

Firefly Magazine

III



A Journal of Luminous Writing

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POETRY



Tree in Negative | Anna Nazarova-Evans



Featured Poem

IT'S ABOUT TOM THOMPSON'S REMAINS | *Lyndsay Kirkham*

Weevils burrowed deep
Between pine and newspaper
Left behind in an Algonquin cottage
(the kind where you've never travelled, because they've pulled them down)
But that I know
Without eye-sight.
It's mapped out
against a tent's canvas
as taut as muscle
and as white as my quiet feet;
In the thicket,
married to the wooden roar
of the winter silence
engulfing the fragility,
where snow stitches
in fringes to the ragged shore;
Canoe Lake
in January
Insists on a sacrifice.
The heat isn't enough
And my mouth

Wills

The warmth.

Tom's under this
ancient pocket of water, (tight fist around a sketching pencil, canoe his back)
that's been tucked in
hemmed away
until the thaw;
his body
like his love
never made
it to the surface.

And now women
write about him
as if he were an
innocent serving
time,
his release in this
transaction:
trans media
over decades
and
a Toronto
art scene that isn't sure
if they've properly
buried their father.

Tom Thompson
was a sacrifice

for a story
they keep telling up there.
When really
he had an attack
of the cardiac variety
(making their tale
almost true).

TRIBUTE | *Lynne Crookes Pepper*

The year ebbs

Sodden fields slump beneath sullen skies

Waiting for winter's blast.

Hatred unfurls

Grief immeasurable tears our hearts

Splinters lives.

Above a kestrel waits

Hunter.

The wren sings from the bramble hedge

Heartfelt challenge to the sky.

Hope.

CORNERS | Slade D. Wilson

For All Those Who Have Suffered and Suffer Still

I.

I saw a world,
where Evil had won all of its battles
which were no real skirmishes
as that would imply a willing opposition
I saw a grey city breathing in
the first of its very last breaths
dying, withering, ungracefully falling apart
I looked into faces, faces, a thousand faces
and followed trickling down into their souls
finding nothing but Abaddon and emptiness
I saw the void, I saw the lack and fear and hatred and indignance of Love
parents saying goodbye early in the morning
coming back at night laden with Moloch
but bearing no Love, and asking the right questions
when it had been already late if at all
I saw the shivers under the covers,
I heard the screams of night
waking the hundredth time from the same terrible nightmare
and I saw the perpetrators
I swear I did, laughing
smoking a cigarette around the corner
I saw no Justice and I saw no Redemption
only countless cunts and motherfuckers
waiting in line to abuse the next Individual
in an uprising against the clearly superior
abhorrent executioners of difference

I saw the playground (read football field or school),
and I saw them play and talk
breathing in the plagueish corrupt air
And I saw the victims
Oh dear Fate!
I did see the victims.

II.

Abaddon! Demon of demons!
Fearless harbinger, portrait of fear.
The spirit of abuse, God of abuse
wingless unfathomable distasteful deranged
hopeless caged rotting animal
raping the most vulnerable ones
honourless, heartless heathen
tidebringer and tyrant of trauma
father of a thousand legions
master of a million, undefeatable
destroyer of human lives
the oldest of all, Abaddon!
Abaddon! I know your spawn
The broken creatures you created
I see the proud in their weakness
Sly succubus, pretending to have lost
you're caged pinned to the wall, yet utterly dominant
revelling in anxiety they feel
devouring their insecurity and fucking
their ravings, incomprehensible
I know the incantation to free you
as do all others but prefer to survive not live

in the cozy torchlight of Abaddon!
Then walk through the Darkness
towards the vindicating light
Abaddon!
hiding in the face of a lover
Abaddon!
hiding in the fists of a ten-year old sadistic bastard
Abaddon!
hiding in my life contained in eyes and more eyes
I see you, come to the light
and disappear be expelled and exorcised
Abaddon!
hiding behind corners and cornerstones
behind your brother's skirt
You are not invisible, not to hearts that seek
Not to hearts which seek to defeat Abaddon!

III.

