

inkslinger

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contents

I Thought I Lost Your Darlings

(Written to the Blind Old Marxist, Who Lives By the Sea)

Christian Bearup

You said walk down and west and make an infinite left turn, and down at the bottom of the plunge I made myself a friend of the shrine to Our Lady of Lourdes and said a spiritless rosary throughout the hills of your living island. I'd passed your farm again before I'd known it but a goat's bleat brought me to myself and led me in to talk with you, only you were mystified I'd heard the goats when they were so far out to pasture and sent me out to find if they had strayed. I left you with a bucket brimming with grain and went two steps west and then two steps east, me in my dung-cruste boots while finishing the ultimate decade of my spiritless rosary. From the east emerges a cloud-colored head with two clicking walkers and a clean blue cardigan. They say here blue is Mary's color, so I ask her if she's seen my keeper's goats but she says nay and points me to the gated southern pasture where your darlings sometimes feed.

I drop my bucket to draw the pin and muscle through the gate but Lord my bucket's blue as day and brings my spirit back to the hood on Our Lady of Lourdes. So I turn back, plunge down westward a second time to find her shrine, carried by the hope my keeper's goats will be with the statue of the Blessed Virgin. They're not, of course they're not, and the fool with the grain and the dung-cruste boots is left to scale eastward up that awful plunge with nothing in the world to show you.

I'm contemplating St. Brendan and the blue of Mary, carrying and carrying as I look out upon your self-possessing sea. Flannery O'Connor. I imagine a climax to this experience, a grotesque irony in which I find your twenty darlings drowned in the shallows of the Mary-blue sea. I'll write that story. If nothing else I'll write that story and show it to someone to trouble them.

(So how'd it go?)

You know. I found them all right, blithely grazing on a northern cliff I didn't know existed, down down down where the earth breaks and the north cliff falls into the fists of the rolling, punching, Mary-blue sea.

Beethoven, Bless

Christian Bearup

He led us angels through guts of LA,
who looked at our brains, who dialed our minds,
until we were all thinking on our oldest fears—

who give me these sensitive, childhood visions,
yet spared me a Camel, and I smoked out my fear,
and LA seemed holy and welcome again.

We ambled toward statues, the figure of Beethoven that lay under
light.

Longview stated him stately—stoic—him hewed from a stone,
a gift to LA, a shrine for all men, a sign to the fearful who's lost on
his way.

*Carve him with violence til you're sure he's all done—
dusty your hands—your eyes—your back that's corrupt,
and give him to angels, to Pershing Square souls.*

I hear a wind, a prophet, a genius out of time—

I hear three buses, a lover, a dog on a cheap leash—

There's cracking out here—a deafness like blindness,
like dormant transhumans, like dolorous cries.

*The midnight that's glaring the orange sun snaring
the charcoal cars sharing the traffic declaring—*

But give me your blessing,
so long as I'm here.
My ears have been lifted
out of perishing.

The Things You'll Do Again

Christian Bearup

time is a circle
to cur all our brains
and “self” is the “origin”
that lends a short leash.

to cur all our brains
the cosmos makes fists
which lend a short leash
to every ambition

the cosmos makes fists
and crumbles the climb
towards every ambition
and won't look to god.

but crumbles the climb
the dead make from flesh
and won't look to god
nor question rotation.

the dead make from flesh
a question to god
and question rotation
what's flesh worth at all.

a question to god
on how souls fly up.
what's flesh worth at all
if bound to the self.

Rabbit Psychology

Caitlin David

He's a shy thing, tiptoeing his way under the bushes,
investigating the brick yard for signs of unknown invaders—
suspiciously sniffing our hands for signs of betrayal, or worse—
the smell of soap.

He flicks his feet out behind him as he scampers away, perhaps to
shake us off
and place more than spatial distance between his new seat of
observation
and our intruding presences.

