuge Journal*, *Poetry Quarterly*, and most recently Urbana Arts & Culture Program. He has also had a career as a commercial artist and can easily be googled and looked up on social media. He's grateful for the loving support of his wife and children.

CLS SANDOVAL—she/her—Poetry

CLS Sandoval, PhD is a pushcart nominated writer and communication professor with accolades in film, academia, and creative writing who speaks, signs, acts, publishes, sings, performs, writes, paints, teaches and rarely relaxes. She's a flash fiction and poetry editor for *Dark Onus Lit*. She has presented over 50 times at communication conferences, published 15 academic articles, two academic books, three full-length literary collections, three chapbooks, as well as flash and poetry pieces in several literary journals, recently including *Opiate Magazine*, *The Journal of Magical Wonder*, and *A Moon of One's Own*. She is raising her daughter and dog with her husband in Alhambra, CA. Follow her @cls.sandoval on Instagram and /crystallaneswift on Facebook.

MANDY SCHIFFRIN—she/her—Poetry

Mandy Schiffrin is half-British, half-Argentinian, and lives in the Netherlands. Mandy has always had a passion for words, language and how we understand what we mean by what we say. In fact, she obtained a doctorate studying this topic, in Artificial Intelligence (Natural Language Processing), and still works in the same field to this day. Mandy explores this with her poetry too, and has recently started submitting some of her work for publication. She has poems either already published, or accepted, in the following magazines and journals: *Black Nore Review*, *The Crowstep Journal*, *Ink*, *Sweat and Tears*, *Dawntreader*, *Obsessed with Pipework*, and *The High Window*, as well as for a couple of upcoming anthologies.

ELLEN HIRNING SCHMIDT—she/her—Poetry

Ellen Hirning Schmidt first submitted poems for publication when she turned 70. She received the Helen Kay Chapbook Prize, a Pushcart nomination, Connecticut Poetry Society Award and became a finalist in American Writers Review 2023. Her poems have appeared widely. *Armed to the Teeth* her first full-length collection, was released in 2023 (Antrim Books). Retired from a crisis center, Schmidt designed *Writing Through the Rough Spots* for students from across the U.S. and 15 countries to create clarity about life challenges. She leads workshops online and at Star Island, NH. A mother and grandmother, Schmidt lives with her husband in Ithaca, NY. www.WritingRoomWorkshops.com

LARRY SCHUG—he/him—Poetry

Larry Schug is retired after a life of various kinds of physical labor. He is currently a volunteer writing tutor at the College of St. Benedict/St. John's University. He lives with his wife and one cat in a little house on 55 acres of permanently preserved land in St. Wendel, Twp., Minnesota. He has published eight books of poems, the latest being *A Blanket of Raven Feathers* with North Star Press. His website is www.larryschugpoet.com

NOLO SEGUNDO—he/him—Poetry

Nolo Segundo, pen name of L.j.Carber, 76, became a late blooming poet in his 8th decade in over 150 literary journals and anthologies in America, England, Canada, Romania, Scotland, China, Sweden, Australia, Portugal, India, Australia, and Turkey. The trade publisher Cyberwit.net has released 3 poetry books: *The Enormity of Existence* [2020]; *Of Ether and Earth* [2021]; and *Soul Songs* [2022]. These titles and much of his work reflect the awareness he's had for over 50 years since having an NDE whilst almost drowning in a Vermont river: that he has—IS—a consciousness that predates birth and survives death, what poets for millennia have called a soul.

CAROL LYNN STEVENSON GRELLAS—she/her—Poetry

Carol Lynn Stevenson Grellas is a recent graduate of Vermont College of Fine Arts, MFA in Writing program. She is the author of sixteen poetry collections, including several chapbooks. Her latest collection, *Alice in Ruby Slippers*, was short-listed for the 2021 Eric Hoffer Grand Prize and awarded an honorable mention in the Poetry category. Her work has been published or is forthcoming in some of the following journals: *The Comstock Review*, *War, Literature and the Arts*, *Redactions*, *Verse Daily*, and many more. She has served as editor-in-chief for both *The Orchards Poetry Journal* and *Tule Review*. An eleven-time Pushcart Prize nominee and seven-time Best of the Net nominee, according to family lore, she is a direct descendant of Robert Louis Stevenson.

