

# HAND TO MOUTH

a zine curated by Rebecca Kokitus & Joaquin Fernandez



KISSING DYNAMITE  
*A Journal of Poetry*

## ABOUT THE EDITORS

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## CONTRIBUTORS

Mary Bowers	4	Samuel J Fox	29
Marvin Gonzalez	5	Kyla Houbolt	30
Joaquin Fernandez	6	Barnaby Smith	31
Savannah Slone	8	Stuart Buck	33
Allie Marini	9, 19	Chad Musick	34
Elizabeth York Dickinson	10	Ada Pelonia	35
Christine Taylor	11, 21	Jane Fleming	36
Mathew Yates	12, 15, 16, 18, 39	Rebecca Kokitus	37
Christina Xiong	13, 14, 27, 38	Oliver Cato	40
F. E. Clark	17	Laurie Koensgen	41
April Rose Brazowski	22	Mirabai Scholz	42
Roppotucha Greenberg	23	Maggie Dove	44
Constance Schultz	24, 28	Anonymous	49
Jeremy Gaulke	26, 43	Lettie Jane Rennekamp	52

**aren't you tired of living hand to mouth**  
*Mary Bowers*

aren't you tired of  
living hand to mouth

she asked & it was  
20 years or so ago &

she didn't do that she  
had 3 kids & a

husband & boyfriend  
just in case it might

come to that & was  
always out of bread

but never money &  
wine & the kids

were always w/him  
so she could go out

& he drank until  
falling sleep heavy

at 3 in the afternoon  
so the children could

watch him snore but  
he worked hard &

addiction for them  
would show its own

hand & all hearts  
would wrench &

weeping keep repeating  
but no hand to mouth

from *She Loved Me Vol 1*  
Marvin Gonzalez

Our fathers were  
our models for  
God

If our fathers bailed,  
what does that  
tell you  
about God?

-Chuck P.

When is a single  
mother

supposed to

Learn English, go to college

raise her kids

with a

full time job?

## The Kids Don't Need To Know

*Joaquin Fernandez*

Even though they're crooked, she takes impeccable care of her teeth. They're not pretty, but she was in middle school when she had her last cavity. That part's almost free, if the toothpaste is buy one get one and the Dollar Tree's right next door and they even carry those Disney toothbrushes the kids love. The kids don't need to know that she uses theirs while they're asleep and an extra dollar is an extra dollar.

After school, the kids go to her mother's house for a few hours. The kids don't need to know why they never stay longer. Sometimes her mother gives them dinner, sometimes she doesn't. Sometimes Grandma's fun and sometimes she's not, alternately sweet and chiding, grim and ridiculous, a sudden change the kids don't need to know depends on how much money their mother owes her. They just know that sometimes there's pizza. Sometimes there's a knock on the door and they know that it's time to clap their hands and run to the table. It's time to watch wide-eyed and thrilled as Grandma's hands shake while she pours Cherry Coke from a two-liter bottle and maybe this'll be the time she drops it. It's time for that magic steam that lives in the cardboard box like it's still baking right up until the moment Grandma opens it. And sometimes it's chicken soup. Sometimes Grandma opens a can and frowns into her phone and the kids know to eat in silence. They know to finish their hot water and salted starch, seasoned dull with aluminium and something mechanically separated. They know to finish it even though they know it's not quite chicken. When the kids tell their mother about Grandma's after school, they notice her smile, fake and nervous, wide with false excitement as they pass all the restaurants and grocery stores on their way home.

Somedays Grandma stops frowning into her phone. Somedays Grandma steps away, but the kids can still hear her, hissing and yelling, smoking and apologizing just outside the front door, pacing like a guard. And it's really fine. The kids just know to turn up the television and that's when the girl reads and the boy draws, focused and anxious while their Grandma yells her daughter's name, spitting sharp curses in a loud, failed whisper. And it really is fine.

It's fine because they're not poor. Not really. There's always beans and rice, scrambled eggs with perfect squares of white toast, stiff with preservatives, yellow with whichever imitation butter was on sale. Grilled cheese when there's time. Hot dogs when their mother remembers to go to the store. When she does go to the store, it's always in that hour after the school bus takes the kids, before she has to leave for work. That's her hour. More and more, it's errands. Sometimes it's a catnap and a second cup of instant coffee, pale and extra sweet. Sometimes it's a cigarette from the emergency pack that's lived on top of the refrigerator since she quit two years ago. Sometimes she knocks on the

apartment next door, chilly in her robe, smoky, and sticky sweet with coffee on her breath. When she hears him rustle on the other side of the door, she cranes her neck to the corner bus stop, anxious and certain, checking that the kids are really gone.

He's not wearing a shirt. She's never seen him wear a shirt, even in the winter when she can see her breath while she waits for his door to open. His apartment's always too hot and his skin is always too cold and he smiles in a way that's goofy when it should be sexy and she can tell he's nervous even though the same thing happens every two weeks or every time she has a fight with her mom or one of the kids get a skinned knee, only it feels like she's the one bleeding. The smartest mistake he keeps making is when he offers her coffee, or a beer, or wait, that's stupid it's way too early. Because if he keeps talking, she might think it was sweet of him to offer. Instead, her robe is off and her mouth is on him and that too-cold skin is all over her and he can mistake her shiver all he wants as long as he doesn't stop. This is the part that gets a little hazy, but that was always the point. Once the condom's on, she can close her eyes and when she closes her eyes, she's going to whisper I want you I want you I want you when she really means I want you to be somebody else.

And when it's over, she's going to slide back into her robe and float out the door and she's not going to remember if he was still in bed or the bathroom or rolling a joint in the living room when the door closes behind her and she goes back to brush her teeth with one of the kid's toothbrushes, a little bit lighter, if just for that moment, alone and smiling at all the things the kids never need to know.

## The Table Where We Sat and Sit

*Savannah Slone*

*Trying to make ends meet*

One Christmas, I gifted my mom an orphaned quarter that I found, because then she couldn't say, *I don't have a dime to my name* anymore. A quarter was even more than a dime. Habitually reading *The Table Where the Rich People Sit* to reassure me that we're better off.

Stealing toilet paper from the school in my *not-even-Jansport* backpack. Smelled like somebody else's mom's cigarettes. Living wherever there wasn't rent. Goodwill trips.

*But I'm a single mom*

Growing up poor means I now have my own money, and I can't stop spending after never having enough. Never breaking eye contact with the pickpocket's pocket. Gypsy butterflies migrating, teaching me value.

*You don't want to be rich because rich people don't appreciate things.*

Now, here I am, single mom, growing up poor, with my son, growing up poor. It would be so much easier to eliminate that stressor. I think I'd still appreciate things.

*\*previously published in Hearing the Underwater (Finishing Line Press, 2019).*

## That Kind of Poor

*Allie Marini*

We are that kind of poor  
that never really realizes how poor we are

only that the bank account hovers more treacherously close to 0  
in the days leading up to payday

sometimes it occurs to us that  
maybe not everybody has the lights turned off  
sometimes  
because they're over a month behind & can never time  
that three-paycheck month just right to finally catch up

or that not everyone considers more than \$50 for groceries  
extravagant  
or clips  
coupon  
after  
coupon  
that never feel like they actually help  
all that much

or feels grateful that \$11 an hour with two college degrees  
is the best pay they've ever gotten  
so what if the insurance is too expensive to afford  
it's available, at least

making too much money to get food stamps  
& too little to do anything but juggle the bills & pray  
working longer hours & more odd jobs than we ever expected  
but never thinking it's all that strange because

everyone we know  
is right here with us

sinking  
day  
by  
d  
a  
y  
.

*\*previously published in New Mirage Journal*



**Elizabeth York Dickinson**

## We Didn't Call Them Fireflies

*Christine Taylor*

Once the sun sets, the lights on top  
of the hill shine through the trees.  
During summers, we stay out  
past the time the streetlights beam  
count the lightning bugs in front yards.  
We catch them in our cupped hands,  
prayers lit up in summer darkness:  
*Let my dad get another job,*  
*let grandma's cancer disappear,*  
*let cousin Lisa stay away from drugs*  
*so she doesn't go crazy again*  
then release them into the night.