But when the sun starts to set and he is blinded in the momentary
glory,
we are his brothers. Then surrounded by those who love and are
beloved,
he leaps a dervish dance for joy-

Until the sun is gone. Then we again are strangers, our hands cold
and threatening,
our offerings untrustworthy to his discerning nose and whiskers.

Nighttime Lessons

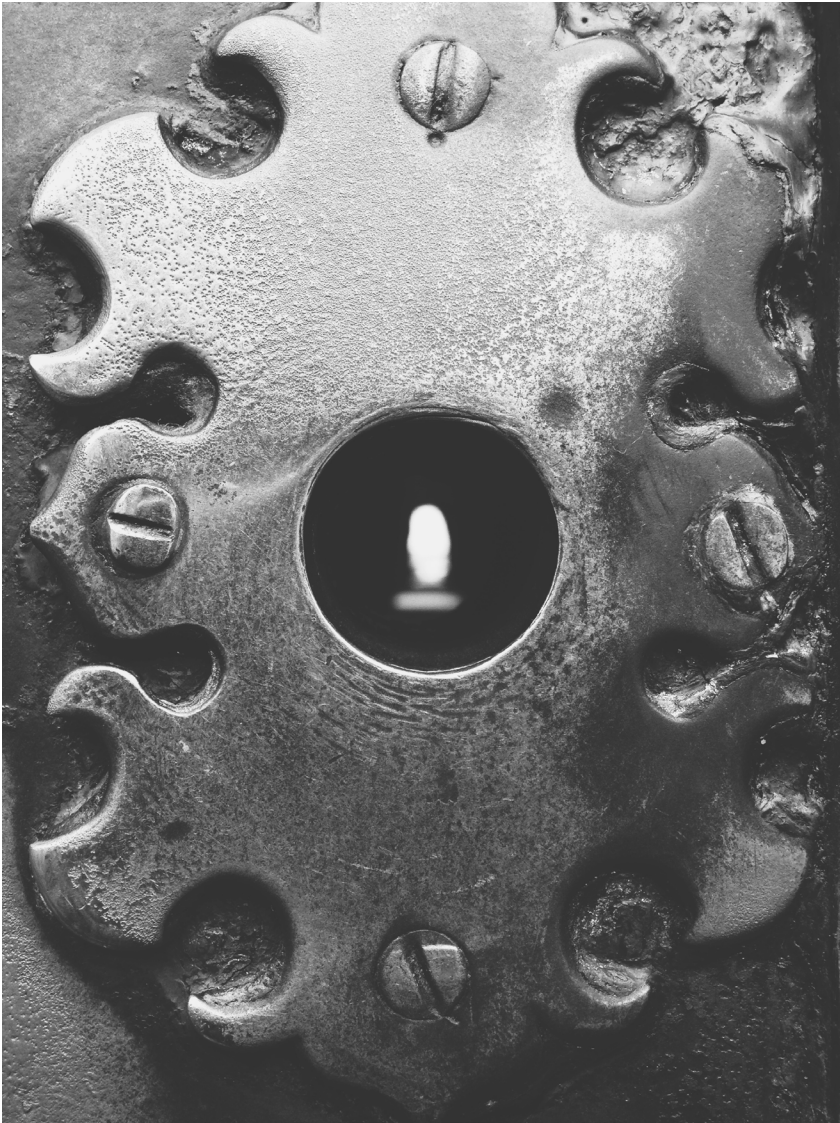
Caitlin David

The first night, she dreamed she lived in a tree.
But instead she woke to find herself
on the floor, wrapped in bedclothes and disappointment.
(And the moral of the story is to learn to love the ground.)

The second night, she dreamed she lived underground.
But instead she woke to find herself
shivering from the lack of bedclothes and forethought.
(And the moral of the story is to learn to love the air.)

The third night, she dreamed she lived in the clouds.
But instead she woke to find herself
gasping for air in the stifling fears and bedclothes.
(And the moral of the story is to learn to love the heat.)