Come take my hand walk with me
through the deserted streets of Tangier at dawn
Let us walk around the corners fearlessly
Trust me, I know You won't, You can't
He is still there, I know, believe me I know
I know You are cheating on me with Abaddon
Take my hand, You'll understand
you see, this is not the same hand
that caused all that pain
an eon ago ruthlessly
tell me, tell the truth for once
Tu conosci mio segreto

Tell me thine
Thou knowest the words the ways
perhaps you have seen the steps as well
it's simple, it's like Waltz
one, two and three, admit it
see the Darkness in front of thee
You feel how he rattles his cage
You flinch, I know why and so do You
drop the mask, all that sense of invulnerability
we are all humans underneath
we want to laugh and we want to Love
we desire, and we should care
there is no reason; I know of no reason
to hide, since there is no escape
no escape from Abaddon
only compromise, only defeat
let him out, and grab thy sword
let us fight then together
for the light
for tomorrow
hand-in-hand

COOPER LAKE, ONTARIO | Lyndsay Kirkham

I can't be
an explorer even if I tried
to untie the frayed strands of
genuine curiosity, good deeds and monastic principles
from colonial tendencies to rape what wasn't
theirs.

Here, at Cooper Lake
I can't settle into the
advertised *urban comforts*
heated bathrooms (rustic) and extra-firm mattresses (rest soundly)
because
in downtown Toronto
there are two men
I see every day
and I know the untaught
history
that led them to
the intersection
of Young and Bloor.

Cooper Lake
is deep and
my paddle is wide
but I can't glide
up to the sheer rock face
with the weight of
what we aren't saying.

I sit at the pine table,
at Cooper Lake
and worry about Canadian children
and what
we aren't teaching them.

SPIRIT AWAKENING | *Kim Bailey Deal*

Drums are beating
from ancient places
as I open my eyes
to the filtered light
of a new day.

Chants are echoing
from ancient places
as I make hot water
turn black and smell
good this morning.

Tears are pouring
from ancient places—
my heart pounds painfully
as I try to remember
what my spirit
could never forget.

Beating-beating
drums, beating
air from Father Sky
fills my lungs
as ancient places
surround me
with light and open spaces.

Feet are stomping

from ancient places
from Mother Earth
the dust rises in a cloud
to cover my skin
brown and red.

Dancing to the drums
singing the song
I have always known,
my spirit is born
my teeth
honed.

MORNING SILENCE | *Tom Montag*

The birds
have disappeared into

the cold. An old man is
having his coffee, steam

curling the way smoke
takes the sky. It all means

nothing. Somewhere someone
is coming home. Somewhere

the story turns out
different. You lift your eyes.

Only dawn here, only
the morning's emptiness.

ROLAND BARTHES ON LOVE | *Lyndsay Kirkham*

I won't tell you what I did with my copy of
Barthes;
performance art signalling my annoyance
with his need to eviscerate text
digging out every signifier and lashing all
signified; he left
them
splayed out
completely,
pages flapping,
vacant of all value.

But, as I've found myself
in this way
full of [signified]
and us
semiotics now
a critical theory I can engage
because this hand
<readerly to me> becomes a million tender
encouragements in you <writerly>

Suddenly, Barthes is leading
this parade of
heartbeats
pounded out into soft breaths
<because that is how
you
rewrote them.

FLASH FICTION



Left Psychedelic Fire | Anna Nazarova-Evans



Featured Flash

SHE'S SAVING IT FOR ME | *Santino Prinzi*

I love her; she's here every weekday and I listen to her sing. She uses a microphone, though I know she doesn't need it. Sometimes I fancy she switches it off but I don't think she does because she won't waste the best she has to offer on these people, who, if she's lucky, she may sell one or two CDs to.

She starts to sing, unchaining stars from their constellations for me, rearranging them, capturing and caressing them. Oceans will writhe and the mountains will crack under voice, yet this is nothing to what I know she can do with her voice. She can make it all dissolve, I've seen her.

She doesn't know I always watch her sing, wherever and whenever that would be.

There's polite clapping from a few individuals after she finishes the first song. They think they've heard her real singing, thinking she's pretty good, but they haven't heard her. No, not like I have; I like to think she's saving it for me.

Like clockwork her concert is performed. Some bystanders drop change in passing, some simply pass, and if I could reach down my throat and give her my heart I would. She doesn't sell any CDs again today so she packs her things away and leaves.

