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*"We are all apprentices in a craft
where no one ever becomes a master."*

-- Ernest Hemingway

We are breakfast people

On Sunday mornings when I was a little girl, I stood atop a kitchen chair in order to spy my mother create my favorite breakfast. I silently watched as she sifted flour like falling snow into our pale yellow mixing bowls. Her soft pale fingers would gently fold mounds of snowy egg whites into the batter.

The special pan used to cook our *æbleskiver*, the traditional breakfast of Denmark, weighed more than my little frame could comfortably lift. The black pan was a large circle with seven smaller hollowed out circles on the inside, as if they were spots on a cast iron ladybug. After the grease had been brushed into every circle and the tantalizing smell of warming butter filled the house, my mother began the process of scooping gobs of batter into the pan. The white batter sat in its new circular bed, unchanging, but my mother somehow always knew when to turn the puff over; after a flick of her wrist and the spin of our Oneida forks, the perfectly golden face of the *æbleskiver* surfaced.

I gently peeled apart the golfball-sized pancake puff to reveal the steaming center. It was an honor to taste the first one. My father would swipe his knife across the stick of butter on our wooden table and spread it inside my warm *æbleskiver*. I spooned mounds of brown sugar inside and sealed it shut to wait for the butter and sugar to melt forming a warm, syrupy nectar.

Sunday mornings were holidays for my family. All of us would gobble down our *æbleskiver* as quickly as my mother could flip them in the pan, and we'd teasingly fight for the last one in a batch. This is how I will remember the mornings of my childhood: my small self, sandwiched between my siblings, my parents and a stack of Sunday newspapers, impatiently waiting for a bite.

The Loyal Listener of the Phantom Regiment

one man remembers the drum corps movement of the 1980s

My father says today's instruments are tinny
shadows, mere cylindrical bores searching
for missing overtones and spluttering
sounds. They will never, he tells me,
vibrate with those lost timbres that found
an audience and lifted it into a sonorous
canon.

He aches, imagining trumpets now lying in
closets and buried in basements
with no memories of higher
dimensions.

He, however, knows that old noise: brass
cacophonies heard from centerfield fill
his body nightly (apertures expanding
the hum, muscle memory pressing
on pistons).

He wonders aloud, *What happened to "The Adagio from Spartacus"?*
or *What of the artillery shells in the "1812 Overture"?* –
songs whose beats still measure his blood and leave him
suspended in an airless column, obsessing over
perfection.

To Miss Elizabeth

in celebration of the bicentennial of *Pride and Prejudice*

You couple impertinence and wit
with grace and compassion.
Proud though you are
you do have your prejudices,
but you've been my
role model for
200 years.



Blind Beauty

Kathryn Ehrhard

I see your C and raise you a fifth,
to modulate from definitions to language.
I will not jump from A minor to E minor because
Bach progresses from the ii chord to the vi chord;
I am writing for two sopranos my wife detests,
but she is no more than a Browning's Duchess.
A trill here, an arpeggio there, where is the life in
a clear statement? I will not live to die
the death of a pauper, the son
of a poor violinist.

Fifth: A musical interval of the fifth.

Modulate: The act of moving a piece of music from its original key to a different key.

ii chord to vi chord: Refers to the chords that begin on the designated tone of that scale. In G major, the ii chord would start on A and the vi chord would start on E.

Trill: A musical ornament.

Arpeggio: A technique that takes a blocked chord and plays the notes of the chord successively, instead of together.

When Mozart died, he left his wife with an incredible amount of debt. She could not afford a proper funeral, so he was buried in a pauper's grave with no headstone. To this day, his grave has not been found.

Why We Have Chickens:

My Family Will Survive the Apocalypse While Your Family Starves

I was raised to be apocalyptic. I never knew this, of course. Does the guppy know water? I didn't realize that I was groomed to face society's doom until I was eighteen. By that time, it was too late for me. You see, while other little girls played with Barbies, I sat on the floor next to my dad, an unplugged PlayStation controller in hand, and pretended to blow the heads off zombies. While other girls spent weekends at the mall, I spent them with my dad, shooting Christmas Coca Cola cans until we could hit the polar bears from 30 yards away. When other girls refused to associate with their fathers, my dad and I were getting matching pentagram tattoos to guard against demonic possession – just in case.