The neighborhood kids pile  
in a circle on C. B.'s lawn and point up  
at Mount St. Mary Academy--we know  
the name from the signs on the highway.  
We imagine the students sat in a big hall  
eating dinner with the headmaster  
planning to take over the world,  
not reading from books  
that still bear their parents' scribbles.  
We wish we went to school there too.

A violent storm sends ravaging rain  
that floods the barrier brook, washes  
our entire block with muddy sludge.  
We spend days hauling water  
out of basements. Once the brook recedes,  
the kids meet in the middle of the street  
to kick a softening ball  
under the streetlights.

*\*previously published in The Queen City, Broken Sleep Books 2019*

## **laid off**

*Mathew Yates*

say you wake up one day & dad's still home  
his hands ungrimed  
his truck lukewarm  
what do you do?

if the beat of his clenching jaw  
is visible even through the way  
his resting iron hand traces it up to his temple  
*don't say a word*  
if you sense tears, hug him  
hug mama regardless

say the church leaves gifts on the trailer's back porch  
a tonka truck  
a wiffle bat  
a training bra & plastic horses  
how happy should you appear?

how many cigarette butts line the path out back that Dad's been pacing for going on an hour?

if you lose count, only smile with your lips,  
if it's under five, you can play for five minutes

say you hide away one night  
to study your parents' yells  
will that help you understand?  
will anything ever make less  
sense than an empty hand?

say dad tucks you in later, gently sobbing,  
says he loves you & the clouds will pass,  
how quickly do you say it back?  
right away, but softly,  
the only way i can

## The Taming

*Christina Xiong*

At eighteen, I was wild.  
Long dark hair streaked with copper highlights,  
tanned skin—campfire smells clung to me, leaf and ash.  
*I can sleep anywhere*, I bragged, and it was true.

I slept on the grass at rest stops, on the wooden floors  
of friend's and stranger's houses.  
In cars, once for a week parked on the streets of San Diego.  
When I went to the woods, I never wanted to return.

Babylon is a figment, a fever dream, a sparkling gemstone  
you can cradle in your hand, but never own.  
*I want to live gathered*, I said after my first Rainbow Gathering.  
*I want to be present, like an animal is present, walk with no sound.*

I slept in the North Woods of Wisconsin, in a dried-out creek bed,  
dreamt of cranberry bogs, the earth sighing beneath me,  
felt footsteps of dancers who once followed the creek,  
in a time when it flowed. I told myself that I was Wendy,

tending the lost boys, boys whose socks I washed, whose tick  
bites I treated, whose oatmeal I stirred on the camp stove.  
But wasn't I another Pan, in my way? I sank beside them  
on the shores of lakes, near rivers. I opened myself, all of myself,

like the heart of a small child, *this can last forever*,  
the earth ready to receive me, ley lines like veins  
pulsing with a promise. The fire was the heart,  
the drum, stomping feet in the dried creek bed,

standing bear on the highway's shoulder,  
the hide of the deer stretched between young trees.  
Homelessness made sleeping among the thorn and sage  
of the desert less romantic, and the West Coast's rain—  
our overflowing outhouse—grimmer. Bare trees groaned  
at the root, swayed far above where I slept, covered in thin,  
nylon, tent fabric. Lighted windows I rode past made me ache.  
My wildness was tested when there was nothing left to go back to.



Christina Xiong, *Junkers*

## economy

*Mathew Yates*

standing lose  
    on the barleyhouse  
    slipping is a promise

such sheen in the rainshowers  
that dancing is ordained

how upright the weathervane seems  
twisting in the gale

go unbidden up drip or torrent  
& on up into the clouds  
    *which must mean shelter*

& capturing sunlight  
    do not ungrasp

slipping is a promise  
    even up there  
in the aftermild  
    atmosphere



Mathew Yates, *portrait of a miner*

## Knit Knotting

*F.E. Clark*

The Wifie—they call me to my face. Once  
on my knees scouring the floor  
I heard one of the grand-bairns' friends  
call me a witch, and unseen heard  
no argument from that child of my child.  
Grimness smiled in me, teeth long gone.

They save the string that comes  
machined into the tops of the feed bags.  
The first few anchoring stitches  
need to be unpicked carefully—  
click, click, click,  
they rip, from the brown paper sacks.

The men come with in handfuls of string they've saved,  
or hang the strands on a nail in the shed.  
Perfect white, soft, kinked,  
smelling richly of molasses from the calf-feed.  
I smooth them down, stroke their otherness,  
this, I knit-knot, knit-knot, knit-knot.

Cloths I make, knitted, rough and disposable.  
They do not stay perfect white for long,  
bree of muck and men and blood, stain and spoil,  
to be bleached and bleached, then burnt. Replaced  
by the next one. I knit-knot fast,  
there are always more.

Sometimes they're not careful,  
the precious string is spoilt. Farm beaten fingers too cold,  
too rough, for the unravelling of string.  
They hide the discards in the midden,  
they think I won't see the bright white in the glar.  
Who do they think cleans away their muck?

Yoked to the farm  
I sit of an evening, sucking toffees slowly,  
rationing their secret sweetness. Fiddles and reels on the wireless.  
All fed, all watered, table set for breakfast, clothes laid out.  
Knit-knotting the next cloth, I cannot stop, cannot sit idle,  
if I did—we'd all unravel.

**redneck sketch**  
*Mathew Yates*

becoming the gravel road  
you walk upon

the crushed muscadines  
between your toes

the trailer's tin roof  
rattling in a rainstorm

the way people eat  
while the food is warm

is it normal to sometimes crave  
the baptist god & bologna sandwiches?

you could sleep all week  
& never dream like a redneck

become the old river  
but never flow so free

is it something in the way  
people understand the word *have*

or a matter of the way  
they understand *be*

**G.R.I.T.S**  
**(Girls Raised in The South)**  
*Allie Marini*

I want to say a prayer for all the GRITS,  
you girls raised in the South,  
who came up in the trailer park with dreams bigger than a doublewide—  
saddled with the names your mommas gave you  
to mark the wide open spaces they themselves will never see:  
names like Savannah, Sierra—  
with a backwoods “Lynn” tacked onto the end to tether them to  
the one-stoplight towns that are always blinking red,  
because girls like us,  
we weren’t meant to make a break for it.

Let this prayer reach you, Tami-Lynn, & you too,  
Misty, Amber & Crystal,  
named for all the beauty denied you by the food stamps & F-schools,  
all those dead-ends cast out like a net on the day you were born,  
drawing up tighter, and you:  
leaping out of the water like a mullet, caught up in the nylon webbing,  
trying to breathe in the air as your gills gasped at the hurt of it.

I'm bending at the knee for all the dishwater blonde Dakotas & Kelsies,  
who learn to make biscuits & sweet tea before they learn to read or add,  
because everything in the trailer park is a trap,  
designed to keep you poor,  
                    keep you scared  
                    keep you ignorant & pregnant—

These words are for all the Beckys & the ground-in pit stains on the hand-me-downs  
from your sisters & cousins, & their wish that one day, if you can finally afford  
*Nice Things*  
that you'll give all those *Nice Things*  
that you can't have right now to people just like you.