The fourth night, she dreamed she lived in the light.
But instead she woke to find herself
squinting at the outline of the bedclothes and uncertainty.
(And the moral of the story is to learn to love the night.)



Aventine
Leanne Bergey



The Temple of Faustina
Leanne Bergey

Sky

Caitlin David

moment of openness to everything and nothing at once;
hiding place of the sun, the moon, the winking stars,

scars of the once-vibrant clouds, the planes, the
tire-screech of man against the wide expanse.

Sunset 1.6.14

Ian Heisler

The sinking firedisc
Flat as a flashlight lens, blazing as a forge
Dichotomizes heaven and earth

The sinking hourhand
Flat as a cold steel plate, blazing as a train
Divides me from one for the other

A Place To Be Home In

Karis Ostby

Sister
Bring me back to the forest
Singed scent of campfires in my mind lure me
Load up the orange van
Novels and jackknives
Pile the bedding high
We'll be warm in the frozen nights
My face pressed into yours

Clink in bottles of Mexican Coke
We'll be so fresh on the riverbanks
In the sweltering afternoon
The sun will glare and our minds will wander
A moment loses time as we sit
No idea is defined
Our one thought
Is soothing contentment

Push the clumps of long hair up into your beanie
Balance that guitar on your thigh
Black grime in your fingers
Happy fingers none the less
Stroke strings
Your voice floats up over the pine needles
And puts me at peace
It's all I want

Share smiles my dear
Make it last
Put the tea back on the fire
For a final cup
Scrub out the skillet in the icy creek
On the freeway our brains will be happy
All we know is the road
Movement is a home
Journey is where we are alive

On the Flood Plane

Joshua Patch

Mercy if the rain wasn't coming up over the sidewalk and the dogs barking at the screen door and lightning out over the Lundgrens' endless soaking cotton field. I saw it first and hollered, but I remember Mama hugged my head and shushed me, all soft and soothing, like the world was coming to an end but I was too young to know. Daddy's Chevy was big and tough, and we piled in with muddy boots and a bag of tortilla chips and a bundle of crying Joey and one fat suitcase for all four of us. Sat somber watching the water as Daddy loaded the pups into the covered truck bed. Then—away we went. Drove up out of the flood onto County Line Freeway, which was paved on a raised grassy strip that the water hadn't covered yet.

~ ~ ~

The day before was the start of a cold front, the kind I liked in the Texas spring, overcast and noisy with wind. You could almost forget you lived on a flat prairie stovetop for the better part of the year. I used to go out and run on days like that. Not run like Mama ran early mornings, in some exercise getup with practiced steady breathing up County Line. Not run like that, but also not run to get anywhere or catch anything. I'd run like a sailboat in the high wind, whooshing out across the bounty main of the Lundgrens' cotton field.

Joey in the baby swing in the yard, watching me with his mouth open, his eyes far away and not at all babyish. I was supposed to push him. Mama and Daddy had to talk inside. Lulu and Sonny lounged under the swing. Good

pups. Golden retrievers, not riled up too easy. Just faithful and sleepy and eager to meet you at the far end of the long sidewalk that led from the gravel driveway to the front deck. And they loved Joey. It's almost like they knew he was sick, the way they lay down and guarded him, even on the swing there.

I zipped back around and gave the swing a little shove. Joey didn't make a sound as the plastic seat ascended; he was used to swinging. I was happy it didn't make him cry. It was annoying when Joey cried, that harsh grinding wail. A gust of wind whistled and I ran from the swing back toward the field.

Mama came out the screen door and looked at me right as Joey slowed down to nothing. Her eyes looked red and puffy. "Ty," she said in a husky tone, "Didn't I say push your brother?"

"The wind will push him, Mama."

A smile ambushed Mama. "No, I don't think that's the way it works."

"Uh-huh, Mama! Like a cyclone almost out here!" The word "cyclone" was on my yellow vocabulary list from school. "And anyway, I was pushing him just one minute ago."

