





Trailer Park Dog

Harley Patton

At seven years old I found a dog in the trailer park that was nobody's. Named him Pidgeotto and fed him salami from my backpack and brought him home to my mother, crying that he wasn't anyone's. She only said we couldn't keep him once, it was easy, just a riverfull of tears then it was 'okay so what's his name.' The sage bushes behind our trailer twisted in the breeze as I watched him eat canned chili in the dirt lot through the kitchen window smeared with grease. The light was that evening desert light that gathers up the dust to all the halos and the harps. Wolf brand, we ate it too. The veterinarian up in town gave Pidgeotto his shots and a flea bath and a collar with his name on it. We went everywhere together for three weeks until he ran off. Just rice and beans after that and the lot manager pounding on the door, slipping letters underneath it when we didn't answer. Couple months later we sold everything except the car and drove north for three days. For a year after I would dream of that drive, just instead of an ash-grey Saturn Ion we drove a cherry red convertible that you could float right out of and fly away from, and watch the highway straighten out below you from the sky, and twist in the breeze like a sage bush, like you were nobody's.

A Dead Maple Seed

J.R. Neary

Sensing a need to escape the stale air, he goes outside. He looks around, picking up an old and dried maple seed, he runs a finger across the brittle protective layer and wing that catches the wind, and brings it back to the surface in a spinning dance where it can start a new tree that will do the same, just as its predecessors had done for time immemorial. Not this one, though; this seed, a testament to time and nature's ingenuity, ended up between two concrete pavers onto convenient plastic turf. It was left to bake in the sun for a few months, leaving the seed long dead and withered—a failed offspring. Hundreds of others share its fate, stymied not by a competition for nutrients and space in the soil but by the infertile plastic they bake on under the mid-June sun.

He peels the brittle husk and gently presses the ellipsoid, and its remnants scatter in the wind, leaving it naked. Nothing but a hardened, dark seed, untouched by vermin. Something about the destruction and fragments of the wing makes him think of something other, older, than himself—an outline on the edge of his understanding, hinting at an injustice and quiet yearning. But not for too long. Dropping the seed, he will soon go back inside where most of his years have been spent, likely forgetting about this kindred body and unlikely source of wonder



2.J. Feyfibre

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Speed Limit

Joel Bush

The yellow sign leans
against the tree—
a weary young son falling
back against his mother.
Its metal pole is overgrown
with weeds at the base.

Its 15 MPH
command is choked by
pine needles.

The mountain will
move at its own speed.

H O M E

Javeria Yousuf

The four letters,

H

O

M

E

are four walls of my room.

I stare at them,

and they look back into my soul,

promising me

one day they will consume me whole.



Standing in the Stem of the L

Ruth E. Thomas

My house is an L.
I don't know why.
Resultant from this design,
From my kitchen window, near the sink, I can see into my living room.

Languid but lucid, I'm standing,
washing cake and carbonara from my porcelain and silver,
Remnants from a time when I was rich,
and I look into the leaking night,
that crowds around my quiet L-shaped house,
and I am lonely.

I occupy myself.
I do the maths on what I ate today:
1 thin crumpet (no butter), 10 blueberries,
1 meal replacement bar, 15 grapes,
a large pizza, carbonara, 3 large slices of chocolate cake, a tube of Pringles...

I gaze into the dark glaze outside,
while running circles around the plates.

Then,
just as when your eyes are pulled by blurry shadows
to look a certain way,
and you find a dramatic, hefty spider
leering nearby,
I'm drawn to look at the window of my blindless living room.

I jump,
Because, when I glanced to my right,
right into my living room,
a bitter face stared back
from the bare and unlit room.

I stop,
I cringe from fear,
I squeeze my eyes almost closed,
trying to see more clearly,
forgetting that I'm in real life
and that I don't have a zoom function,

What's happening?
What to do?
Fight or flight if the face is real?
Is it a trick of night?
Is my mind blowing ghosts out into my space?

I grab a knife from the knife stand,
Just in case,
I leave through the back door,
Just in case,
I lock up,
Just in case.

There is no exit from my garden,
Lavender and grass are manned by high-built stones,
I don't know why there is no exit; a design decision.

Look in the daytime and my garden is colourful,
filled with yellow rhododendrons and blue lilies,
In the night, the only colour is from the bulbs inside my house,

I study desperately the window
in which I saw the eyes,
I can't make out the features now,
I can't quite see anything but nothing
I breathe deeply and happily,

Living lonely is not healthy,
It erodes my sense of mind.

My muscles relax,
I close my eyes and shake my head,
I open my eyes,
as the window opens
and the face bursts through.

Out spills the bitterness,
Out comes the twisted features,
into the open night,
lit only by my kitchen.
Faster and faster, it comes,
until it absorbs me entirely,
and I remember that your worst fears can come true.



Three Poems Inspired by the Artist Agnes Martin

Lori Rittner

I.

A straight line from her to me
What beautiful soul
Touched by madness
Was it crying out
For purity or reason

The angles, severe and true
Beyond question
Complete white space in between

What is the mystery
What does she say
Except I am here
Waiting to touch you
And you me

Luminous
These grids are not prisons, rather gates
The lines around your mouth tender
In the desert

II.