Don't worry. I'm not a romantic. I know that when the apocalypse comes, there will be no monsters: no undead, bloodthirsty scapegoats. There will be no sounding of angelic trumpets. No devils crawling from black smoke. It will be humanity that unravels civilization. The global economy will collapse and people will do whatever is necessary to survive.

When this happens, my family will be prepared. You see, in the end, the rifles mounted on the wall won't be enough to sustain us. The concrete, one-way-in/one-way-out panic room won't save us from the rumbling in our stomachs. Civilization or not, we'll still need to eat.

This is where the chickens come in.

Chickens are self-sustaining protein factories. They eat the scraps from our meals, everything from rotten grapes to corn cobs to watermelon rinds. If left to their own devices, they slurp down worms and dig meat out of buggy exoskeletons. They, themselves, consist of meat: delectable meat that all other meats strive to imitate. After all, everything tastes like chicken. Of course, I will never (circumstances permitting) eat our chickens. The very idea repulses the pseudo-lacto-ovo vegetarian in me. I am content to devour their eggs, the most plentiful product the protein factories manufacture.

Originally, my parents bought six chickens. They were supposed to be Bantam hens, because they are small and easily domesticated. The more likely reason is that my parents think the feathers around their legs – or “the boots with the fur,” as my mom calls them – are adorable. However, we made the unfortunate mistake of buying chicks at Easter. By the time we reached Family Center, dozens of grubby-handed children had snatched up the chicks and moved them from one aluminum tank to the next, scrambling the breeds into indiscernible chaos. Therefore, instead of six Bantams, we have three Bantams, one Wyandotte, one Rhode Island Red, and one bird resembling a pheasant. Oh, and two of them are roosters, which

incidentally, do not lay eggs.

Due to these unexpected complications, my dad took it upon himself to acquire six laying hens from the local Farmers' Co-Op. While the other chickens all have distinct colorings, making them worthy of individual names (Zeus, Hera, Apollo, Aphrodite, Hestia, Persephone), the six, identical laying hens are known collectively as "The Dinosaurs." These hens are a testament to evolution. They have gangly, scaled legs, long necks, and wide, black eyes. If I stripped them of their feathers, they would look like Velociraptors. The only excuse for their ugliness is the large, white eggs they lay: the eggs that will keep us alive.

I'm not crazy. I know that the odds of an apocalypse – be it pandemic, demonic, or economic – are slim to none. I know that, if an apocalypse arose, I would not have the guts to shoot a zombie, let alone a human. I know that, even if I became a ruthless sniper, my family's tiny flock of chickens would not be enough to feed us forever. But you know what they say...

Better safe than sorry.

Rachel Haley

Until the Sunset

Nights playing in the outdoor space of my wilderness front lawn would be spent with my sister Sarah. From the hanging limbs of the old maple and oak trees, we would climb to watch the sunset from the world above. Slowly, the sun would shift across the horizon of the Kansas plain and fade into a harsh, but brilliant fashion of color: pale pink, scorched orange, blistering scarlet, deep indigo. Together, they formed an array of light that was each different and each splendid in its creation. Sarah and I would watch from the tree branches as the world altered from dusk to night. We would wait to hear the ending call of our day from our mother indoors. Dinner time would come just as did the steady passing of the sun.

Petrichor
Ariel Williams



Melinda Hipple

Dust

from a car long over the hill
eddies across the pasture turned
umber in the setting sun.
In a temporary fog, I replay
our first lovesick summer
in the fields.

Dust

settles a stifling layer
over brittle prairie grass and stirs up
dry, crackling cicada song
as I turn back to the road
and remember why it is
I am making this trip
alone.