"Okay." She walked to the swing and pulled my little brother gently from it. "Well, come in and wash up now, sweet boy, so you can eat supper."

Supper was quiet. Mama and Daddy didn't talk. Sometimes they looked long at each other and raised their eyebrows, like one of them had asked a question hours ago and was still waiting. Then one of them would sigh, and they'd look back at their food.

"Push the corn this way, Tyler," said Daddy.

"Sir." Passed the serving bowl quietly. I didn't know how to chat through awkward silences then. Even the one word felt heavy.

But I also saw Daddy look over once at Joey, whom Mama was feeding mashed potatoes. He didn't look at Mama, just Joey. But after a second he smiled just a little. And he turned to me. And he looked—even in my young eyes—so brutally tired.

~ ~ ~

That same quiet reached into the next day. Old barns whizzed by on both sides. County Line Highway rumbled hypnotically under our feet. Joey shut up after a minute and widened his strange eyes and looked around. Babies don't have a concept of natural disasters. Big noises and shocking sights scare them, but Joey could have sat peaceful for a long spell at the end of the world, watching water cover the tips of mountains, so long as he watched it out a window.

We made a turn onto some wider, smoother road. That was when Mama turned to Daddy, leaning just a little over the center console, and said, "Ben."

In the mirror, Daddy raised his eyebrows.

Then she said, "Nice going, picking out a farm on the flood plane."

Looking back, that seems like the kind of comment that would have set him off. The kind that would have let loose the angry flood they both held back, clean through the levee and into my face and Joey's. But I also consider now that I was not yet initiate into the sprawling secret world of grown-ups, where that one sentence could have been connected to a thousand flirtatious jokes or a piece of youthful double-talk or some older conflict long-since resolved. But then—and it was one of the last times—I saw Daddy's right hand let go the steering wheel and squeeze Mama's. How it rained! The wipers clicked and rubbed.

~ ~ ~

I didn't know how to read an analog clock until the fourth grade. We never had them at home. Daddy liked digital better. But the farmhouse at Dee's Ranch, the snake-ridden property down Houston-ways that we shared with Mama's sister and cousins, had a grandfather clock in the family room. Ticked loud as fury, and I could hardly focus on the Bugs Bunny I was watching. The Bugs Bunny I would *never* get to watch at home so why wouldn't the clock shut up! It scared me even, that ominous tick.

I was too distracted by the tick and interested in my show to notice then, but I stood up between episodes—right at "That's all folks!"—and moved toward Mama and the tortilla chip bag. On the old blue couch she held Joey. The clock chimed four p.m. like a deep, solemn music box. Joey's gaze went straight to it. I think he had heard the ticking too. He was listening.

Then he started to laugh. Aunt Christy had a baby too, but her baby didn't laugh like Joey laughed. No baby laughed like Joey laughed. I don't think so. Lulu and Sonny put their ears up from where they lay by the door out to the kitchen.

Daddy was standing by the window when Joey laughed. Guess he was trying to work out the way the weather was tending. It was windy there, cloudy, almost like the day before had been at our house. Maybe the flood was on its way, making a steady march down Highway 290, on its way to the Gulf. But Daddy didn't seem to mind, the way he grinned and grinned at Joey, who was beside himself laughing at the chiming clock. Daddy looked at him very hard.

"You can have one handful, sweetie," said Mama to me. "Supper in not too long, okay?"

"Okay, Mama!"