This prayer is for you, Madison & Taylor,  
because when your hips started to spread  
& your breasts ripened like little apples,  
you had a whole different set of obstacles than just wanting to get out—

For the Kylies & Shawnas,  
the girls who kept your knees closed—not because of Jesus—

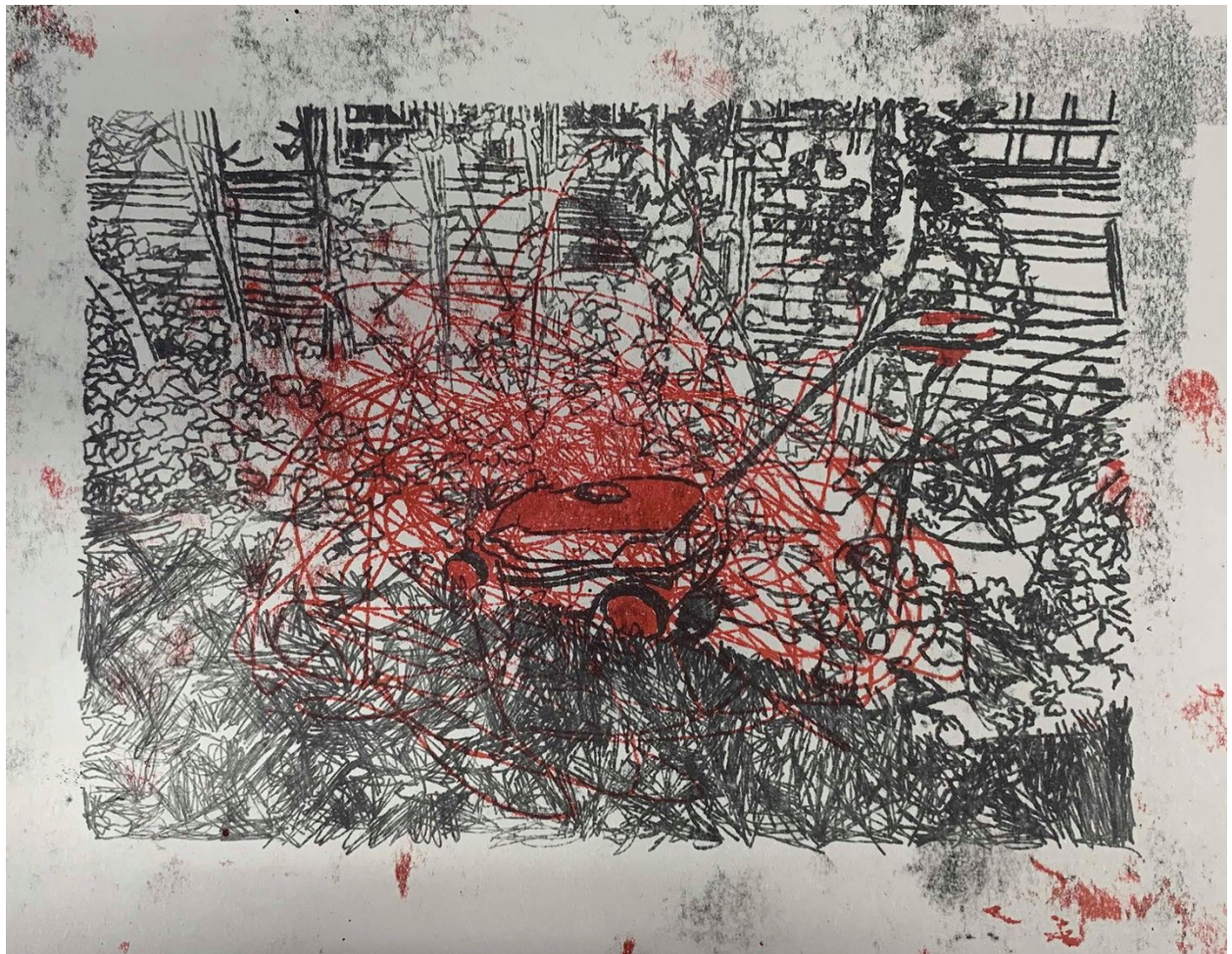


## On the Block: An Elegy

*Christine Taylor*

Back in the day, we pedal Big Wheels,  
the streamers flapping, until the pavement  
bores holes into black plastic tires.  
We chase lightning bugs through front yards,  
catch them in our hands, let them crawl  
to the tips of our fingers. We never  
put them into glass jars.  
We play hide-and-seek by the rules:  
no sneaking into backyards,  
no touching the neighbors' cars.  
Chay cuts her arm on a nail under a porch,  
so we rule that out too.  
We trip on groundhog holes  
cut each other's bangs  
serve up the dozens  
fish minnows in tin cans from the brook.  
We make the boys jump double dutch.  
Down on the corner of Academy and Front,  
we find little plastic baggies  
next to the house with the high brown fence.  
We don't touch them.  
A car does 40 up the block, hooks  
into a driveway down the street.  
The girl next door  
bounces a basketball,  
the net from the hoop is gone.

*\*previously published in The Queen City, Broken Sleep Books 2019*



April Rose Brazowski, *Weather Worn*

**You have a bike but**  
*Roppotucha Greenberg*

You can't live in a bike,  
You crank up your saddle, but it's no property ladder.  
I'm freewheeling with worry, for  
You dangle too close to the traffic,  
And the puddles leap into your pockets.  
You swaddle puddles all day, full of diesel and pink-blown blossoms.  
But you plan to sell tea.  
Victims of frozen rain  
Will get served at bus-stops, hard-shoulders.  
Cups of guerrilla tea  
You'll deliver and make good money.  
At night, you say, starlight will squeeze through the spokes,  
Or you'll spin it till raindrops scatter  
And, reflecting the city lights, turn into fireworks  
And they'll gather to see the marvel around your spin-sleeping form.

## lost & found

*Constance Schultz*

have you ever been lost  
in the city  
so far away from everything

lost in the city  
at night  
no quarters &  
no one to call  
if you did  
no one & it's dark  
'cept for lights  
left on all night  
to scare away thieves  
but you're lost

not even the moon comes out  
& it's city  
but houses  
are far apart  
& where is that  
(phone booth)