Remnants of Refuge

Black trees tower above me and scorched
twigs crunch beneath my feet. Smoke-scent
assaults my lungs with every breath.

I pick my way along the path,
sidestep fallen limbs. Ashes
coat my shoes and soot stains my hands
as I run them over blackened trunks.

My feet lead me to a clearing, bright
in the noon sun. Charred earth lies
in place of verdant grass.

A skeleton of bare burnt limbs stretches
against a blank blue sky. Bark
rough beneath my hands, I trace
the scars where flames licked, unabated.

My fingers search out two sets of initials
and find them, untouched
by destruction.

Hunting For Sea Glass

a prose poem

She told him things he did not know; she told him about the Sombrero Galaxy. In the evening when they drank Sailor Jerry and talked about Christmas, he would fold her—his *little eskimo*—into his soft flannel arms. When her cat hissed at his ankles, he decided he preferred dogs, dogs named Lucy and Nacho and Hutch. At first light they walked on beaches in search of sea glass. They combed the surf for fallen stars, pebbles of light, marbles molded from discarded bottles and sculpted into jewels by heaving waves. They searched Bar Island, Fort Bragg, and Rosario Beach. They found aquamarine, cobalt blue, and polished emerald. Once she stepped on a wayward sea urchin and released her fistful of glass back into the foam. *Poseidon would have laughed*, she thought, *to see this shower of Pacific confetti. I stepped on a shooting star*, she always said. He felt a deep blue sharpness at the thought of her wearing that old cream-colored sweater, the one with the anchor stitched in red. But he was just a speck of salt on a grain of sand in an ocean too large to hold in his mind. Sometimes when an ocean zephyr hummed, distant and sweet, he could almost feel a shiver or a breath; he could almost feel the sand-soaked girl with honeycomb eyes and hair that curled like sea foam at dawn.

Lighthouse
Megan Nelson

Allyson Sass



Valentine's Day, Granada, Spain

After my morning class of Civilization and Culture, I'm out roaming the too-small cobblestone streets desperately trying to see past the bright Mediterranean sun and jumping into random *tiendas* to escape zippy motorcycles. I search a treat for this Valentine's Day: I, a single American in a love-obsessed culture. I enter a *frutería* and there they sit — plump, green, juicy, rare. Expensive. I ask to try one *¿Me permite probarla?* *No*, he says, violently shaking his head. Cleary, I have offended him. I dish out 5€, and leave with *las uvas* in my grasp. *Gracias*, I say. *Umpf*, he replies. The walk home is not short enough. I climb three stories to my flat. I pop the soft green fruit into my mouth: mushy, bitter.



Lauren Jaqua

This is Just to Say

I have removed
the cigarettes
that were in
your chest pocket

and which
you were probably
saving
for my bed time

Forgive me
they were distracting
so sickening
and so toxic.

- With apologies to William Carlos Williams

*Sunset on Portuguese
Train Station*
Allyson Sass

Josh Rydberg

Clementine

Often confused for my Mandarin cousin, I am the family cutie.

Kate Colby

Regret

is the brown bottle, blue bottle,
clear bottle, spirit bottle, long-necked
bottle, bottle neck spiraling
down your throat.

Secret Dialogue

a poetic response to Annie Dillard's *Holy the Firm*

I am too aware of degenerating skin stretched
over weakening muscles and bones. I feel my skin
knit together in *fragments too small to imagine* –
by seams too intricate to understand.

I stare at my own eyes, ponder their complexity:
the iris rich with pigment. Sclera, cornea, retina.
What makes us see? I feel my soul

deep within my chest. Dead-center.
Its weight, a shapeless impression –
undeniably human.

My self is my mind and brain,
mysterious entities tied together
but not united. I cannot comprehend thought –
a secret dialogue with myself
that moves faster than time.
How do we avoid thought? Suddenly,
there it is: I feel created, Annie.
I feel created.