RET TALBOT—he/him—Nonfiction

Ret Talbot is an award-winning Maine-based science writer, journalist and author who frequently writes about marine animals and environmental issues. His work can be found in publications such as *National Geographic*, *Discover Magazine* and *Yale e360*. His most recent book is *Chasing Shadows*. Written with shark biologist Greg Skomal, the book is a conservation success story about restoring an apex predator to an ecosystem. He lives on a wee farm on the coast of Maine with his wife, scientific illustrator Karen Talbot.

MARIANNE TEFFT—she/her—Poetry

Marianne Tefft is a poet and voiceover reader who daylights as a Montessori teacher on the Dutch Caribbean island of Sint Maarten. Her poems and short stories have appeared online, in print and on air in North America, Europe, Asia and the Caribbean. She reads regularly at *The Nomads* (SXM) and *Free Times Café/Art Bar* (Toronto) and joins online Open Mics at Nuyorican Poets Café (NYC), Bottoms Up (Asia/US) and Inspired Poets Corner (Toronto). She is the author of the poetry collections *Full Moon Fire: Spoken Songs of Love* and *Moonchild: Poems for Moon Lovers* (2022).

MCKENZIE LYNN TOZAN—she/her—Poetry

McKenzie Lynn Tozan is a formerly Midwestern writer, transplanted to coastal Croatia. She is a published poet and novelist, the Editor-in-Chief of *Lit Shark* and the *Banned Book Review*. Her poems, essays, and book reviews have been featured in *The Rumpus*, *Green Mountains Review*, *Whale Road Review*, *Rogue Agent*, *POPSUGAR*, *Motherly*, and *Encore Magazine*. Her short horror story collection, *What We Find in the Dark*, and her horror novella, *Black As Black*, are both forthcoming from The Shiver Collective in 2023. Find more at www.mckenzielynntozan.com

DOUG VAN HOOSER—he/him—Poetry

Doug Van Hooser's poetry has appeared in *Roanoke Review*, *The Courtship of Winds*, *After Hours*, *Wild Roof Journal*, and *Poetry Quarterly*, among other publications. His fiction can be found in *Red Earth Review*, *Flash Fiction Magazine*, and *Bending Genres Journal*. Doug's plays have received readings at Chicago Dramatist Theatre and Three Cat Productions. Find more at dougvanhooser.com

PETER A. WITT—he/him—Poetry

Peter A. Witt is a Texas poet, with poems appearing in on-line and print publications such as *Bluebird Word*, *The Wise Owl*, *Inspired*, *Verse-Virtual*, and *Live Encounters*. He is a former university professor who now devotes his time to researching and writing family history and poetry. He is also an avid birder.

SUBMIT TO LIT SHARK OR WRITE FOR US!

Thank you again to everyone who submitted to Issue 2: The SHARK WEEK Edition of *Lit Shark Magazine*. It was honestly such a lovely process, and I'm so grateful for your support and continuing this journey.

If you're interested in submitting for Issue 4 and beyond, here is the most pertinent information (and you can always look at our website, too—www.litshark.com).

We one more issue being published in 2023 (yay!): one more general issue like Issue 1.

Issue 4 Deadline to Submit: December 11, 2023

Poetry: Up to 5 poems or 10 pages

Fiction and Nonfiction: Up to 15 pages or 4500 words

Our final issue of the year is open to general submissions. Open to anything! Surprise us! We just ask for minimal sexual content and expletives (and sharks portrayed as villains will be considered, but they'll primarily appear in our annual spooky editions).

And don't forget our monthly Poem of the Month Contest!

That brings us up through the end of 2023. How exciting?!

Now, if you're more of a nonfiction writer, interested in writing essays, theory pieces, book reviews, and the like, this next section is for you:

How to Write for Us as a Regular Contributor at Lit Shark:

In addition to the work our Editor-in-Chief is doing on the site, we've also welcomed to the Shark family several regular contributors. Each one enjoys writing book reviews, but their interests vary wonderfully beyond that, ranging from intuitive creativity, current conservation efforts, nature and ecopoetics, audio ecology, and green living and conservation for families.