Daddy sat down a foot from Mama on the couch.
“Reckon that patch out back could use a mow.”
She sighed. “Yeah.”
“Reckon I’ll fire up the mower if there’s time, and if there’s gas in it. “
“You know the combination for the shed and all?”
“Sure, sure. Your sister showed me last time, remember?”
“Oh. Yeah.”
I was fidgeting in the big chip bag for as large a handful as I could manage.
“Think it’ll rain here, Ben?”
“Want me to check the news?”
“Mmm, Tyler’s watching Looney Tunes.”
“Sure. Sure. Well, I guess we’ll get a little shower tonight.”
Mama nodded.
Daddy swallowed. “Remember watching Bugs Bunny? You know, when you were a kid?”
“Yeah.”
“Hm. Anything wrong?”
Mama said one more thing before I turned up the volume on the old TV and stopped listening. “Hope the house doesn’t go all the way under,” she said. “The photo albums are still there.”
Daddy just looked right down at Joey. I saw when I turned for a brief glance out the widow. He didn’t look at Mama when she was talking. And I saw, Mama was looking at Joey, too. Looking at him like the flood was going to take him under if she looked away.

Love, to Me

Joshua Patch

I wrenched the round lid off her tin of peach and ginger tea. “Thank you,” she said. And when I reached to hand the tin to her, she reached inside it, took two bags, and spun around to face the whistling kettle, leaving me in furrowed contemplation of a tin. She said, “I’m not upset, I just don’t want the noise of it right now. My head feels like somebody hit with a shovel. But, like I was saying, if you wanted to, we could play cards a little while, or we could read from Wendell Berry on the porch. By now the sun will be smack dab behind the chimney, if you’re sitting on the swing, and won’t cast such a glare down on the page. It’s warmed up so much, too, these last few days that we could leave our sweaters in the house, and sit close, swaying, reading in a whisper.” I got the gist, but even at that time, with her dark hair in circlets that hung down around her clavicles, I didn’t hear. The one thing I desired was for my girl to settle in her armchair in the dim, unwindowed parlor and to look at me while I rehearsed the opera I was in. I *was* in love, but love, to me, was silence, my tenor forming ripples in her tea and rattling her hanging picture-frames.



Old Town Soda Fountain
Micayla Hardisty



Joshua Tree
Alyssa Mori

Shipwrecks

Marisa Lainson

And we'll pin the ocean on a clothesline,
next to our bedsheets and linens
to dry in the summer breeze.

You have seas beneath your skin;
I know because it seeps through your pores
and I lick the salt off your chin.

I know because St. John tells how
Cana's wine poured out from water pots,
so the Pacific pooling in your bones
isn't too strange a thing.

I've been sailing 'neath your sternum,
catching the rise and fall of the tide
as it goes in and out your lungs.

I've climbed the rungs of your spine
to sit at the cliffside of your clavicle,
letting the tempest of your thoughts
drench my face as they drip down
in rivers tracing to your palm.

You leave puddles when you walk across my floor,
when you rifle through my mind with siren's hands-
And I can't mop up memories;

they're sticky and they stain.

You're blue and I'm woozy;
you don't want to lose me,
so out with the linens you'll be.

You said that you would be dry land;
I've been too long at sea.

Bluestocking

Matthew Edwards

Her hazel gaze humorously halts, as
She is hazarded by *hic! hic!* hiccups.
Holding her hand, I hear her hesitate
As her heart lurches with every hefty
Hic! hic! hiccup.
She is dressed to impress
Wearing her best green dress and
Long, blue stockings. Her first step, missteps to
Show that placing faith in her grace is rather
Groundless.
Ungraceful yet gracious, glorious
Queen of Klutz! She trips
And dips, tilts and twirls, till misbalance is
Her balance, regaining composure through
Her many marvelous missteps.
Herrick and I agree: She is delightful in
Disorder. My shoulder shoulders her before
She falls any further. This is how we have learned to walk,
Leaning together. We hide nothing from each other,
Not our missteps, nor mistakes, nor even our *hic!*
hic! hiccups. She is my bounding beauty, my
Bluestocking.