A Midwest Sunset
BriAnna Garza

The Filmmaker

Silver Fingers Haven Ashley



He watches the world like it's a movie, sucks in scenes through wide-angle eyes. Eyelids snapping like shutters and lips dubbing over mundane dialogue, he bypasses truth and instead explores *What if.*

His thumb and pointer finger are longer than ours: they are the extended legs of the tripod, helping him frame scenes, place characters. He turns

against the world, pushes his limits and challenges the unimaginative stock by which fellow filmmakers swear. When we tell him *Your persistence of vision is a gift*, he cannot hear us as he marvels over his captive footage, so we plead *Take your kaleidoscope eyes and render our lives in silver.*

Exchange of Letters

I.

Clara Schumann to Robert Schumann

Dear Robert,
I hear the syncopated rhythm (5/4+9/8)
of one hundred hands when Beethoven
skips under my fingertips.
Today, I submit to the works of masters,
playing sonatas with a woman's touch
(I would have been applauded if
he had let me decrescendo). If our children
would sleep, I could give my song
to an equal world, but I am not artist enough
to be the first. I am the wife
of a composer, and I
will play your song.

II.

Robert Schumann to Clara Schumann

Dear Clara,
I rhyme in octaves and
hear alliteration in Beethoven's Fifth.
I write poetry in minor sevenths
because I awoke from a delicate dream,
and words cannot describe E major any more than
a symphony could whisper I love you.
Here is my deathbed poem:
Rewrite my childhood
with your diminuendos.
The world may deafen your voice —
the wife of a man choked
by an elderly mask — but I trust you.
Even the phantom knows
the scars he hides.
And the phantom can sing.

Minor sevenths: A musical interval.

Delicate dream: Refers to a piece he wrote about a childhood dream.

Rewrite my childhood: Refers to a set of pieces he wrote illustrating different parts of childhood.

In Support of Spinsters

Families are like a box of chocolates, to borrow the phrase. Given by fate, chosen by none, meant to be loved. With love, we choose the recipient, but with family it's instinctive: a gut-wrenching, indelible, promise-filled love. Unconditional love seems a risky investment. The whole "husband and kids" scenario a Ponzi scheme, with myself at the losing end. Only a 50/50 chance I'll choose correctly. Because who's to say my mother-in-law won't be the Lizzie Borden type, or my children neo-Nazi radicals sporting shaved heads and pinwheel tattoos? The true nuclear family. I think I'll take those chocolates, Forrest. At least they come with a label.



Who's Wise

Milan Piva

society says

i am not
perfect.
my eyes are green, not
blue, and my waist is
one size two size three
too big.

my fingers are
short, stubby, and my legs
are neither long nor
lean; they do not go for
miles.

freckles dot my
back from hours spent in the
summer sun, and wrinkles line my
eyes, mouth, brow from
laughter and smiles and hope.

my voice is not
high enough clear enough soft
enough, and my teeth are
crooked.

my nails are
jagged from wear and
tear and my hair has
split ends.

my skin is pale, but
not enough, my skin is tan, but
not enough. i am healthy, but
never enough.

compared to
others, women with
perfect skin, perfect bodies, perfect
hair, i am
flawed.

society says
i am not
perfect.

but
i am

human.

Power

struts into the Classical Period concert hall
wearing a black dress coat
and greets his colleagues dryly.

A Different View
BriAnna Garza



To the German Composers of the 18th Century

We are your pencils,
etching accidentals in the five lines
of your symphony, each point
easily erased.

When you stopped making corsets,
we learned the musical alphabet
and became sopranos, only to discover
you had already defined our existence:

enharmonic. *You tell us we can sing*
Mozart's Requiem as soon as it is finished.

Was a voice in perfect unison too pure?

Handsome Men

I am not distracted
by handsome men.
Unless they ride unicycles
or read Thoreau
in donut shops. No,
I do not stop

for handsome men. However,
if handsome men glide through
crosswalks as I am
driving, the law demands
that I stop. *Even if I don't want to.*

Handsome men are quite
handsome, but I will not be
distracted by bow ties and
orange curls and fingernails.

I am not preoccupied
by freckles placed perfectly
over shoulder blades or
the scent of work and grass
on worn flannel shirts.