I follow her down the other side of the high street and towards her house. I perch near the post box, hidden by the foliage of the tree it's by, and know in ten minutes time she'll hop into the shower and start singing again. From here I listen as the real show begins.

ALL THAT GLITTERS | *Paul Beckman*

The girls smile while waiting for the school bus. Their mother, standing in the doorway, smiles looking at her girls. The husband/father scootches by the mother, briefcase in hand, smiles and pecks her on the cheek as his car pool driver shows up.

The father is in his last day of work due to layoffs. The girls will be bullied on the bus and in school and the house is under foreclosure due to their bankruptcy filing for the mother's cervical cancer bills.

The neighbors wave and smile to the mother and she back to them. One calls her for coffee but she begs off saying another time.

The scene repeats itself the next day except the father stands next to his wife smiling and waving to his girls. They go back into the house.

After lunch the police and ambulances arrive and the sheet-covered parents are wheeled out as the neighbors gather and watch not understanding what could cause a happening like this in such a happy, smiling family.

HOKEY POKEY | *Niles Reddick*

Ray Anthony's mama had been after him to change---quit smoking and drinking and frequenting Ms. Greer's piano bar downtown. She didn't know about the marijuana and sex.

"Need to get it together before it's too late," she said. "I'd like to see your sorry ass in heaven. I'd hate for you to go to hell with all them Muslims and other heathens."

"You reckon they let you talk like that up there?"

"Damned right they will, if you're saved. That's what matters."

Ray Anthony knew he needed to change. He was always coughing up phlegm and it was nasty. He also knew the hard liquor he knocked back at Ms. Greer's made him crazy. There were nights he'd gone home with others, smoked pot, woke up in strange places, and knew he'd sinned. He knew the fun-filled feelings were temporary and meaningless, when he remembered them.

He knew Jesus lasted a lifetime. He'd seen his mama change when he was a young boy--her own smoking and drinking turned to getting saved and dragging him to church every time they opened the doors. She'd dance around the living room while cleaning and sing gospel songs, holding a white handkerchief just like Vestal Goodman. For ten year old Ray Anthony, it was a site to behold. He felt like she was an angel; she certainly had the voice of one.

On Sunday, Ray Anthony went to church with his mama for the first time in many years, went down the aisle and got saved. A week later he was baptized and the following week, his mama was diagnosed with terminal pancreatic cancer, stage four. They gave her two months.

Ray Anthony was glad his mama got to see him turn himself around, and when he buried her, he decided to give up painting houses and go after a more stable job with the government. After testing, he finally landed a job delivering mail for the U.S. Postal Service. When he's running short on delivery time, he takes

the mail home and piles it up in his spare bedroom. He wants to be on time and stay in good with the government. He believes what they don't know won't hurt them or him. Plus, it's mostly junk mail. He tries to sort through it and deliver what he thinks might be important the next day. Most days, after he has sorted mail and eaten supper, Ray Anthony sits in a chair in the living room, listening to old gospel music. He no longer drinks alcohol, but sometimes he imagines his mama cleaning, humming, holding her white handkerchief, and turning herself around and around.

THE PRISONER'S TALE | *Holly Geely*

The puddle didn't smell like water and the rats weren't chewing on candy.

Sven was glad it was dark and both substances remained a mystery. He'd spent the last hour trying to calm the other prisoner. The man's screams had continued until they took him away.

Sven didn't miss him. The nutcase had been convinced they were both dead. So what if Sven's last recollection was the semi crashing headlong into his bus? That didn't mean he was rotting in Hell. The chains, the screaming and the rats meant it certainly wasn't Heaven, but that didn't make it Hell.

Footsteps splashed through puddles and a key clicked in a lock. The toe of a hard boot jabbed Sven in the ribs. Rough hands hauled him to his feet.

"Your turn," the guard said.

She led Sven down a dim corridor and up some stairs into cold night air. They walked down a dock and boarded a wooden raft. Water surrounded them as far as the eye could see, which was farther than Sven would have expected given the darkness.

Sven glanced back at his prison, and with shock realized they'd been holding him prisoner in a 50s style diner.

His jailors took up oars and began to row.

"I'd offer to help if you unchained my hands," Sven said.

