

KISSING DYNAMITE: A JOURNAL OF POETRY

ISSUE 48 DECEMBER 2022: "THIS SHALL BE"

Welcome to Issue 48 "This Shall Be," in which our contributing poets explore hope and expectations.

Issue 48 includes work by Sadie McCarney (this month's featured poet), Joyce Hida, Chris McCann, and Jacob Stratman. Please view The Gallery below!

Featured Artist—Tanya Rastogi

Tanya Rastogi is a 15-year-old artist and writer from Iowa. Her work is published or forthcoming in *The Lumiere Review* and *Kalopsia Lit*.

Poetry Gallery

"Cherry" by Sadie McCarney, December's Featured Poet

When X's silhouette was sharp enough to knife an assailant¹, she toted a glass-bottle grenade of cherry soda into a plus size store. She was there with Y, whose fingers danced a furious strip search of the sale rack - longing for a dress that would love her back. X was a bony blip - a size 6 - a nothing.² The drink in her plastic Zellers bag sloshed with foreboding.³ Cherry soda trickled out behind her, like a telltale trail of true-crime blood: first the changing rooms, where Y tried on her dress, then out to the main store where it ranged its red chaos all over the decadent display of G-cup bras, relaxed-fit jeans.

The red liquid luxuriated in being so free, adhered itself in sticky splendour to the linoleum tile like cheap red lip gloss. The store now held a scarlet map of X's shame. She escaped, with yet another preloved "sorry" ⁴, from that perverse version of Hansel and Gretel's crumbs. ⁵

X crawled her way to and from and around the lovely/ beleaguered Boston, slumbered on the outbound commuter rail as it scrolled beneath the red arrow of the Citgo sign. Dreamt herself whole in 3X, 4X, 5X.⁶

¹ A hard, triangular jaw; hips and ribs that jutted out like homes hammered into the side of a cliff.

² All she ever wanted was Grandma's tender, pull-it-apart roast beef dinner with singed-edge roast potatoes, candied yams, a glut of rich gravy. All of it all to herself.

³ No one knew she lulled herself to sleep at night with delusions of balloons; the expanding universe; expanding. That she once taunted the chubbiest girl in her grade with the hot flush of what she now knows to be envy.

⁴ Since age 9, X had sought to deny herself all pleasure: a paltry portion of Oat Bran for breakfast, endless apologies for each imagined wrong. But she never tried to be thin on purpose like the dietician, the doctor, and the psychologist all said.

⁵ How X would have loved to be Hansel, fat but still able to blame the witch.

⁶ She dreamt herself big as that Citgo sign, relentless cherry red.

Sadie's Commentary on "Cherry":

This poem started out with personal experience- e.g. I really did spill cherry soda all over a plus-size clothing store, and I really was a student outside of Boston - but the journey that it took me on after that kernel was planted has an intimacy all its own. I found myself confronting certain questions, like "What is a good body?" and "What is a shape worth striving for?", so that as the poem took form, so too did the protagonist's desire to inhabit a fat body. The footnotes represent the wants and dreams that X won't admit, even to herself. My hope is that readers see themselves in X's story - whatever it is they find themselves longing for.

Managing Editor Shon Mapp's Commentary on "Cherry":

McCarney's "Cherry" is a stirring exploration of the conflicting relationship one often has with food and body image. The experimental form provides both a structural and contextual disassembling of the self in its clever use of prose and footnotes. The thoughtful yet grandiose language is employed with precision and creates undertones of dark humor that feel relatable and compassionate. I most admire the handling of relationships through juxtaposition.

We see the consequences of X's longing through the cherry soda that "luxuriated in being so free." What I love most about this piece are the footnotes. Whether they are read inserted within the piece or separately, they create a layered backstory to X's evolution. Sadie McCarney masterfully pulls the reader into the center of a nuanced tug-of-war by forcing us to question our perceptions about what a body should be.

"Yogurt Recipe" by Joyce Hida

I am peeling back the milk's skin,
begging a hangnail to sour itself
into yogurt. *Boil slowly*, instructions
from my mother, *to transform
the matter*. And I love her for that,
for believing in gentle
change.