Handsome men whose limbs reach
like branches – pull books from
the highest shelf; but I am not
aware. I am writing,
and I am not distracted
by handsome men.

Train Watcher

She lived above the trains
lived on the second floor of an 1863 mercantile,
windows overlooking tracks
that stretched across horizons.

She heard the trains and each time
raced across a paint-stained floor
at the sound of whirring wheels
and whistles – then stood mesmerized
by stacked metal cars glinting
in fading afternoon light.

She counted the boxcars
as they sped by until she lost track
and all faded to a blur
of quick colors, a breath
of space between cars.

She stared at trains that crept by
and gazed at the couplings attaching
each car to the next
like schoolchildren holding hands
to make sure no one got lost.



...
Melinda Hipple



Josh Rydberg

Honeycrisp Apple

If only Johnny had seeded a farm of your sweet trees along Highway 20.

Tuna Casseroles

The sun was bright. Cheerful. Mocking. Birds sang, dogs yipped as the lawn mowers ran their last hurrah before the leaves changed color and ambushed the ground. People stopped by to chat, to pry, to bring food. The black mourners contradicted the glorious September day. That autumn day was whole while we were not. It was inviting while we were crowded. That autumn day we were full of terrible tuna casseroles and pity, but were empty of love and peace.

That busy day I thought to myself, “I have no family.” It’s just me and my mom. I am abandoned. A freak. I have one more way in which to be different. I envied giggling girls playing with their dads. Ornery boys tricking their moms. I noticed mellow mothers and their babies. And dorky dads embarrassing their teenagers.

As time passed I grew jealous and cold. Distant and mean. I hated my friends when they complained that their dads were unfair. *At least you have one*, I thought bitterly.

My mom knew. She realized my withdrawal was part of the grieving process. She didn’t *completely* understand because she herself, had lost a husband. But she empathized.

And then she confronted me. She invaded my room one day, sat too close on my bed and looked me straight in the eye. “We are a family. You’re my family and I’m yours. We’re different but we’re all we have. We’re not just ‘making do’ anymore—we’re living.” She spoke this as though our lives depended on it. And they did.

The words took a while to sink in. A few days; a few months. All along I knew my mom was right. I eventually allowed myself to be happy—to feel love. I finally realized *this woman in my life is my mother*. And she can understand me better than anyone, better than I understand myself. She loves me unconditionally. And she supports me. I share her values—faith, compassion, integrity, and she depends on me. My mom is my family. I accept that and now treasure it. It means we are different. Atypical. Unique. She’s the single mother and I, the only child. We’re a team: we’re a family.

Stockton Lake

All of my childhood summers can be combined into one scene: a Friday night sunset over Stockton Lake. To me, sunsets always looked prettier from the bow of a Crownline speed boat. I would sit on my knees, crouched down so my dad could still see to drive, and grip the metal hand railings until my knuckles turned white. I would gaze at the shoreline, where tan rocks gave way to leafy, green trees. Over the trees hung the sun, looking to me like a giant orange, framed in pink and blue and yellow sky. Its light created a golden trail along the glassy water, from the rocky shore to the bow of the boat.

As the boat turned, I would let go with one hand and reach for the spray of water along its side, relishing in the cool mist soaking my hand. I always hoped there would be enough sunlight left to paint a rainbow streak across the spray, but there never was. When I straightened and looked across *our* cove, I saw before me a sleeping playground. Darkness was coming, and as the sun dipped below the trees, they turned from green bodies to a solid black mass. But I knew that when I woke up on Saturday morning, the cove would be alive again.

I was right, every time. On Saturday mornings, after devouring a double chocolate chip Otis Spunkmeyer muffin and taking a quick detour to feed stale bread slices to the two-foot long carp at Mutton Creek Marina, I always found the cove alive. Jet-skis zoomed along at the entrance, jumping the wake of passing speed boats. Pontoon boats blasted Aerosmith and Motley Crue from an inlet on the left side of the cove. Where the cove forked in the back, anyone who knew anything about Stockton turned left for a place to splash and drink -- or right for a place to fish and teach cousins how to ski.