The second guard snorted.

"What? I'm serious." His mother had always taught him to be polite. "It's not like I have anywhere to escape to."

"Quiet," the first guard said.

They rowed for ages before the scenery changed. The dark outline of a tower finally appeared, rising out of the lake like a cold glass sculpture of loneliness.

"Freud would get a kick out of that," Sven said.

"No talking!"

"Geez Guard One. You're strict."

She raised an arm to hit him. He stopped talking.

They docked at the tower, crossed the dock, and went down the stairs into a smelly dungeon. It looked exactly the same as the prison he'd been taken from. He heard more rats chewing on more not-candy.

"I'm in a coma, right? My subconscious is punishing me for something."

Believe he was dead would be crazy, but a coma made sense. All the crazy things that were happening could be explained away by a dream.

"No talking," Guard One said.

She locked the door and left. In the distance Sven heard the screams of his friend the panicked prisoner.

"Come on! Tell me the truth. Am I dead?"

Sven's shout had good volume, but there was no reply. That was fine. If this was his dream, his nightmare, he should be able to shape it to his will. He closed his eyes and wished really hard so that when he opened them, he would turn out to be the master of this place. The guards would grovel at his feet.

When he opened them, he was still the prisoner of a story that began but didn't end.

CARNATIONS | *Santino Prinzi*

Owen kept his head down and stopped at the cemetery gates. Cold rain rolled off his umbrella and dripped down his back. The black railings, sharp and unforgiving, reminded him of his wedding day.

Laura captivated Owen on their wedding day. Behind the veil she smiled, her eyes glimmered, and she appeared to float down the aisle as if on clouds. Even the rain couldn't eclipse the way her face beamed. Owen's lips still tingled from their first and last kiss as a married couple.

The gravestone in front of him was covered with withered wet flowers. He took them away and settled some pink carnations; her favourite. They seemed to shine against the grey, much like Laura used to. He'd always remember the headlights that extinguished the glow behind her eyes, the screech of the tyres that shattered her smile, and the rain that fell on her silenced heart whilst his still screamed.

THE CONNECTION | *Anna Nazarova-Evans*

The phone buzzes. You say hello and the telephone cord stretches across the north of France, throws itself into the channel, climbs up the harbour and skims the tops of trees and houses until it reaches my ear here in the city by the sea.

The second your voice hits my eardrum I no longer care. I no longer worry about the beggar by the bus stop and the fact that I spent my one pound fifty on the bus fare instead of his evening meal. I no longer remember that Katie cries in the office toilets. I don't need to tell myself that it's because I'm so busy with work that I can't spare five minutes to sympathise. The children on TV with bellies swollen under their fragile rib cages, flies settling on their eyes, ears, mouth and nose - all of them disappear. Your voice - it saves the world. Better still - it makes me feel like I've saved it.

That's how it's been. You've always had that air about you, as if any differences we had were already addressed, everything we would ever need to discuss – already understood and accepted. There was really nothing else to do but to enjoy each other and be at peace.

'Come home,' I say into the receiver, my voice - a pebble that skids back across the channel and into your hotel room with seventies wallpaper and a large painting of Audrey Hepburn's face.

'Soon,' you say. 'Just a few more days.' And I believe you.

At night my arm follows the familiar trajectory: over the fields and towns in the British suburbia, off the shore and into the waves, past the vineyards and into the German city where you lay wrapped in cotton bed sheets. I trace your face

contours with my fingers, feel the warmth in the crevice by your neck, smooth your hair and that makes me feel like you are right here, next to me.

A few days later I feel the pang of loss again and ring, but the phone cord springs back. At night my hand feels the place in your bed where you've laid, still warm, but empty.

I wait and make weak chai tea, just how you like it, leaf through your old magazines. I throw the phone cord back over the channel in search for you. It feels its way in pulsating heat, your mobile going to answerphone every time. But the voice is different - the voice of the universal woman who doesn't care about starving children or beggars. She doesn't care, which means that I have to.

A MISTAKE | *David Wing*

The switchblade trimmed my bearded left cheek then continued slowly on, past the skin, flesh and muscle. When it hit the gum I flicked my screaming tongue to taste the blood but danced over the steel edge instead. His eyes burned as the tip caught on my lower pallet, and then continued on through to the right side and beyond.