everything

w/people & buildings  
squeezing you  
afraid to ride a bus &

you have to walk &  
you do  
you walk &

go even farther away  
& wait even longer  
& the driver doesn't want  
to chat

the people are looking  
at their shoes

you find your way

back because  
you are good at that  
& what then

*\*previously published in Rising Phoenix Review*

## Linden Way

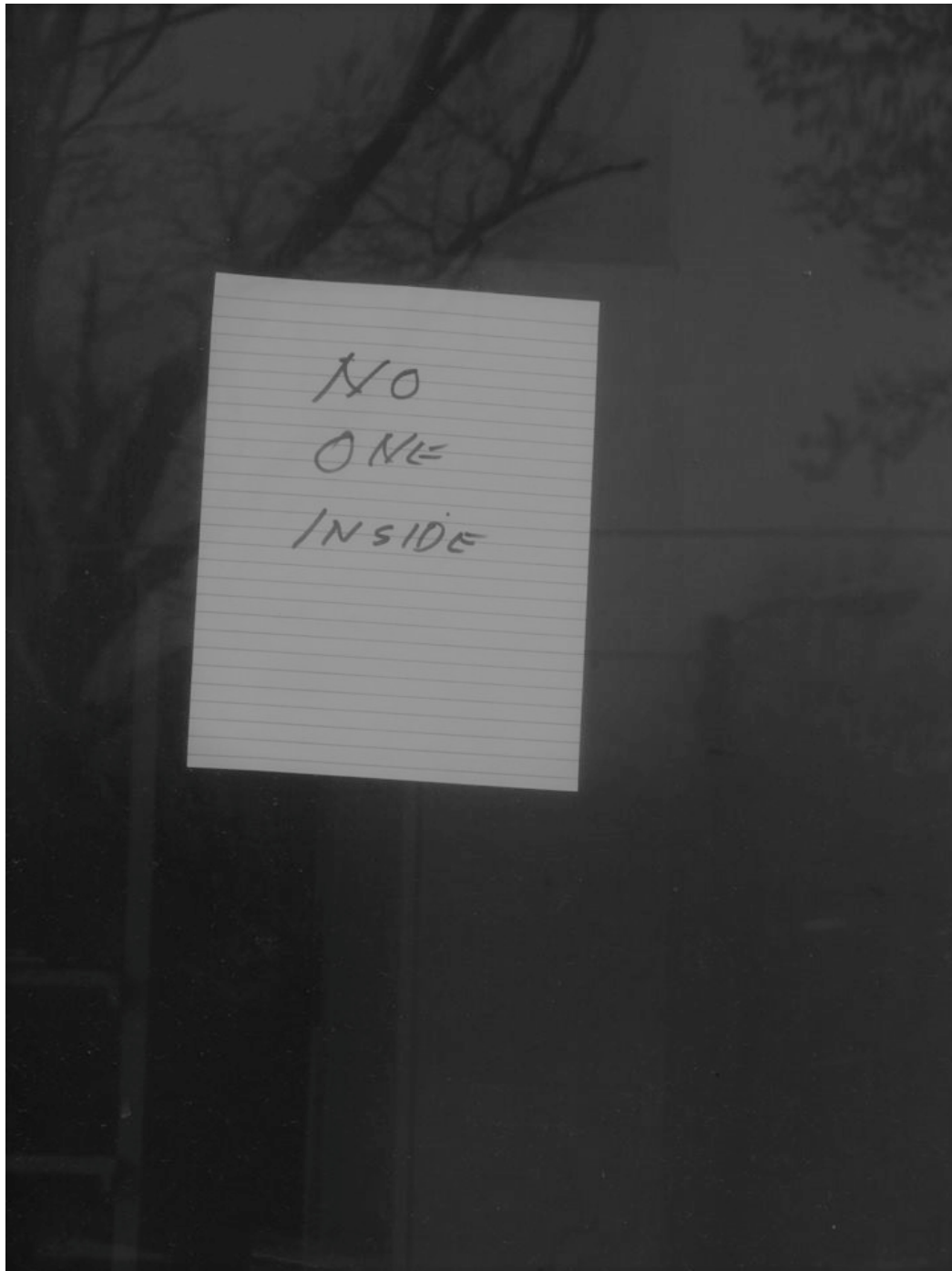
*Jeremy Gaulke*

the neighborhood  
was the shadow  
of trees  
cast on republican hollows  
and every insatiable lawn.

a man who called himself 'sheriff' stopped me  
my face just dark enough in the summer  
to make walking his road a crime

a book of matches  
was the only kind  
that could've made a difference there

*\*previously published in What the Master Does Not Speak Of (The Temple Inc., 2009)*



Christina Xiong, *No One Inside*

**after the plasma center**  
*Constance Schultz*

after the plasma center  
people roam the sidewalk

unpredictable  
unpredictable

dance  
in rain  
up

hill always  
an uphill climb  
to an old apartment

where everyone shares  
the bathroom at the end  
of the hall

& share the phone  
w/it's messages

& it smells  
like they spray for roaches  
once a month they do

don't look  
men in the eye

don't smile at them  
they think *easy prey*

don't look  
directly  
at them

& know where you are

## **& I'm rent asunder**

*Samuel J. Fox*

& I'm rent asunder by the way this city remembers to show its flesh by the way two men hold hands as they walk next to the university clock tower despite the truck toting a Confederate flag like an anchor to the past & I'm rent asunder at my own wreckage motley and crew cut homeless with an appetite for freedom for who has not wanted to make everything touchable their home I walk the main street and for the first time in what feels like God was present I find myself smiling half naked drenched in the slow crescendo of the rain how it falls like coins at my feet before it is soaked into the thirsty soil & I have lived a thousand deaths before this one miniature fugues half-garnished eulogies and now I am writing a psalm behind these eyes letting the light in knowing that home is not a house nor a cot in a car but a mindset of stopping to greet strangers stopping to watch the gardenias sway in the wind stopping to review this only world we have and wanting to be alive in it

## Freya In Poverty

Kyla Houbolt

***"If someone comes along and starts talking, quietly shoo them away, you're busy, you're a poet with a penny in your mouth...." – CA Conrad***

in the city it is slightly cold in the morning, the sky clear with small floating clouds  
in the morning the imagination is slightly cold and cloudy with unremembered dreams  
in the dreams the memory is slightly cold, as though shivering but not enough to wake you  
in poverty it is slightly cold on the mornings of no dreams or sleep, sometimes more than slightly  
with no pennies to add to anything, the cold becomes a sort of friend in its slightly cloudy imagination  
of the pennies that are elsewhere than in your pocket or the small fountain in front of the chilly park bench  
who are slightly cold and sometimes freezing because some of them are in Iceland or New York winter  
where pennies are nearly useless but for their potential conductivity of venusian current and also  
idea of love as a form of poverty which is slightly cold but has a skin like the skin of an orange  
peel it and inside it may be slightly cold there also however the flesh is both sweet and tart  
on the tongue and being slightly poor but a poet you wish you had an orange or even a  
small sandwich even a slightly cold one or slightly stale and you know pennies are  
truly useless and it takes so many of them to buy a sandwich even a slightly cold  
or stale one they would weigh you down til your knees touch the slightly cold  
ground which is currently safely under your feet and the penny that you do  
have is not enough to run even the slightest current of venusian fire to  
warm you let alone buy you a slightly cold slightly stale sandwich  
and though it is slightly cold you know if a poet sings to you  
the pennies will listen and sing a call and response in  
their own language which is slightly cold but also  
full of poetry, poverty, love, and goddesses.

*\*previously published in Neologism Poetry, Issue #22, March 2019*

## dine & dash

*Barnaby Smith*

'Poverty has brought about a stretching of frontiers that mirrors the most radiant freedom of thought.'

– Walter Benjamin

the cable company doesn't care about that  
neighbourhood – not even in cold early evening  
light when ball physics level out tempers & red  
plastics on wheels split puddles & dusk

\*

the A380 passes over town schematas; in nervous  
cahoots mother & boy point out of our universe,  
point out our universe, & their polyphony of needs  
dissolves into the calm sultry atmosphere of people  
coming home from work

\*

streetside interiors coveting food behind glass  
(unthinkable inwardness), a test of civic cupidity,  
the porous space of stairwell carnivalesque bringing  
its release – & so the happy life is joy in truth pulled  
from words & wallets, ringfenced & tickled pink

\*

time of year for mould in thin dusty homes &

courage to stay in one place; dust gathers on reams  
of receipts she holds close – in that neighbourhood  
summer thoughts in winter collect themselves  
to renew the blind faith of the block



Stuart Buck, *this is what you'll get if you mess with us*

## Sticky Fingers

*Chad Musick*

Hunger and I long, two fast companions,  
lean against bare trees, hopeful of fallen leavings.  
Sharply ribbed, lingering and lazing at the mall,  
cops are called to oust our malingering and malaise.

We only wanted back what was stolen,  
but there are no returns and no refunds on childhood.

We are pigs after truffles, leashed and choked,  
our discovery provokes our restraint.  
We are all sticky fingers and thin branchy arms,  
a slap dash of loose teeth fallen on barren soil.

We hear them when they say,  
let us bring them to heel,  
grind them to bone meal under foot.

We mumble pray wheeze over bloody crumbled teeth,  
may our aspirations sprout to rice to oat to wheat,  
oh let us catch the grains against our gums  
before they're plucked from us, ripe and clean  
like more promises to be broken.

## what even is breakfast?

*Ada Pelonia*

you see, living is costly.  
we can't even afford to tape  
the cracks on the ceiling or  
breathe without the rancid  
musk of a week-long viand in  
the refrigerator getting stuck  
in my nostrils because my  
family wants it to last longer  
/for some thrifty reasons/

nearing expiration dates don't  
give much scare to me. mothers  
know too well more than those  
manufacturers to tell me that  
what's food is food /not until  
termites and flees flock in  
the can when you open it/

days are counted either with  
a shiver or a sizzling bombard of  
questions like "what would we  
eat tomorrow?" or "would there  
be anything to eat?" and more of  
these to follow

you see  
living is costly  
when every night, with a slightest  
tinge of hope, you stare at the  
vast sky and wish that  
"in my next life, i hope it won't be"

## Rice & Black Beans

*Jane Fleming*

I made  
rice and black beans  
for dinner tonight  
    and four nights after,  
the beans percolating in uncooked  
    soft white;  
like tiny grains of down I dream  
of each night;  
    and I fill it with cheese,  
if I'm lucky and meat  
if I'm lucky too  
to meet you with this bowl of  
filled stomach cavities and pink  
slimy hearts, beating  
wildly from blue pills I hope will make  
me  
less hungry.

