

See Spot Run

January/February 2016

Maddening the Sacred Eulogy

Dear Readers

Dear reader,

*Clive Barker, in his novel *The Thief of Always*, wrote, “The great grey beast of February had eaten Harvey Swick alive.” What unfolds against the backdrop of winter’s last gasp is Harvey’s panoply of discovery and discord. In this issue, *Maddening the Sacred Eulogy*, we hope you find yourself initiated into your own journey through the end of Winter into Spring.*

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There's a bump in the floor

by Elizabeth Austin

A tree has slowly grown
Up through our house,
Arching the floorboards
Cracking plaster with its boughs.
This tree pushed its way into the living room,
On the floor below,
Starting as a small curve of rug
That we stumbled over-
Until one day it burst through,
Splintering the wood floors,
Green leaves pushing upwards
Desperate for light.
This tree hoisted the coffee table up
Along with the high-backed wing chair-
Now we're sipping tea in its limbs
As it climbs higher and higher,
Up to my bedroom
To burst through the roof
And eventually its branches will shatter
the glass of the windows,
blow the doors out completely
and we'll live in the limbs,
swinging ourselves through burgeoning jade.

Three More Reasons

by Karli Henning

1

your eyes
blue like
the surface
of frozen rivers
flecks of ice
flecks of white

11

your eyes
blue like
the tips of
campfire flames
melt my hands
light my night

111

your eyes
blue like
blood through
winter skin
where my blood goes
at your touch

Traditions

by Karli Henning

It was the last weekend of November in a little-better-than-dive bar and we sipped on spiked coffee instead of beer while we waited for the fireworks show to begin above the state capital building. The creamy drinks were lukewarm at best but they thawed our fingertips and the small but growing conversation.

My father always drove us two towns over to pick out the highest quality Christmas tree during the last weekend of November not because he loved to play lumberjack tour guide but because it meant two more hours with three happy daughters, hot chocolate upholstery stains and a million pine needles in his backseat.

I am buying another round as a Christmas gift to all of you! shouted one friend who never got a chance because the soft thud of the first firework shook the bar windows. It was a signal for us to re-bundle and shuffle out onto the sidewalk to scope out a spot to tilt our raw pink faces to the sky.

The explosions drowned out murmuring carols from citywide speakers. The violent blasts of gunpowder mixed with humming bells and the sporadic lights against black clouds made me close my eyes to see a dance of red particles. There was a sudden wave of gasps and I knew the tree was lit.

Eyes still closed, I pictured roots bursting from the bottom of the Christmas tree shaped like the arms of fireworks, dripping flecks of gold. They reached all the way to an old farm on a dirt road two towns away in the last weekend of November.

Growing or dying?

by Domenica Dalla Vecchia



Twisted crossroad
by Domenica Dalla Vecchia



Father

by Taylor Card

DNA never needed to Stockholm Syndrome me into anything.

*If I truly had to tell you why I'll always love him,
It would come down to a rainy day and a yellow dress
stained blue with forget-me-nots.*

*I'm four when God pulls the plug from his bathtub
'cause the water's gone lukewarm and lost its steam.*

*It drains for hours and hours onto our driveway
but it's almost summer
and I've fallen in love with kissing tulip bulbs and dancing for sunsets.*

*So we go out to get massaged by endless bathwater
Kiss all the pink tulips and the rare red ones twice for luck
and he forgets how to be embarrassed.*

*When the sun goes down,
I can't stop smiling;*

we're dancing in our driveway in the pouring rain.

It's April and Our Knuckles Are Cold

by Angela Williams

In the rain my love and I scour the gravel pit for fossils. We sift and scan, searching for freshwater coral, paw through layers to see what slid down in the slick. Clay seeps under our nails, into our skins. Our feet dig in and brace us against the wind.

When the sky clears we drive to the dam for the first steelhead trout of the season. Nothing is jumping. It is still too cold for them to come up river to spawn. The rail at the look-out is soaked from fast water--river risen from melt-off and rain.

Drupes of sumac berries, red torches against the grey sky—easy to mistake for fat cardinals, their feathers matted against the wind. Now we walk down to the riverbank. I pinch off a clump of sumac and grind it against my palm. Its red spice recalls from childhood, a bloody nose bitten by the wind. It is just too cold to breathe.

My love will work on his truck in the barn until dark. He'll use everything under the sink to clean his hands. Spray his life and heart lines raw. Late, when he wants to touch, his hands will be dry as the stag-horn sumac at the woods' edge behind my father's house. His nails are sanded smooth, round as the moon in the golden sky of his eyes, a halo as honest as the day's work he'll already have put in.

When I was a kid my father kept the snowplow on his truck until May. We'd drive back to the woods. He'd curse the sumac, then he'd lower the plow and hit the gas, uprooting as many trees as he could on a run. Their branches flew like antlers in rut. Then he'd back up, rev the v-8, hit the gas, do it again, and laugh like hell.