My parents and I settled in one of these inlets, leaving the body of the cove for boats pulling inner-tubers or wake-boarders. Once my dad secured the anchor in the cove's muddy bottom, we began our routine. My mom took over the front of the boat, stretching out along the white leather seats to tan; my dad hung off the ladder at the back of the boat, easing his way into the cool water. I jumped straight in, splashing him, sometimes intentionally, sometimes not.

My dad and I spent hours in the water. We played tag, chasing each other in circles around the boat and hiding by the propeller. We cleaned the boat with our feet, scrubbing with our toes until the dust and grime from the gravel roads were completely washed away. Sometimes Daddy pinched my calves with his toes and pretended that I had been bitten by a fish. I believed him, until I realized that the water was so clear that I could see his monkey feet reaching towards me under the green glow of the surface.

Eventually, my parents traded places, Dad soaking up the sun in the boat and Mom swimming in the

water with me. If she just wanted to relax in the waves, Mom wore her lifejacket upside-down, like a diaper instead of a vest. But if she wanted to stretch out and swim, she grabbed a lime green, foam noodle from the boat's storage compartment.

Instead of playing, my mom and I always talked while we swam, drifting further away from the boat as the conversations grew deeper. We counted the little, cerulean dragonflies that landed on our wet arms. We talked about the next competitive trail ride, and how my beloved mare refused to side-pass over logs. As I grew older, we began to discuss my transition to middle school and then high school and then college. The summer after my junior year of high school, I listed the majors I was considering: English, psychology, journalism. I named the colleges at which I might pursue these degrees: Pittsburg State, Emporia State, Baker University.

Eventually, every summer weekend came to an end. When I was little, these ends consisted of shaky muscles that desired stable land and sun-burnt skin that thirsted for Ocean Potion Aloe Vera Gel. I watched anxiously as Mutton Creek Marina grew closer, wanting nothing more than to scramble onto the dock and climb the hill back to our motor home. I was tired. I was burnt. And I was ready to go home.

Every time my dad steered our motor home across the Y Highway Bridge, which stretched over our section of Stockton Lake, and we took one last look at our playground, with its smooth, blue waters glittering in the sunlight, my mom began to cry. As a child, I never understood her sadness; I was always ready to move on to the next adventure. However, the summer before my freshman year of college, with nothing to look forward to but four more years of school, a stack of textbooks, and a cinderblock dorm room, I finally understood her grief.

For my mom, and now for me, Stockton Lake is not just a summer vacation spot. When we are nestled away in our cove at Stockton, protected by a wall of trees and a 25,000 acre mote, work and school and all of life's stresses melt away under that big orange in the sky. Stockton Lake is our safe haven, where life means being serenaded by a Tom Petty & the Heartbreakers Greatest Hits cassette tape and rocked to sleep by a Crowline speed boat. But more than that, Stockton is the place where my mom spent her childhood, the place where we shared mine, and the one place where we will always regain the peacefulness of those years.

The last time I left Stockton Lake, I didn't watch anxiously for Mutton Creek Marina. Instead, I looked over my shoulder and gazed at our cove, watching as the tree line grew smaller behind me. The sun was setting, turning the sky pink and creating that streak of shimmering gold up to the stern of our boat. As we took our final turn out of the cove, I leaned over the side of the boat and let the mist fly through my fingers. And on that last Sunday afternoon, I found there was just enough sunlight left to hit the silver spray and create a rainbow.

Cypher

On the works of Gustav Klimt

I do not paint the self portrait,
enraptured as I am by a Byzantine memoir.
My brush would rather luge down the slope
of a woman's hip and rest at the summit of her patterns.

I see Earth through a kaleidoscope,
a lace-cloaked spyglass,
or some quilted aperture
that renders floating figures in a patchwork of gold leaf.

I shroud women in technicolor tessellations,
and light the gas lamps behind their eyes,
coating the canvas in velvet-soaked brush strokes.