A Story for Birds, Part II

Matthew Edwards

The robins flicker
Like red ribbons, they flutter
Across the clear sky

Pears

Nicole Rinde

“put the pears in the basket”
my favorite task
the box, heavy
first opening this, then
the green papers,
they are stamped with the name of the orchard,
and each pear is wrapped gently,
I wonder whose hand is on the other side of my pear,
The pear whose shape I can see,
Whose blush is revealed
When the paper sticks softly with the moisture of fresh fruit,
I pull on each sheet gently,
As a lady in a different time may have pulled a hankerchief,
The pears roll cascade out of their translucent opaque wrappings.
Into baskets,
Where on the other side another hand will reach,
Reach and grab,
and finally they shall reach
lips.

Ceiling Fan Light

Alea Peister

I was reading, but now the music
and
 this metallic ceiling
patterned
reflects light.
and the fan attached to one of its metallic squares sends
indistinct paddles of shadows spinning through the night.
 Thwaphthwaphthwaphthwaphthwap...
 [READ FAST].

I love the light, how it plays,
and the shadows.
 But here they're (*whisper[moving]*)
 ~ And the nebulous spot of light's stillness is...
 (*...thwaphthwaphthwaphthwap.*)



'Merica
Amanda Bishop



Downtown
Amanda Bishop

iSight

Hannah Schaller

How did it go, you ask?
The evening was unhappy, I –
Bing, bing, numbers four
Unlock the gem-encaséd door
Through which mystic symbols pour,
Dazzling her eyes. She strokes the keys
As Peter guarding Heaven's secrecies.
Priestess in ecstasies of the hypnotic
Radiant Fifth Phonic,
Disyllabic Delphic
Oracle
(The steeple bell is ringing, the choir is singing)
Deaf, mute, her trance unbroken holds her eye.
Tap, click, clatter,
Icons all aspatter
Commanding meditative veneration;
She gasps – eyes widen – and are still.
Beatific inspiration!
Did she see a soul uptaken,
Or a vision of the great
iAm?

The passion of the lamb
who opened not his mouth,
 perhaps is what her silence signifies;
perhaps the fixé sight
of some unmoving star
 turns to stone her glittering, marble eyes.

Blind to this world, Tieresias
(so the blind bard reports, and the blind
ever did follow in one another's footsteps)
riddled with gods, perceived
the mysteries of generation, the fullness
of human experience;
do you see all, following those
who feed you news of distant worlds,
experiences of untouched
planes of being?

Facebook and Twitter,
eyelids flutter
back and forth; ecstatic exclamation,
meanwhile the entrancéd gaze unshaken.

Myopia
may be a virtue – purity of heart
wills one thing, so perhaps the singular of sight
are blessed.
What, what fills her gaze of transportation?
The garden of Paradise forsaken,
or her mansion in
uTopia?

Movement

Scott Hubbard

Flashing,
Light particles animate the
Darkness, casting shadows
From the eye's view,
Flashing.

Dropping,
Or maybe dripping so slowly
Raindrops splash into the
Waiting puddle,
Vanish.

Darting,
Pebbles skip once or twice, then sink
To rejoin those long-gone,
Tossed ages hence
Downstream.

Roaring,
The Wind with all its bravado
Gusts forth from the West. And
Not returning,
Blows on.

Turning,
Time revolves steadily on its
Way. Seasons pass by and
Through the changes
We go.

Flashing,
Or maybe dripping so slowly,
To rejoin those long-gone,
Not returning,
We go.

Thoughts from the Labyrinth

Scott Hubbard

No ball of yarn. Twists and turns
Into faceless walls,
Ever-changing corners.
On cold stone, wet footprints of fore farers;
Men of many ways who wander still;
Lost in this Proteus.

And I have looked at the moon
And seen its light
Burn white against the violet blush of night
And I wish it was as easy to see the truth.

No prison. Just endless trails of vines
Interwoven and lily buds blooming.
Grass trodden down for the first time.
Flowing water bathed in dappled light.
Once we both walked here, in this garden.

And I have put my fingers in the holes
Between the branches, and slowly pulled my hands apart
And peered into the secret valley,
Gazing at the tree glowing golden-green
On a clear summer's day.
And I wish it was as easy to find you.