Hydrologic

by Eric Morris-Pusey

Grandfather snaps photos with his Nikon D5500.
Everyone hasn't been together like this since the last funeral.
The camera is heavy and black as Jimmy's coffin lid,
and when I watch Grandfather change its lens

it is not unlike seeing him load a pistol.
Droplets hang on the points of umbrellas
like ripe fruit aching to fall,
to swell the rivulets and puddles that keep soil soft

for the gravediggers. Where will I meet the next person
I love? Perhaps beneath a streetlamp a winter or two from now,
each falling snowflake burning as it catches the light.
And where will we be parted? I'd catch one of the specks

in my tiny hand, hold it to my lips, and ask, but surely
my breath would kill it. The stars will hide
behind clouds and the halo cast by the town's lights, offering
no answers. When someone catches me and lays me

in the spread of earth the rain has softened for me,
the rivers that stream and steam down that someone's face
will feed towering oaks and fill the deepest oceans
in worlds our eyes will never dream of seeing.

Extinction of the Planet

by Daniel de Cullà

We laugh at first
Excerpt from a Journey of blood and tears
When Songs of Love and Maps of Freedom
Have undertaken to be revealed
And only are correspondences, notes
Quotes as wave lengths.
Sun rods into mountains
Hearing thrssh thrssh from the tress
Rotting nebulae.
Moon rides rivers
Just being able to pick and go
Objective characteristics
To the observance of geophysics.
Are we seeing our extinction?
Voices-- human crying
Voices-animal, voices-plant
But the Planet cannot sleep a wink
Bushing over the stream.
Voice-Life of Earth lives
And we laugh at first
Again. The same.

Water and It's Sky

by Domenica Dalla Vecchia



Because of St. Kevin and the Blackbird

by Angela Williams

Near Glendalough, Ireland a cave is bitten
into the apple of a hill with room enough
to lie there and listen to the stars.

Perhaps you can reach out to wish them goodnight.

While you're reaching out of sight,
if a blackbird lands on your hand,
draw it back in and fashion a bed
from what you come across in the dark—
what can comfort, what can hold.

If you find nothing, fold your other hand
over the blackbird and its three eggs, now laid,
cupping it as you make your way downhill
through bramble and stony piles, to the woods.

Stop there then among the trees, while your breath
catches up to you. Under the canopy of oaks,
you will find leaves to fold into a nest so
your hand is freed of progeny—
their flight imagined in early dreams.

Stalemate

by Eric Morris-Pusey

Tears and snow leave
unattractive stains on your cheeks,
so you move to the desert.

Only the dead speak so far from the cold
city lights, and even the dead are
usually silent. When they do find a voice,

it is only their bones rattling,
not endless jawing in bars or lecture halls
or under bright election banners.

There is no rhetoric in the desert
because there is nothing in the desert.
The phone lines, the spindly cell towers

struggle to stretch their arms so wide.
When I call from back East, we can hardly speak.
Do I understand why you left?

There is so much bright pain here under the lights.
Click and whoosh, you light a cigarette
before you say, "I've washed off all the soot

the city left on me." My laugh is not quite
bitter when I tell you the tobacco was packed
under North Carolina factory fluorescence.

The call is dropped. I bite my lip. Do you sit,
listening to the song the wind sings
streaming through naked ribcages

stripped of all that made them
so dirty, so noble?

Dancing with My Lass to Elvis Costello

by John Rybicki

First night alone in the new apartment.
The spirits draw up from the hard things
of this world. The oak floor and trim,
even the walls warm to malleable,

wrap themselves like a shawl around my animal.
I put on some Elvis Costello and shape my arms
to hold Julie's form, as if she were there
in the hollow under my chin. Is it Elvis

or some acoustic angel sprinkling my love's
spirit near her man, who leans his pillars
from foot to foot, his palm gripping no more
than the apparition of her baby-bald head?

*

They say that grief is a tidal wave
and when it hits it staggers me
to the living room floor. I kneel
and hold my hand to the distance
the way my love did every time

she'd chalk away over the stones
in our driveway, turn signal winking
left so the squirrels and such would know
which way she was going. She'd curl
onto the blacktop and squeal the brakes,

jut her arm out the car window, her hand
straining to drag the arm almost out
by its socket and fly her back to me.
Were those bracelets, or little bells
of cancer jingling along her arms?