She is almost 50 now, and being 50, visits
my kitchen as a bug-eyed angel
visits this manger or that cave, bearing
prophecy up slow stairs. Before
her feet can rest she is taking
space, refilling my wooden fruit bowl,
tutting at the state of things. She
denies

all pain, though it simmers through
her jawbone. On her last pilgrimage,
she stitched my gaping jeans and I
injected medicine into her thigh,
because love, these days, is quiet
needlework.

*You never remember this
part*, she sighs, cradling the yogurt in
a white towel, *this breeds the old
bacteria*.

"Earthly Paradise of Carteret" by Chris McCann

The glistening dew
on the chain-link fence
reflects in miniature

the azure lakes that rise
with the ice melt.
In the strip mall donut shop
we stay up all night
on coffee and crullers,
the flakes of sugar falling
on the Formica tabletop like snow.
Someone should paint a picture
of this, you said, as we
watched the sun come up
over the auto parts store
with its shining chrome
and picture windows.
If there truly are ten thousand
things in the material world,
then why not write them all down
in a litany of praise?
The small dog in the shadows.
The busted taillight of a Mustang.
The surgical mask floating
on a rainbowed puddle.
I would do it, you said,
if only there was enough time
and I knew where to start.
The world lights up
like someone's idea of heaven.
It's right here, the tower
and walls of the prison
seem to say—don't let it go.
And for a second we have it,
we see it all laid out
like a painted Japanese scroll
far away from the earthly
world, a paradise preserved,
inviolable, impossible to regain.
Then let us become these visions
of storefronts, broken glass,
and grime. Since these
are the landscapes of our dreams,
let us populate them
with mountains and shadows
of mountains, and trees against

a yellow sky. Let us never
wake up.

“We can’t draw what we can’t see” by Jacob Stratman

For E.S. and ART 2413: Drawing 1

After receiving bad news, I watch
kids draw still life: plastic paled fruit, dusty
bottles, leather boxes, lanterns with faux
finish, copper kettles, everything draped
in gilded maroon. Masked students circled,
spacious music spacing against sickness.

One holds a view finder, leaning
on her drawing horse, trying to avoid
men—flaky busts of Homer or Aristotle.
She has her eye on a clock next to oddly
shined apples. Another, off by herself,
circle adjacent, mines a paper bag landscape —
ridges and rifts, creases, cracks, crinkles,
valleys, vaulted lines separating shade and light.

We can all hear the woodpecker: deadwood
deadwood deadwood. Late winter branches
stretch up against darkening blue, waning
daylight. A few, near windows,
look hard, point in competing directions.

A turkey vulture floats above. Someone calls
it an eagle. Too high to differentiate
baldness. No one here knows what kills
trees from the inside, but we all know
eagles are visible for another month
or so, and we forgive the mistake.
Too many buzzards circling all the time,
you often wish for difference.

In silent breaks, circled and spaced,
on a cold, late afternoon when light
is lowering, we attend to what we can’t see
well—what we mistake for hope.

Poet Biographies

Joyce Hida is a recent Penn grad and poet based in NYC. She is a previous Best of the Net nominee for her work in *Empty House Press*. Her writing has also been featured in *TYPO Magazine*, *South Florida Poetry Journal*, and *Eunoia Review*, among others.

Chris McCann (he/him) lives on Bainbridge Island in Washington. His work has been published or is forthcoming in *Moss*, *The Pedestal Magazine*, *Interstellar Review*, *Noctua Review*, *Salt Hill Journal*, and *The Shore*.

Sadie McCarney (she/her) is a queer, neurodivergent writer-performer based on Prince Edward Island, Canada. She is the author of the poetry collections *Live Ones* (University of Regina Press, 2019/ tall-lighthouse uk, 2020) and *Your Therapist Says It's Magical Thinking* (forthcoming from ECW Press, 2023) as well as the found poetry performance text chapbook/ mental health memoir *Head War* (Frog Hollow Press, 2021). Sadie's work has appeared in *Best Canadian Poetry*, *The Walrus*, *Literary Review of Canada*, and *The Gay & Lesbian Review*, as well as in various literary journals.

Jacob Stratman's (he/him) first book of poems, *What I Have I Offer With Two Hands*, is a part of the Poiema Poetry Series (Cascade, 2019). His most recent poems can be found (or are forthcoming) in *The Christian Century*, *Spoon River Poetry Review*, *FreezeRay*, *Wordgathering*, *Ekstasis*, and others. He lives and teaches in Siloam Springs, AR.

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