If you identify with one or more of these subjects, or if you enjoy another subject that could relate, we would love to hear from you. A range of writing experience is welcome, as are those with some background in biology, conservation and sustainability, and of course, teaching. As long as you love our mission and believe you could positively contribute to it, we would love to hear from you.

How Do You Submit?

On our website, we have submission portals for *Lit Shark* (emerging and established writers), *Lit Pup* (children and teen writers), and our Shiver team.

But if you have any technical difficulties, no worries! You can send McKenzie an email at mckenzie@litshark.com.

Contributors can send all of their information in the body of an email, including their pitch concepts.

Creative writers should put all of their identifying information in the body of the email, but their creative submission should be attached as a Word docx. or PDF (one document!) with no identifying information, so we can ensure you receive a fair, blind reading.

Thank you all for your support! Happy writing and happy submitting! And thank you again for reading Issue 2.

Looking Forward to 2024? (Us, Too!)

We've had so much fun this year and are really looking forward to how we can make 2024 even better. Here's what we know so far, and maybe this will lead to a submission opportunity for you!

Lit Shark's Best Of 2023: Coming January 2024

This is pretty self-explanatory, but we'll be going back through all of the pieces that we accepted throughout 2023, and our favorites from the year will appear in the anthology, but we will ALSO reach out to each of those writers about including something new in the anthology, as well, to give us all something new and interesting to read!

We're loving our monthly Poem of the Month Contest, and we'll continue to run that every month throughout 2024 with one winner and several honorable mentions each month.

Issue 1 (Winter 2024) of Lit Shark Magazine:

Submissions will be considered in January, February, and March 2024, and the issue will come out at the end of March. General submissions; all welcome!

Issue 2 (Spring 2024) of Lit Shark Magazine:

Submissions will be considered in April and May 2024, and the issue will appear at the beginning of June. General submissions; all welcome!

Issue 3 (Summer 2024) of Lit Shark Magazine:

Submissions will be considered in June, July, and August for submissions that cover all things Shark Week, marine life, sea stories, conservation, etc., and the issue will come out at the end of August.

Issue 4 (Spooky Season 2024) of Lit Shark Magazine:

Spooky submissions, dark retellings, and campy horror and shark tales and poems will be considered in September and October 2024 to appear for Halloween 2024!

And Lit Shark's Best of 2024 will then appear in Nov-Dec! Yay!

FIN.
(UNTIL ISSUE #3...)

SOMETHING TO SINK YOUR TEETH INTO

POETRY & PROSE

contributed by

- CLS SANDOVAL • SARAH HOZUMI •
- RESCUEPOETIX • RIE SHERIDAN ROSE •
- JULIE A. DICKSON • JAMES B. NICOLA •
- MATT HENRY • BARBARA ANNA GAIARDONI •
- RET TALBOT • ALYSSA HARMON •
- KB BALLENTINE • EMILY BILMAN •
- TRICIA CASEY • MANDY SCHIFFRIN •
- CAROLYN MARTIN • DEBORAH KERNER •
- ASHLEY KNOWLTON • ROBERTO SABAS •
- LORRAINE CAPUTO • CRAIG R. KIRSCHNER •
- PETER A. WITT • MARIANNE TEFFT •
- LYNETTE ESPOSITO • VERN FEIN •
- MCKENZIE LYNN TOZAN • SANDRA NOEL •
- BETH MATHISON • DALE E. COTTINGHAM •
- CAROL LYNN STEVENSON GRELLAS •
- MAGGIE BAYNE • ELLEN HIRNING SCHMIDT •
- DOUG VAN HOOSER • PATRICK DRUGGAN •
- JAMES CONNELLY • KEN GOLDMAN •
- NOLO SEGUNDO • JANET BOWDAN •
- EDWARD AHERN • ALAN COHEN •
- MICHAEL FLANAGAN • LARRY SCHUG •
- PAUL GASEK •



LIT SHARK MAGAZINE

www.litshark.com

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