I stifled a terrific call in favour of a demented, firm grin. There was surely more to come. I passed out.

He left me and that dilapidated factory to the complementary sounds of whimpering and rusting scaffolds. My jaw held fast without need of encouragement as my eyes shot a frenzied, desperate stare. The aged plastic chair creaked under the rigour of my weight and as the sun began to set past the brick-broken panes, my hope sank too.

I'd been there since the night before and while my sleep had been tortured through concern; my morning had found other agonies. The rats had begun on my feet and would surely move more northward. I'd managed to tuck "myself" under and sat awkwardly, but was now or never.

Endless scraping had seen the bonds fray underneath and with a waned tug, my right arm flew free.

I steadied myself for the extraction, worse than the dentist, far worse.

I thought of my family. I thought of their eyes. I firmed my face and slowly pulled. The dip of the tip onto my amalgam filled tooth released an involuntary reflex and short of tremendous will I would have swallowed. My eyes bled clear and then red. The final move freed my mouth and drew my right hand to the gaping holes with tentative dread.

The knife loosed the ropes at my feet and with a cautious, silent step I staggered to the door. Beyond laid the dwindling sun and a silhouetted factory-scape.

The ride in had sounded hollow from the boot of the car and the gravelled tracks shivered under the tyres. There'd been two men in my car – I had heard their chatter and one in the follow. I remembered a lead pipe earlier in the morning and reached for the rear of my head. The throbbing had been replaced by the searing in my cheeks and while I stood by the door I saw the offending implement.

Pipe in one hand, handle in the other, I steadied myself and gulped, trying not to spit the iron liquid from my mouth and thus alerting any awaiting malcontents on the other side.

I took a deep, considered breath through my nose and then one more. With a tug the double-door slid along its rouged rungs and off the end, falling to the floor and pummelling the dated dust.

Two men turned from a portable black and white and stared. Their pause was enough. My facial injuries did little to slow my feet and I was on them in a split. The iron makes a cringing; wet sound when you're on the receiving end but when you're wielding it it's a whole different feeling. The impact rings in your hand and bounces free from the target, as if ready for another. I gave it one more.

The men lay crumpled and sad.

There was one more.

I was surprised with the noise he hadn't joined the fight. He had to be far away. I dropped the pipe on the concrete and flicked a glance at the TV. *I love Lucy*; don't we all.

Opening a smaller wooden door I peered out. The wind was blowing and a car sat idling in the car park, facing away from the building. The driver had a phone to his left ear and a finger in the other. I strode purposefully forward. Pausing at the door I waited a moment for the man to notice and turn. The wind shot through my face and made a tune not dis-similar to a woodwind instrument. I'd never been musical before. My boot shattered the fractionally open window and with a thrust my newly acquired knife perforated his smoke-sullied cheeks.

I held it there and waited for him to hold fast. His eyes struggled to turn, but turn they did. I think it was my calm that scared him more than anything.

I tilted my head and found what I was looking for.

"Pick it up."

His brow dripped with perspiration and his stained left hand blindly scoured the driver's floor for the mobile phone. It was still connected.

He made to hand it to me, but I shook my head and spat on the gravel.

"Tell him, I'm coming."

The eyes pled.

Then the lips moved.

Then the cheeks tore.

SHORT STORIES



Right Psychedelic Fire | Anna Nazarova-Evans



Featured Short

NU NA DA UL TSUN YI (THE PLACE WHERE THEY CRIED) | *Kim Bailey Deal*

December 1838

We arrived in this strange land two nights ago. There is a full moon tonight. Its reflection shimmers on the waters of the Tennessee River below us, glittering like silver fish in a stream.

We are cold and famished. My father and some other men have taken their bows and rifles to hunt for small game while my mother has made a camp for us. The fire is warm, but it cannot touch the chill in our hearts. We move about trying to keep warm, gathering kindling and chopping wood, collecting dried leaves to put beneath our bedding, and bringing water up to Mama from the edge of the frigid river.

My brother Hoyt is angry. He did not get to go with Papa and the others to hunt. Papa told him to look after his clan. I know he is not angry with Papa. Hoyt is angry because his heart is heavy. Sorrow envelopes all of us like the icy wind around our heads and hands and feet.