White walled square gallery

Lili in front of *Untitled #10* (1990)

Agnes reached out and grasped Lili's mindheartsoul in her soft firm fist

Repeat horizons

Separate like musical staves

Waves upon waves

Reassuring rhythm

Resistant to turbulence

Exact

Yet ever so slightly varied

Ink lines

Bear minute changes in thickness and darkness

Invite scrutiny

But do not give in

Take in the whole

Three inches close up

Lili backed away

moved

soothed

comes home to herself

Loves the capital L in Lili

Right angle for Agnes

III.

What if i met agnes

Would she be wise

Ornery

Mean and nasty

Would she tell me i've wasted my life

How old was she when she found her work

Was heavenly

The smart ones don't need me

The stupid ones can not be helped

Ain't too many in the middle

I wish one could tell me what he learned

Or my son could tell me what i did

Cereal

Matthew Green

The lights are on so I stumble another lap
I light a cigarette; walk around in a music video like I'm *The Verve*
When I return the lights are off

Dad always locks the one lock and tells me which
So I don't wake him fumbling keys
I make quick work of that

Their cereal boxes are on the kitchen bench
There's two bowls and two spoons
And a guzzle of water in a glass, next to tablets





Dandelions in Concrete Canyons

(for M.G.A)

Pixie Bruner

In a strange habitat-
I read, listen to music.
I wash all the dishes in the sink and clear it out.
I pet the cats.
They purr and show tummies.
All this vulnerability—
All these soft undersides we hide.

I sit quietly and listen to the ambient sounds—
The neighbors leave for work,
Footsteps down the wooden stairs,
hum of the refrigerator.
This is not my home yet.

.
I think of a billboard I once saw on 400—
“If you lived there, you’d be home by now”
I’m trying to assimilate the space
While navigating the closeness we now have.

How there is, at times, no distance
And I am boundary-less,
How we get into each other, figuratively and literally and at small moments,
we are the sum of all of our parts.

I am petrified,
As if I will fall of the face of the Earth so
I cling to sheets, pillows, your taut warm body,
That fits me exact like a puzzle piece.

A cup of tea, anything
to ground and anchor me.
My ribs and body sore from being crushed against you and I don’t care,
I want this.

I want to remember everything
each moment written into my story
with inedible ink,
tattooed upon my grey matter.

Invoking “Failure is not an option”
because I’ve imagined you existed all of my life
and you’re with me now.

If we fail, I’ll take off the red shoes
because I’ll retire and be done with dancing.
This is it.
This is the last dance on Earth I want or need.

I dreamed you for decades,
I’ve imagined this apartment since
a poem I wrote over 30 years ago when
I saw who I’d become and who I wanted,
setting my intent for life but life went sideways.

we are wise enough to not believe
In only happy ever after endings,
But there are gaps where the light
gets in and a dandelion of reckless hope
grows in the sidewalk cracks
of the concrete canyons we are drawn to

We say the most optimistic and beautiful things, poetic, impulsive, vulgar
and emotional,
Going deep and never hallmark hollow feeling
In the frequent heat of the moment,.

Words not thought out pour forth like a waterfall damning their real
consequences
From our tangled racing hearts form.

We make promises and swear oaths
humans cannot live up to probably—
But damn, oh how I want to believe in them
In the morning as grey light
floods your living room
as I sit on the floor on the pillows.

we sleep like the sarcophagus effigies
I loved in the Cathedrals of England
each night, fingers entwined, side by side,
Or me curled up on you but your arm is always
Pulling me close, holding me fast to your side
Even in sleep, we do not fully separate.

This is not our normal,
sleeping like remoras
but it's natural like breathing,
We Sleep deep and Dream
separate together.

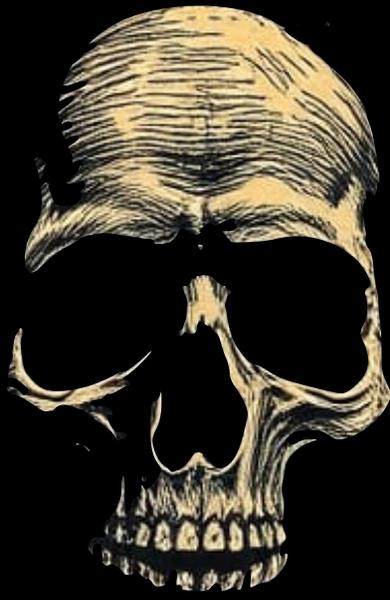
I merely want to write this until
my body gives out in a few decades
The pencil in your hand,
The blue ballpoint in mine
Writing the shared tale until it just stops
without punctuation mid-



VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH

Emma Grey Rose

Our first intimate moment was not / intimate at all. It was a / prelude. We were at once—two strangers, combined under white sheets, primitive and intellectually void. Our fall from grace was slow / steady, like that of an archangel, descending from the billowing clouds of Heaven into the open depths of Hades below. It was one worthy of a theatre ovation / we deserved an audience to our great performance. Infidelity / lies. My endeavor to save you and I was the / last act. It was the final act / 3 of 3. The one in which the black curtain fell and I was / hysterical—screaming, weeping.



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Threads: @tautslob

“A Dead Maple Seed” by J.R. Neary

“Speed Limit” by Joel Bush

“HOME” by Javeria Yousuf
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“Standing in the Stem of the L” by Ruth E. Thomas
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