Scalloped *impasto* resembles dabs of clay, taffy:
a landscape speckled like the cross-section of a cell.
All these shapes a code—my mosaic menagerie—
I give to thee, my Goddess Athena,
in hopes you will decrypt the cypher.



The Field Milan Piva

Color-Patches

a prose-cutting poem from Annie Dillard's *Seeing*

For the newly sighted, vision
is pure sensation unencumbered
by meaning. Darkness appalls
and light dazzles. Dizzy,
I fall and breathe an
air like light; see a light
like water. Terror
and beauty insoluble.

The world is a dazzle of
color-patches that wrap round
my eyes, intricately, leaving
not one spot unfilled. Some
patches swell and loom while others
vanish utterly, dark marks
flit at random over
the whole dazzling sweep.

When fog moves
against a backdrop of pines, I don't see
the fog itself, but streaks of clearness floating
in dark shreds – tatters
of clearness through a pervading
obscurity.

Another type of seeing involves
a letting go. I cannot cause
light, so I must try to put myself
in the path of its beam. It is
less like seeing than like being
for the first time seen,
knocked breathless by a powerful
glance.

When No One is Looking

I lie to myself – become everything
I am not (*the model daughter, unbreakable,
forgiving*). I change circumstances,
alter history (*raise millions of innocent
dead from ancient graves*). Correct memories
until everyone adheres to truth.

I walk a path disturbed by no one. Hide imperfections (*chipped
shoulders, heavy eyes, envious heart*). Craft a world
you will never find.

I dream my existence – create history:
(*I was born a hundred years ago, I marched
in protests, I fought for justice,
for equality*). I live through centuries.

I ignore my need to be alone. Confront nature (*spine flattened
to patchy grass, eyes locked on shifting clouds*). Gaze
until I understand. Breathe
until I'm empty. Erase tomorrow.
Glance up and realize

you are looking.

Divine Regards

I speak in prayers.
Prayers for reunions and hurricanes
and stomachaches. I pray
for daily bread. For sisters
and football games and states
like Oklahoma. Prayers fall
like water from eyelashes
as I step from the shower,
prayers penned on palms.

I write in prayers. I spin
prayers on their axis. I stitch them
into my sweaters; I tuck them
in my curls. Prayers bead like water
on my forehead. Prayers rip
like seams across my jeans. Prayers break
like breath on glass and cracks
in windshields. I pray

for Kingdom come.



Sonder
Ariel Williams

Gray

In equal amounts, a rainbow of color
muddies to a safe and neutral gray.
Passionate red gives up its angst,
and blue surfaces from the depths
of depression. Yellow hides
its zealous cheer behind dull eyes.
Gray, the lithium of color, reins in
the mayhem, stabilizes extremes.
In a madhouse of color, gray
is the man in the white coat
holding the little black bag.

The Hammerhead Shark
Anti-Christ of the Ocean

He knows his eyes were forced to the side of his head when God took a special moment to press a thumb down on him, stealing his popularity from Day Five. But he senses an urchin, hidden behind a porous rock. Electricity jolts across his body when the angel fish sneaks up in front of him to laugh, blindly sending lightning up his shark's spine. This angel is old and fearless. How did she live through her young curiosity? He knows her chances. Those without 20/20 vision share a secret sixth sense.

Practice

A four year old sits dreaming on the side of the scuffed maple floor. A group of children *plié* while holding on to the *barre*, speaking of the only life they have. A lone teenager gracefully moves to the center of the room, staring at herself through critical eyes in the long row of mirrors. No *tutus* here. Just practice; just life. And the music begins. Hushed are the kids, dreaming still are the little girls. All eyes turn to watch the languid *adagio en pointe* - an elegant farewell. A *tombé* to begin, the fall. *Pas de bouree* to step into a *glissade*. An *allongé* here, a *dessous* there. The music builds. In come *pirouettes*, *rond de jambes* and *frappés sur le cou-de-pied*. Twirling faster and faster, she is as high up as she can go—on the tips of her toes. She strikes the neck of the floor. Her long neck curved and elegant. *Fouettés* until she cannot whip anymore. A pause. She *développés* into an *elevé*. Slows into a *balancé*. Finally, an *arabesque allongé*. The notes of the piano and violin drift away and so does the attention, leaving all but the lone girl, transformed into a *ballerina*.