In late November some white men came to our village in Tennessee with papers in their hands and told us we had to leave. Our clan lived on a small ridge between two high mountains, the only home any of us had ever known. My people fought with the white men so we could stay on our land, keep speaking our language, and teach our children The Way. In the end, after so many broken

promises, we are told we have a new home in a new land out west, in a place called Indian Territory. We are not convinced this new home will be a peaceful place. We are skeptical of the white man's promises. He does not know how to keep his word.

My little brother Jesse died on the journey several days ago. He was a baby and had just learned to walk. He caught a fever and soon he was unable to breathe. We buried him next to a large oak on a bluff overlooking another part of the Tennessee River, the same river we have traveled to this strange place.

Mama has hardly spoken since that day. Grief had already stolen most of her words because she left her mother and aunt and my oldest sister behind. Grandma and Aunt Neva refused to leave their home. They and many other Cherokee who had also refused to leave were forced to abandon their villages and homes to go to a camp deemed appropriate by the white men.

My sister, she is called Sara, she also stayed in Tennessee. Her husband William is half white. His Cherokee mother married an Irish man called Robert, who came from North Carolina. William is a coal miner. They have a small parcel of land and a house, with a barn and some livestock. Sara wept quietly as we all packed our things and began our journey west. She did not want to go, but she did not want to stay. Now her spirit is wandering between two places.

My best friend Lucy fell and broke her leg the first day we started our journey. We had climbed a tall, hollowed out tree while our families waited for the soldiers to tell us where to go next, and her foot slipped on the high branch. I heard her leg bone crack when she landed on the hard ground. She became feverish and began to speak about terrifying things, such as the killing of women and children and the death of the Cherokee and The Way. She cursed at unseen men who came to do unjust things to her. She died two days later. Her mother refused to leave her gravesite. Instead, she lay beside the grave and began to wail and moan, pulling her hair and pounding her stomach with her fists. During the night,

Lucy's father took his hunting knife and cut her throat. He said his wife was no good anymore, that her spirit was with their dead daughter, and her heart could not be unbroken.

As I gather more water for Mama, I look out over the river in the bright moonlight. My heart is heavy. I turned sixteen last turn of the moon, and now I am in a place unfamiliar to me for the first time, trying to help my family, and not able to make sense of anything. I can hear moans and cries coming from the many hundreds of my people behind me above the edge of the riverbank. Every hour or so, I hear a scream or a shriek, and I know that another spirit has left yet another body of one of our own. The sorrow lingers like thick, black smoke.

I shiver as I carry the deerskin containers of water back to camp. I begin to cough, and Mama calls me over to sit in front of the fire. She wraps me in a blanket she wove on her loom. It has many meaningful colors and symbols upon it. It tells a story of our people. We are part of the *a ni tsi s qua*, the Bird clan. The blanket tells the story of how our people, The Cherokee, *Tsa la gi*, were born. There are pictures of the Little People and the Four Points of the Earth. I hold tightly to this blanket and accept the warmth.

As I watch the flames flicker in the cold night, I think about what will become of us. We were told the land we are travelling toward is much like our home in the mountains. They said there are good places to hunt and fish, to grow food, and space to build another village. I cannot imagine it. All I can see in my mind's eye is our thatched roof home in the tiny village we were forced to leave. Hot tears run from my eyes and form tracks on my face through layers of dust. The farther west we go the more dust seems to collect on our clothes and skin, hovering in the air in tiny clouds formed out of nowhere. I wipe my face with the back of my sleeve and lay down on the bearskins Mama has laid out for me.

My mother is calling out to me, "Ellie. Ellie! Wake up!"

It is morning, and the sun is peeking above the trees on the other side of the river. Papa is smoking his pipe and Hoyt is whittling. Mama begins to sing an old Cherokee song as she moves about the camp, preparing our breakfast. We have some fresh squirrel meat and corn, but not enough. Papa's dark eyes see far beyond us to the future. I can tell that his vision makes him sad.

Mama's voice is soothing. "Wen de ya ho, wen de ya ho..." She sings the old Cherokee morning song, which is sung at weddings. It translates as, "I am of the Great Spirit!" I listen and rock back and forth, holding my knees, weeping softly.