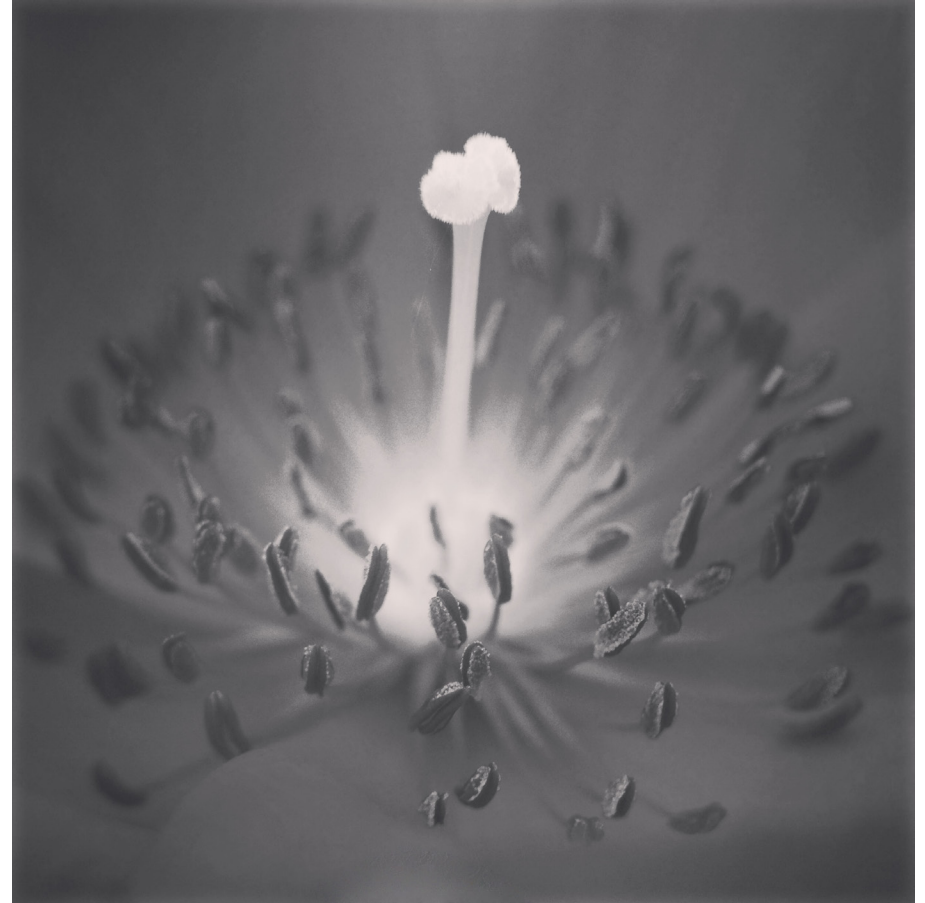
Paradox

Scott Hubbard

The opening bud of the rose,
The golden fruit on the branch.
The gleaming disk of the sea.
The quivering halo around the campfire,
The church floor as the sun meets the colored glass.
The steam that rises from the cups set between two friends.
Heaven's overturned wine glass in a deep sunset,
And the fiery rim that unites twilight with dusk.

And all this we would not know
But for that point of pure black that serves as our window
To the world,
That island of jet
Set in seas of jade, amber, sapphire,
The pupil enwreathed by cornea.

That darkness shows us what light is;
The teardrop moon that stains night's cheek,
The smile of sunlight on water,
The storm-grey eyes that you look through,
And the opening bud of the rose.



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Justin Sinclair

featuring the work of:

Alea Peister

Alyssa Mori

Amanda Bishop

Caitlin David

Christian Bearup

Scott Hubbard

Hannah Schaller

Ian Heisler

Joshua Patch

Justin Sinclair

Karis Ostby

Leanne Bergey

Marisa Lainson

Matthew Edwards

Micayla Hardisty

Nicole Rinde