    And sometimes they do,  
But the jokes on you  
because I made rice and beans  
with onions for two dollars tonight  
    and four nights after.

**eat yourself warm**  
*Rebecca Kokitus*

eat yourself warm—  
your stomach is a  
wound, licked raw

January is a tape-  
worm, ravaging your  
flannel insides

swollen with sodium  
and manmade disease,  
chipped fingernails and

chipped teeth—you  
are soft and callous  
all at once,

eating too fast  
because you grew up  
hungry

## Hungry-Fat

*Christina Xiong*

I was fat and I was hungry. Coworkers noticed I never ate during my shift, ordered cheese pizza, handed me a slice wrapped in a greasy napkin, or bought a honeybun—tossed it onto the counter. Even the Lay's vendor knew to wait for my shift alone, spreading out bags of expired chips on the floor, mostly off flavors—Ketchup, Dill Pickle, Salt and Vinegar—meals for a week—stripping enamel from my teeth.

Scavenging change for a Filet-O-Fish sandwich—calories to last the day. I swayed, sometimes, with hunger, even when I got a free Icee from the machine, or sucked on a menthol Tahoe to stave stomach-pangs. I chose nicotine over nourishment, selling the few valuables I retained from my broken marriage. Drinking well water from the tap, driving once a month to the food bank, admitting, red-faced, that I didn't eat meat, other than fish. Free tuna and beans. Mac-n-cheese. Chocolate cereal. All of my neuroses, my disordered eating—contamination—contamination fears forgotten. Pushed down into the empty well of my stomach. Poison still filled the gnawing void at my center.

My hair fell out in clumps, but my skin glowed, translucent, my eyes were clear. Men read the hunger in my eyes like an invitation, tasted stomach acid and tears in my kiss. Held out cans of vegetables like foreplay or payment. Sensed me drifting from their beds and offered to let me use their food stamp allotment next month—the full \$200 because they had no job. They knew mine was \$16 per month. I got coffee with EBT, rationing it, and a tub of peanut butter for the month. If I told anyone about the forty pounds I'd lost, they'd say *Oh! That's great.* Because I was *still* fat. I told them *It's because I can't afford to eat.* Silence.

One of my managers handed me a compact King James Bible—leather-bound—with a fifty-dollar Wal-Mart gift-card tucked inside. *Food for your body and your spirit*, those were his words. When I didn't walk up to the pulpit to get saved at his Baptist church, he stopped speaking to me. I used the gift-card to make gallons of lentil soup—carrots, onions, celery, garlic, stock. I bought in-season strawberries, ate them slow, slow, lying naked in bed with one of the men who fed me. I had never tasted anything so sweet. When I had enough money to feed myself regularly, again, I stopped eating strawberries. I slept alone.

## supper

*Mathew Yates*

there are few ways to skin a squirrel  
but dozens of ways to cook em

me & Dad preferred fried  
with gravy, mashed taters, & biscuits,  
my brother Bobby liked barbecued,  
Granny made chili or stew

in the early 70's,  
when Dad's mountain heart loved,  
above all, Daniel Boone & rifles,  
& money post-divorce was sparse,  
Granny would challenge  
her little backwoodsman  
to shoot & clean as many  
squirrels as he could,

never letting on  
that without it they had  
no meat to eat that week –  
i still wonder if really he knew

there are so many ways to divulge a truth  
but twice as many ways not to

# Forty-Six Years of Hunger

*Oliver Orestes Cato*

trickling

from a place in the back of my head

finally expression  
folds of secrecy  
lofty incense borne

beseechment

duplicity

surface: blank indifference  
a question of sadism  
parades of empty spectacle

hands scarred and bleeding  
sweat salt protein spent  
a caloric economy

barred  
present again  
and again

I sit in a wire chair in the backyard and share sunshine with ants

## Moiety

*Laurie Koensgen*

I am not a lichen  
who subsists on the invisible.  
What made you think  
that I could drink the air?

Give me half  
of your ripened fruit.  
Give me proof  
you see my need.

Take the orange sun,  
as it slips into the river—  
that ice-fed element  
suffused with flame.

I want some of your liniment  
to soothe these cold blue veins.



Mirabai Scholz

for hate

*Jeremy Gaulke*

1

in america  
there's room for all of us  
to hate someone

the ones who don't  
are really the most dangerous

as the emperor yawns  
to fill his mug with blood and sand

2

there are human  
beings that have too  
much of themselves  
invested in organized misery

orphans who should have  
been drowned in the muddy puddles  
of the flooded streets of gated communities

but no one  
will say that  
without laughing

*\*previously published in What the Master Does Not Speak Of (The Temple Inc., 2009)*

# The Smiting of Wyatt Stupid Face

## *Maggie Dove*

Everyone in my neighborhood growing up was poor - without exception. Even the ones we considered pretty well-off at the time were still dirt-poor by middle class standards.

“Pretty well-off” meant that they had less than three broken-down major appliances in the yard. I think everyone in the neighborhood must have just been optimists, and thought, “Throw this thing away? Heck no! Someday, I’ll fix that old rusted out refrigerator that’s full of spoiled meat and maggots. Let’s just move it out to the yard for now!”

While we were all poor, none of us kids were willing to admit it. Most adults who are poor are the first ones to tell you, “I’m poor - and it sucks. Please tell me what to do so that I can stop being poor.”

Kids? Oh no. None of *us* were poor - at least not as poor as that *other* kid.

I started to notice it around the second grade, when some of the poor kids would come in wearing designer clothes, and they would act like they were so cool with their London Fog jackets and Jordache jeans, walking around like they owned the playground, and making fun of you in your shitty no-name jeans.

You’d respond to their taunts by saying, “Wait a minute - didn’t I just see your mom pushing her car down the street to start it this morning? And I’m pretty sure I saw her boyfriend passed out drunk on the lawn last night with a pile of Steel Reserve cans all around him.”

No, that’s what you *wish* you had said.

What you really said was, “I need Jordache jeans!!!” when your mom came trudging home from work later that night, wrung out like a rag from having to work 24-hour shifts at the hospital to barely keep a roof over your head.

Then she would say, “And I need a man with a bag of money - who’s also turned on by stretch marks. What can I tell you, kid? Life ain’t fair.”

Then you’d freak out for around two minutes, she would ignore it, and then you’d go back to eating your store-brand Manwich on white bread and watching the latest Barbara Mandrell special on TV, while trying but failing to not pick at your impetigo scabs with Cheeto-stained fingers.

Jordache Kid would come in every week wearing something new, regaling everyone in the class with how expensive it was, and how *they* didn't shop at Kmart like everyone else, as they handed over their free lunch ticket to the cafeteria lady.

Then you would say, "You do realize that you just made fun of me for being poor and then immediately handed over your free lunch ticket to the cafeteria lady, right?"

No, that's what you *wish* you had said.

What you really said was, "I can't be seen in Kmart!!!!" to your exhausted mother any time she needed to go into Kmart.

You had to give Kmart some credit here. They really tried and it was actually a pretty great store. Kmart had a toy section, a solid selection of gumball machines at the front of the store, and an Icee counter where they sold popcorn, too. You would think that would be enough to make it worth being seen in there as a kid. Nope. Still not enough incentive. Nothing was worth being seen within its walls. If someone saw you there, your life was over.