One night his cat brought a bunny into the house.
I awoke to the rabbit's cry, a shrill scream that cracked the air like a glass pane.
Altogether strange, alien. A plastic sob, a rubber sound that bounced and popped.

I heard fur and teeth meeting outside our bedroom door,
the hallway carpet soaked with sounds of fang and tail.
Caught in my stricken waking, my guilty indecision,
my waxy, salty, terrible apathy,
I remained a stone.

*

One night his cat brought a bunny into the house.
I awoke in a tangle of sheets, wandering, lost in the honey thick air of sleep.
Outside the door a wrestling of forms—a queer shuffle—a scrape against the wall.
A ragged metal shriek.

Fear and dread boiled and frothed in my chest,
and little shards of flint rubbed, sparked, until
I rose, a phantom, and stumbled blindly
into the house.



Irish Cow
Carly Berblinger

Rachel Haley

Florence and the Machine

Blinding, Spectrum, Cosmic Love,
The Dog Days Are Over,
Between Two Lungs, Heavy in Your Arms,
Kiss With a Fist,
Lover to Lover, All This and Heaven Too, Only if for a Night,
Leave My Body, Shake It Out, Breaking Down,
No Light, No Light,
Heartlines.

Erin Wilson

Kiwi

Within lies a speckled halo of sweet green perfection.

Melinda Hipple

Coconut

This hair shirt shrouds a pure white manna.

first things first

I write in clichés. It's not that I have an aversion to originality, but there is comfort in the familiarity. How else could I describe my age-defyingly trim grandfather, other than *fit as a fiddle* and *strong as an ox*? Or what about the meek girl with the braces? Well, *she's just a diamond in the rough*. And in the case of heartbreak, what could console you more than the words *it's not you, it's me*. That way you can rest assured that those last two years of your life were not a complete waste. Here's the *moment of truth*, the cliché is more than the plot points of a chick-flick, or the breakup songs of Taylor Swift. *All's fair in love and war* isn't just a blanket statement allowing you to release all moral integrity in the search for your knight in shining armor; it's a thought process. These phrases are classics, not the Shakespeare or Salinger sort, but the kind that tell you what to expect. Despite their puzzling wording, clichés form that instant connection in your brain -- no need for explanation. Why not *call a spade a spade*? The guy you see at the bar, go tell him he's *the cat's meow*; he'll know your intentions. And when you're down on your luck all you have to remember is a few wise words: *All's well that ends well*.

Sean Nordeen

Courage

readies herself for battle
equipped with leather armor
and does not flinch as the beast nears.

Shayla Farley

Celery

Oh how your pipes are like floss to me.

Egypt's Final Pharaoh

You ruled the land with a sequined
scepter, spent your days seducing
insatiable men with your open
palms. You tested poisons

on prisoners, sparing subjects who
thanked you with treasure from
Canopus. People still dive

off the coast of your capital, hunting
for slices of your neck and arms, searching
for evidence of a woman so captivating,
a tone so pleasuring, a tongue so like
a many-stringed instrument.

You are immortalized in
flashy slot machines, perfumes,
Middle Eastern cigarettes:
full-flavored *Cleopatras*.

The lens remembered terracotta rooftops,
bell towers tolling out patterns of time,
lovers with braided hair,
and a handful of sea glass.

The lens remembered
faces smeared with pastel balm,
books with cracked spines,
and snow that crumbled like ash.

The lens remembered
things scratched and smudged with salt,
things of feathers and bone that heaved,
bellows high and frenzied with being.

The lens remembered everything soft, living, gone.

On behalf of all featured writers
and artists,
thank you.