There are several fresh graves on the outskirts of our camp.

So much sorrow in this place, where we wait for the boat to come and take us to another place where there is sure to be more sorrow.

The small town nearby is called Waterloo. My people call it *The Place Where They Cried*. Some of the people here have been kind, some have not. Many white people stood along the trail and watched us trudge onward, with tears in their eyes. We kept putting one foot in front of the other, when we could, and refused to let them see our own tears.

Papa begins to move about the camp and Mama stops singing. We will soon pack our camp and wait. The boat should be arriving soon.

I look in the direction from which we came. My heart is back there, at my home. The farther we move away from it, the larger the hole becomes inside my belly and heart.

Looking down at my feet, I spy my baby brother's rattle beside me in the dirt. Hoyt made it for him out of some deer hide, a stick and some dried corn. I pick it up and brush off the dirt, revealing a picture of a black bear. Hoyt painted the picture onto the hide after it had dried good and hard. I shake it a bit, and the dried corn makes the rattling sound that had stopped the day my baby brother became so sick.

I stand up to walk over to Mama, and hand the rattle to her. Her deep brown eyes brush past me in a caress. She nods as she takes it and puts it in her pocket and she begins to sing again as she trudges over to the cook fire and pours water on the hot coals. Steam follows a hiss and rises up in the air above her.

I take Mama's deerskin containers down to the river to fetch more water. My legs are tired but my back is strong as I scoop the water.

Before I head back to our camp, I watch as the sun begins to show the way of the river before me. The waters are moving swiftly as the morning light dances across the rivulets of water in reds, oranges and deep yellows.

Soon it will carry us to the new place we cannot yet see.

As I turn to carry the water back to Mama, I know in my heart we will continue to carry the tears from this place where our spirits cry out for the old ways and our people, as we continue to lose them one by one, along this treacherous journey.

The Artists



Cuthulhu | Sophia Johnson

Paul Beckman

Paul Beckman's a frequently published author of short stories & flash in both print and online magazines. Info on his new collection "PEEK" & his website can be found www.paulbeckmanstories.com

Kim Bailey Deal

Kim Bailey Deal is a writer, poet, amateur guitarist and avid reader. She is editing two novels and blogs weekly at <http://wordjunkie1966kimbaileydeal.wordpress.com>. She lives in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

Anna Nazarova-Evans

Anna Nazarova-Evans has been published by the Word Factory, National Flash Fiction Day anthology and Bibliophilia magazine. She is due to appear in Spelk Fiction in April 16.

Holly Geely

Holly Geely is a Canadian bookkeeper. She likes bright colours, bad puns, and cake. She started writing as a kid and forgot to stop.

Sophia Johnson

Sophia Johnson is a Cairo-based artist who draws influence from works such as those of Edward Gorey and John Kenn Mortensen.

Lyndsay Kirkham

Lyndsay has fiction and non fiction in many places; she currently writes down the road from where they filmed The Sound of Music. She is fierce and tattoo-covered. And cats.

Tom Montag

Tom Montag is most recently the author of In This Place: Selected Poems 1982-2013. He is a contributing writer at Verse-Virtual. In 2015 he was the featured poet at Atticus Review (April) and Contemporary American Voices (August).

Lynne Crookes Pepper

Lynne Crookes Pepper is currently writing a crime novel 'Dark Peak' and also writes poetry - when inspiration strikes.

Santino Prinzi

Santino Prinzi is currently an English Literature with Creative Writing student at Bath Spa University and was awarded the 2014/15 Bath Spa University Flash Fiction Prize. His website is <https://tinoprinzi.wordpress.com>

Niles Reddick

Author of a collection Road Kill Art and Other Oddities and a novel Lead Me Home, Niles' newest Drifting too far from the Shore is forthcoming. His website is www.nilesreddick.com

Slade D. Wilson

Wilson started writing poetry on an Autumn night in 2014. Since then a year has passed, as he continues to express himself in poetry on his blog.

David Wing

David is a Master's graduate in Creative Writing. He has a remarkably attractive wife, a 4 month old daughter and a very needy Priscila the dog. David runs a monthly competition called www.zeroflash.wordpress.com