Granted, as most parents would point out when you resisted Kmart, if someone saw you there, it would mean they were *also* in Kmart, so it should have been an equal smiting, but that didn't matter. The person who saw you there would always invariably say that they were just there because their dad was buying fishing tackle or something. That was the only socially acceptable reason to be at Kmart. Plus they had a dad at home, which was like having a unicorn - more often than not a drunk unicorn, but still. A dad living in your home was rare. Most of the dads lived in one-bedroom apartments on the other side of town with their new girlfriends.

It never occurred to me to say, "Well, at least my family doesn't have to pull its dinner out of the canal down the street. Good luck with the rubber leeches."

That's because they might have come back with, "Oh yeah? Well at least my family didn't get Thanksgiving dinner from the food bank!"

Then they'd have you, because there was a strange hierarchy among us poors.

If you got food from the food bank, you were ridiculed.

If you had to fish from the canal for your dinner, nobody cared.

If you were on food stamps, ridiculed.

If you were on free lunch, nobody cared.

Medicaid? Fine.

Section 8 housing? Ridiculed.

If you thought it was perfectly acceptable to walk around the Winn-Dixie grocery store barefoot and eating Vienna sausages with your dirty fingers straight out of the can, you fit riiiiight in. You might even attract jealous onlookers who would be like, "Check out this motherfucker with the fancy Vienna sausages. Somebody's mom must have gotten that sweet tax return money!"

I wish I had an explanation for any of this besides "kids are exceptionally good at punching down", or the more vulgar and to the point, "kids are stupid assholes". It didn't matter that we were all from the same underclass. There was always somebody perceived to be of even lower social standing, and lord knows people love to have someone to subjugate.

Speaking of stupid assholes, there was a guy a few streets over named Wyatt, and I hated him so much that the thought of his face still makes me angry even today. I'll call him Wyatt Stupid Face, because his anonymity or whatever, but mostly because his face was *stupid*. He was 11 years old, had a tomcat head with a kid body, and he was a fucking *jerk*. If he wasn't pulling wrestling moves on kindergarten girls, stretching their little girl bodies backwards over his knee while they screamed and cried while he yelled, "It's the back-breaker! Tanya's taking a lot of punishment in the ring!" then he was throwing rocks at baby ducks and laughing. This kid was pure evil. You just know he grew up to be something disgusting and irredeemable, like a serial killer or a Hollywood movie mogul.

Wyatt made fun of me relentlessly for being poor and used to tell everyone in class that my house had a kickstand because it was so ramshackle. He wasn't wrong. With caved-in, moldy ceilings, collapsed tile walls in the bathroom, and a healthy, well-regulated militia of cockroaches regularly climbing up the walls, it could have used a kickstand, but Wyatt didn't need to go around telling everybody about it. His house was just as shitty as mine. He used to tell a "hilarious" yo' mama joke he made up about how he saw my mother kicking a can down the street one night, and when he asked her what she was doing, she said, "Moving!"

Oh you're so funny, Wyatt! Like nobody's ever heard that one before. Dick.

He had seen me in Kmart one day and then, of course, proceeded to tell everyone in school about the next day. I was inundated with taunts about "Blue Light Specials" and "What does Maggie say when she flies over Kmart? Cheep cheep cheep!"

Then you would say, "That's not even a good joke. Why exactly would *I* be flying over Kmart, you morons? The joke is what does a *bird* say. What does a *bird* say."

No, that's what you *wish* you had said.

What you really said was, "Leave me alone!" and then erupted into tears until you had an asthma attack, and then went and hid in the school nurse's office. She would check you for lice upon entry merely "as a precaution" and also because you had lice two times previously. She would say, "Is your head itchy?" and you would always say no because even though we all had lice, nobody was ever willing to admit that they were the one who brought it in.

Anytime anyone came down with lice, it would inevitably turn into a he said/she said scenario with a lot of back and forth of, "Oh, I may have lice, but only because YOU gave it to me! You're the licehead!"

Trying to figure out who Patient Zero was with regard to lice was like trying to figure out where Jimmy Hoffa was buried. Obviously, somebody had to have brought the lice in, but nobody was ever going to cop to it. If you were the first one to show up with it, you would be ridiculed for the rest of your life over it. To this day, there are certain kids from my old neighborhood, who are now in their 40s, who other people still refer to as "Licehead" when they start talking about the old days.

The first time I got lice was in the first grade, and it turned out ten other kids had already been pulled from class for it. Whew! I was lucky. That meant I couldn't be accused of being Patient Zero. The second time I had lice was in the fourth grade, but it seemed nobody else had come down with it yet, so I spent weeks and weeks hiding it from everyone so that they wouldn't think I was Patient Zero.

I threw everyone off my trail by coming up with a perfect little comedy skit I called "I Don't Have Lice" where I would scratch ferociously at my head, all around in swirling circles for a solid thirty seconds or so, good and hard, too. As I would do this, scratching at the actual lice that were devouring my scalp, I would make a wacky face and say in a fake English accent, "I don't have liiiiiiice! Ha ha ha ha!"

It was the perfect cover. Everybody bought it. I would fall asleep at night, head all a' tingle with crawling bugs, and think about how incredibly clever I was that I had pulled off yet another day of being infested with lice while thoroughly convincing everybody that I wasn't. People usually got a laugh out of my little skit, too, so *double* clever for me. I wasn't just the girl who didn't have lice. I was the *funny* girl who didn't have lice, thank you very much. My plan was foolproof. I couldn't believe I didn't already have my own talk show, or hadn't been approached by the CIA to be a child spy.

By the time I got found out, after emerging from my friend's bedroom with a louse on my forehead that was so big that my friend's mother saw it from across the dinner table, everyone else was already infested, too. It could never be traced back to me. I was no Patient Zero. I was a criminal mastermind.

I was such a criminal mastermind, as a matter of fact, that I even figured out a way to smite Wyatt Stupid Face using Kmart as a finely-tuned weapon.

At any given time, it was guaranteed that somebody from our neighborhood or school would be shopping at Kmart. I, of course, did not go in there anymore, because of stupid Wyatt and his stupid face, and instead of going into the store, I would stay in the car with no air-conditioning and hide on the floorboard, sweating buckets, until my mother was done shopping in there.

One time when she came out from the store, I asked if she saw anyone we knew, and she named a few people I knew from school. As we drove home, I was struck with the greatest evil plan that I had ever come up with. More evil than my "I Don't Have Lice" skit, if you can believe it.

When we got home, I pulled the phone book out from under the broken table leg it was supporting, and looked up the number for Kmart. I dialed the phone, and when the lady at the service desk answered, I put on my best fake adult voice and said:

"Hi, I'm wondering if you can page someone for me. I think he's still in the store. His name is Wyatt. Wyatt Stupid Face." (Okay, I used his real name with the service desk lady.)

She said, "Sure, no problem!" and set the phone down for a second.

I heard some rustling sounds, and then I heard the distinctly metal-tinged treble that only an overhead store public announcement system can make as she said, "Paging Wyatt Stupid Face. Wyatt Stupid Face, please come to the service desk."

The deed was done. Now everybody who was in Kmart right at that moment thought Wyatt Stupid Face was there. It didn't matter if he were actually there or not. I had placed him in Kmart without having to ever set foot in the store myself. I laughed and laughed an evil, maniacal laugh. Oh, Wyatt Stupid Face. Your time had come, and now you were paying the Kmart fiddler, you stupid jerkface asshole.

I had Wyatt Stupid Face paged three or four times a week after that, making sure I got a different person on the phone every time so that they wouldn't catch on. I did this all the way through summer. I don't actually know if anything ever came of it in the way of people making fun of him for it, but I slept better at night knowing that the possibility was out there. That he was walking into class in summer school, and some asshole just like him was pointing at him and saying, "What does Wyatt Stupid Face say when he flies over Kmart?"

Burn in hell, Wyatt Stupid Face. Burn in hell.

## What Stays and What Comes

*Anonymous*

I'm nine, maybe ten, when I first hear Papa say that he only has about a hundred dirhams – roughly twenty-seven dollars – on him. I watch him reach into his pocket and pull out a few bills. He fingers through them again and again, as if willing more to appear, as if allowing the shock to sink in a bit more with each count. It is daytime, I think. We are sitting in Mamma and Papa's room where the lights are all turned off for no particular reason. In hindsight, this seemingly random, innocent detail carries the heavy undercurrent of foreboding.

Later that year, Ms. Grant asks us to draw a picture of what we imagine our summer vacation will look like. When my friend asks where I'm going – or maybe she doesn't ask and I simply volunteer to inform her – I say, very proudly, very smugly: Niagara Falls.

When I get home, I show Papa my drawing. I dangle it in front of him, wave it back and forth. I point out the green grass and the Faber Castell blue sky and the lighter blue waterfall and the V-shaped birds. I use my best childlike voice, a sing-song rise and fall. *Pa-pa, loOK!* I try to make my excitement palpable, my eagerness pronounced so Papa can see what is at stake – my pure, unpolluted, wide-eyed hope – and especially so he can be guilted into telling me once and for all what I have already begun to suspect: we aren't going to Niagara Falls this summer. We aren't going anywhere at all.

When I hold my drawing out to him, it is not so much to show it off as to offer a reminder: Papa, we're going on vacation this summer. And to seek reassurance: Papa, we *are* going on vacation this summer, right?

We don't.

\*

Poverty never appears as p-o-v-e-r-t-y. There's too much clarity in a label, too much richness. Poverty has no protocol: it doesn't arrive with formal introductions, never announces itself at the door. No, more like: when you start to become a bystander to your own life as it unravels before you; when you watch the universe peel and prise away so much from you – money, clothes, food, respect, sanity; when you become for others an aimless blot on the margins – unnecessary, unwanted, a nuisance – only then do you get the wordless insinuation that your life has become unsustainable, unlivable.

Names come later although I don't know when. I don't know when I first accepted that the patterns of my family's lives went by a clear, three-syllable

name – not that I didn't know it earlier. I think a part of me was – still is – just ashamed of owning it.

What I do know is that when I begin to accept the label, it comes as a relief. Having recourse to a label can be cathartic, therapeutic even. It helps you make sense of insanity. It helps you categorize, organize, put things in a box, give the box a label. It gives you the perspective to stand back and notice patterns. One such pattern I notice: my experience of 'poverty' came with a hefty price in the form of pity – not just the ritual, often voyeuristic pity of others but the pity I felt for myself. Ever since things had taken a hit for Papa's work, self-pity made me feel safe. Casting myself as a victim, raging with bitterness and resentment for a world that hadn't done my family justice became my default response. Through the everyday madness, self-pity promised a degree of consistency.

Once I noticed the pattern, I could begin to undo it. Turns out that self-pity – this self-righteous sense of having been wronged – robs you of the little agency and control left over after poverty has plundered the rest. You become resigned to life as it is and, in doing so, you suffocate your imagination; you dwell so much on how things *are*, you forget to dream about how they *could* be.

A few months ago, a teacher and I were talking about the future, about life, specifically my plans for college. I told her I was nervous, scared even that I wouldn't be able to afford to go to a good college. She said, "You know everything doesn't have to be a rocking boat?"

I *didn't* know, actually. In the past few years, it had never occurred to me to think differently. I had never thought that maybe the universe wasn't conspiring against me, maybe life could turn out in my favor – and more than that, even if it didn't turn out well, I was still in control of my life and my narrative and I could do my best to turn things around. If I couldn't afford a good university, I'd look up aid options; I'd work harder and harder till I qualified for a good package – maybe even a loan-free scholarship. Poverty takes so much away from you. But sometimes, it leaves you with perspective.

Another pattern I notice: poverty – like the rest of life – is happiness and horror coexisting, making peace. It is a mirror held up to the minute, mundane, nonmaterial beauty tucked into the folds of everyday life. It is staying up into the morning out of anxiety for what the next day, week, month holds but being calmed and soothed by the sunrise. Yes, it is growling and aching hunger, a fridge with Tobasco sauce and old cheese, but it is also the time after, when you eat and feel the onrush of taste and flavor on your tongue, down your throat. Yes, it is being ghosted by friends and family but it is also the random, spontaneous kindness of strangers. It is the barista who genuinely wants to know you're doing good today, thank you. It is the landlord who is lenient and the principal who pushes hard year after year to keep you in school.

Poverty is also tragicomedy. It is laughing with others at your shared fate. It is comparing the cards you've all been dealt and finding they're the same bloody ones. It is standing in a high-end supermarket and chuckling that a single \$5 pot of Greek yogurt counts for a 'low-cost meal'. It is reminiscing on the long train of friends who once were and marveling at their cowardice. It is remembering how dramatic fourth-grade-you was about missing out on a vacation, such a low bar for loss. It is feeling your bitterness diffuse, your burden lift, your camaraderie solidify with every fit of laughter. And sometimes, it is also watching that laughter trail off into stunned silence when it hits you that you're laughing now, but it wasn't funny then.

Poverty, once you accept the fact of it, is mourning what is lost. But it is also being simultaneously grateful – breathtakingly, unbelievably, shiveringly grateful – for the old that stays and the new that comes: life, love, laughter and perspective.



Lettie Jane Rennekamp, *YOU ARE ENOUGH*

## ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

**Marvin Gonzalez** is a writer and a born and raised New Yorker. You can find him on Instagram at @absolvtism and Twitter at @latinovela.

**Joaquin Fernandez** is a recovering filmmaker and Miami native perpetually drifting west like an errant rain cloud and tinkering with his first novel. His fiction has appeared in *Okay Donkey*, *Cotton Xenomorph*, *Rhythm and Bones* among others. He's been an editor for *AFTERMATH: Explorations Of Loss And Grief* and a reader for Radix Media's Futures series. He's also been nominated for a 2018 Pushcart Prize as well as a Best Small Fiction Prize. His first chapbook, *A Beginners Guide*, comes out this spring and he can be found on Twitter @Joaqertxranger.

**Savannah Slone** is a writer, editor, and English professor who currently dwells in the Pacific Northwest. Her poetry and short fiction has appeared in or will soon appear in *Paper Darts*, *The Indianapolis Review*, *Glass: A Poetry Journal*, *Crab Creek Review*, *FIVE:2:ONE*, *Pidgeonholes*, *decomp magazinE*, *Crab Fat Magazine*, *Drunk Monkeys*, *Pithead Chapel*, *Hobart Pulp*, and elsewhere. She is the Editor-in-Chief of *Homology Lit* and the author of *Hearing the Underwater* (Finishing Line Press, 2019). She enjoys reading, knitting, hiking, and discussing intersectional feminism. You can read more of her work at [www.savannahslonewriter.com](http://www.savannahslonewriter.com).

**Allie Marini** is a cross-genre Southern writer. In addition to her work on the page, Allie was a 2017 Oakland Poetry Slam team member & writes poetry, fiction, essays, performing in the Bay Area, where as a native Floridian, she is always cold. Find her online: [www.alliemarini.com](http://www.alliemarini.com) or @kiddeternity.

**Elizabeth York Dickinson** received her MFA in writing from Sarah Lawrence College. Her poetry and photography are published or forthcoming in *Gravel*, *Foliage Oak*, *Kissing Dynamite*, *Royal Rose*, *Ghost City Press*, *Riggwelter* and *Ink in Thirds*, among others. She currently resides in Evanston, Illinois. Follow her on Twitter @aworldwanderer.

**Christine Taylor** identifies as multiracial and is an English teacher and librarian residing in her hometown Plainfield, New Jersey. She is the author of *The Queen City* (Broken Sleep Books, 2019). Christine has been nominated for the Pushcart Prize, and her work appears in *Glass*, *Turtle Island Responds*, *Haibun Today*, and *The Rumpus* among others. Right now, she's probably covered in cat hair and drinking a martini. Visit her at [www.christinetayloronline.com](http://www.christinetayloronline.com).

**Mathew Yates** is a queer, disabled poet and artist from Kentucky. His work can be found in *Barren Magazine*, *Kissing Dynamite Poetry*, *Human/Kind Journal*, *Epigraph Magazine*, *Rhythm & Bones Lit*, and others.

**Christina Xiong** is the author of *The Gathering Song* (Finishing Line Press 2018). Christina's work has appeared in *Cotton Xenomorph*, *Brave Voices Magazine*, *Rose Quartz Magazine*, and others. Her micro-chapbook, *Ghost Monogamies*, is forthcoming in *Ghost City Press's* 2019 Summer Series. Christina holds an MA in English and Creative Writing from Southern New Hampshire University and a BA in Literature and Creative Writing from the University of North Carolina at Asheville. She is a Certified Story Medicine facilitator. She lives in the foothills of Western North Carolina with her family. She Tweets @AzureXiong.

**F. E. Clark** lives in Scotland. She writes, paints, and takes photographs—inspired by nature in all its forms. A Pushcart, Best of the Net, and Best Small Fictions nominee, her poetry, flash-fiction, and short stories can be found in anthologies and literary magazines.

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**April Rose Brazowski** is a visual artist from the UK. She is twenty-two years old and currently completing an Art Foundation Diploma course, and plans to earn a degree from the University of Brighton. You can find her on Instagram at @illusorygoddess.

**Roppotucha Greenberg's** stories have appeared or are forthcoming in *Noon* (Arachne Press 2019), *Elephants Never*, *101 Fiction*, *Former Cactus*, *TSS Publishing*, *Ellipsis Zine*, *Twist in Time*, *The Mojave Heart Review*, *Enchanted Zine*, *Honey and Lime Lit Mag*, *Moonchild Magazine*, *The Cabinet of Heed*, *Five:2:One* and *The Forge Literary Magazine*. She lives in Ireland and doodles creatures. Her recent creature book, *Creatures Give Advice*, is out on Amazon. Web: <https://roppotucha.blogspot.com>

**Constance Schultz** (she/her) is an author from a wonderfully small town in the Pacific Northwest. She has been broke and sometimes not so much. Recently she has been training with her daughter to run in Bloomsday. Ms. Schultz has writing in *SWWIM*, *Black Bough Poetry*, *Euphony*, *Peregrine* and *Sobotka Literary Review*. She is lucky enough to have work forthcoming in *Wire Harp*.

**Jeremy Gaulke** is an illustrator, bookmaker, and writer. He is also the editor and founder of APEP Publications, an imprint that produces hand-made zines, chapbooks, and experimental art books. He currently lives in rural Maryland with his wife and two small dogs. You can follow APEP Publications on Twitter at @apeppub and on Instagram at @apeppublications.

**Samuel J Fox** is a bisexual writer of poetry and essays living in the Southern US. He is poetry editor at *Bending Genres*, a creative nonfiction reader at *Homology Lit*, and frequent reviewer at *Five:2:One Magazine*. He has appeared in numerous online and print journals but can be found in coffee shops, dilapidated places, and graveyards as well. He is on Twitter (@samueljfox).

**Kyla Houbolt** has been writing for years but except for a few brief flurries has only recently begun submitting work. Find her in the first issue of *Black Bough Poems*, the May issue of *Juke Joint Poems*, and forthcoming in the summer issue of the *Hellebore*, and in Issue #19 of *Picaroon*. She is grateful to C.A. Conrad and to her own times of homelessness for the inspiration for “Freya in Poverty”, as well as to *Neologism Poetry Journal* for first publishing the piece. Kyla lives and writes in Wilmington, NC.

**Barnaby Smith** is a poet, critic, and musician living on Bundjalung land in northern New South Wales, Australia. His poetry has appeared in journals in Australia, North America and Europe, such as *Cordite*, *Southerly*, *Best Australian Poems*, *Foam:e*, *Molly Bloom* and *Nokturno*. He won the 2018 Scarlett Award for art criticism. He records music as Brigadoon.

**Stuart Buck** is a poet and artist living in North Wales. His debut collection of poetry, *Casually Discussing the Infinite*, peaked at 89 on Amazon’s World Poetry chart and his second book *Become Something Frail* will be released on Selcouth Station Press in 2019. When he is not writing or reading poetry, he likes to cook, juggle and listen to music. He suffers terribly from tsundoku - the art of buying copious amounts of books that he will never read.

**Chad Musick** is a disabled writer and itinerant mathematician who lives in Japan with his family. He spent much of his childhood on free breakfast and lunch and several years of it homeless, but has love and stability now. He tweets (@TheMusicks) and podcasts with his wife. See his website <https://TheMusicksInJapan.com> for publications and other info.

**Ada Pelonia** is a writer from the Philippines. Her work has appeared in *Pulp Poets Press*, *Royal Rose Magazine*, *blink-ink*, *Germ Magazine*, and elsewhere. Some of her works can be seen at [adapelonia.weebly.com](http://adapelonia.weebly.com) or on Twitter @\_adawrites.

**Jane Marshall Fleming** is a PhD student in the Department of English at the University of Texas at Austin and the author of *Ocotillo Worship* (APEP Publications, 2019) and *Violence/Joy/Chaos* (Rhythm & Bones Press, 2020). Her poetry, collages, and prose have appeared or are forthcoming in *Foliate Oak*, *Ghost City Review*, *Glass: A Journal of Poetry*, *Pussy Magic Magazine*, and *Honey & Lime*, among others. She is currently a Contributing Editor at *Barren Magazine* and can be found on Twitter @queenjaneapx.

**Rebecca Kokitus** is a poet residing in the Philadelphia area. She is the author of three poetry collections: *Seasonal Affected*, now available from APEP Publications, *Blue Bucolic*, forthcoming from Thirty West Publishing House, and *Saccharine*, forthcoming from Bone & Ink Press. She has had poetry and prose

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**Oliver Cato** was born in Southport on Australia's Gold Coast. He grew up a surfer on the beaches of Greenmount and Kirra. After graduating with a degree in philosophy he has lived in Europe, especially Berlin, most of his adult life; he currently resides in East London with his wife and three children. He has been writing professionally since 1992. His short pieces and poetry have been published in *The Arsonist*, *Here Comes Everyone*, *Sein und Werden*, *Coffeehouse Poetry* and *Obsessed with Pipework* among many others and his independently published novel *Resistance* is available on Amazon and at all good bookstores. Oliver tweets @oocato; more information can be found at [www.oocato.com](http://www.oocato.com).

**Laurie Koensgen's** poems have appeared in *Literary Review of Canada*, *Arc Poetry Magazine*, *In/Words*, *Barren Magazine*, *Juniper: A Poetry Journal*, *Ottawater* and elsewhere. She was shortlisted for *The Malahat Review's* Far Horizons Award for Poetry 2018 and recently received the Honourable Mention in *Arc's* Diana Brebner Prize. Laurie is a founding member of Ottawa's Ruby Tuesdays poetry collective.

**Mirabai Scholz** is a mentally ill artist and aspiring cat in Portland, OR. You can find them on Instagram at @marigoldcats.

**Maggie Dove** is a Southern writer (by way of South Florida). Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Hobart*, *Cosmonauts Avenue*, *Foliate Oak*, *The Dead Mule School of Southern Literature*, *The New Southern Fugitives*, *Crab Fat Magazine* and elsewhere. She is petty and immature, and has many tribal tattoos from the 90s for which she refuses to be apologetic. Her blog can be found at [romcomdojo.com](http://romcomdojo.com).

**Anonymous (1):** The author of "What Stays and What Comes" is a Pakistani high school senior living in the UAE.

**Lettie Jane Rennekamp** is an artist working in Portland, Oregon by way of Kentucky. You can follow her on Instagram at @lettiejanemakes. More information can be found on her website, <https://www.lettiejane.com>.

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