*

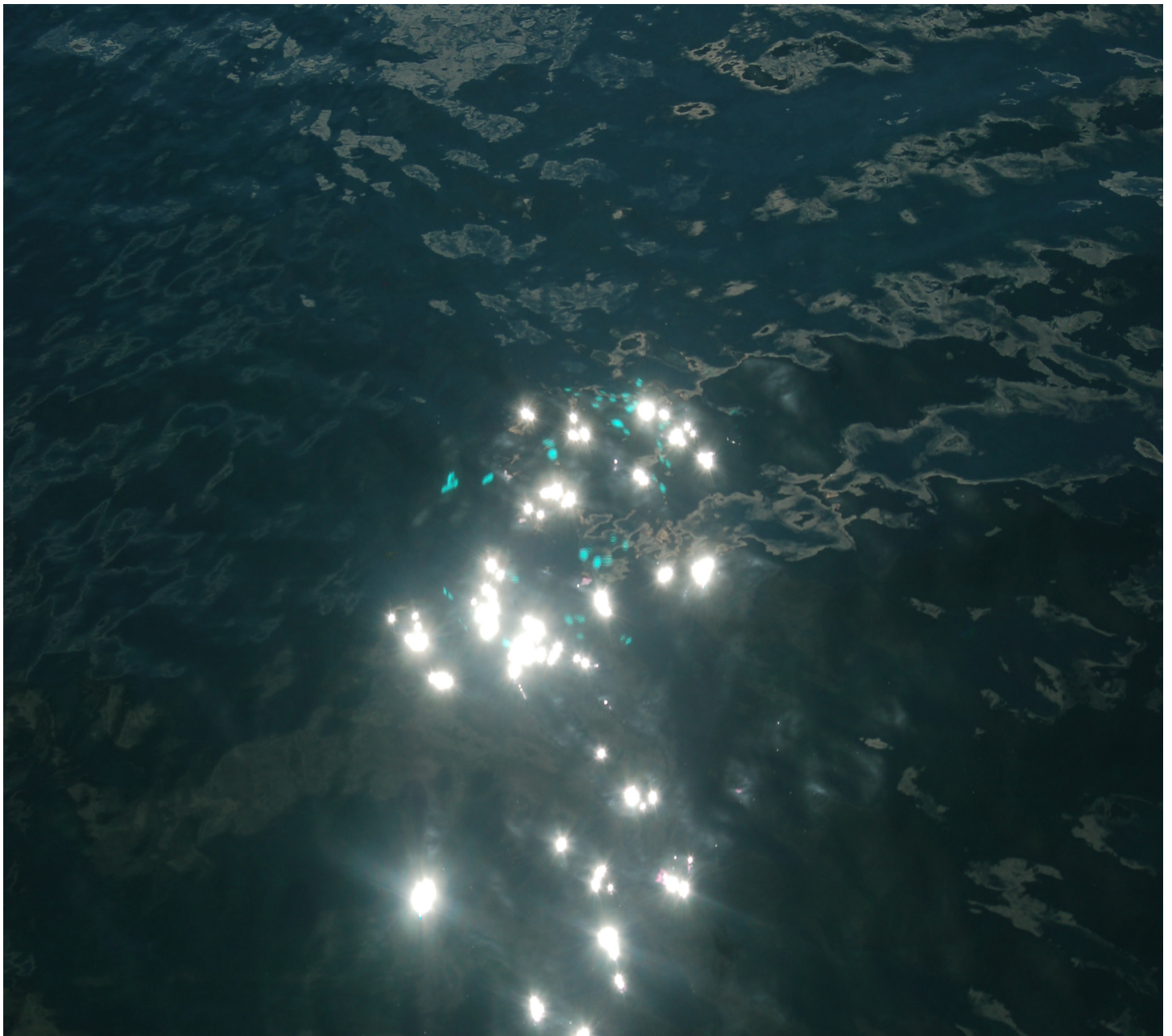
*My lass and I were citizens of that magnification.
We were blood tulips. Wreaths laced with ribbons
circled each of our throats as I stood there in my socks
on our cement slab porch, replicating the gesture,*

*willing my arm to tear out by its root and chase
after her. Julie would ease off the brakes at the apex
of our little world and let gravity take her.
She'd surrender downhill to that river sweeping*

*her toward her own death. Sometimes I'd cry
or she'd cry around the bend to the elements,
"I love you, Dude, I love you, Dude," her voice
always softer the second time with distance.*

Previously appeared in John Rybicki's When All the World Was Old

Twinkle, Twinkle, little Lake
by Domenica Dalla Vecchia



Front Doors

by Daniel de Cullà

*Baby O dynamite
mistress of the Star fish
swimming in my ears
where often a Wo/Man remains alone
long to listen
Doors singing my business daily
dead as a door nail
into all this Channel
O.O. % Ecstasy. No;
showing me a door opening by itself
at the End of lives forgotten
when Sun is a dog cart
botted with gay dogs
of the dooms day
sit and dreaming
of the floor of our
nothingness sentencing:
“Baker’s dozen talk
19 to the dozen”.*

Because of St. Kevin and the Blackbird
by Angela Williams

*You'll need to clean your closet now
they're the first and only words to fall out.*

*I close my eyes and can see his thirty collared shirts
next to my worn robe with the pink roses.*

*I can see the door handle holding an orange jacket
a bit unconventional but his favorite color.*

*Under a pile of clean slacks on the floor
I know there's a book I told him to read*

*And on the top shelf housing fresh dust
letter filled with words like *always*.*

Jack

by Elizabeth Austin

Upon waking from his nap,
he flings his bedroom door open
to an empty split-level landing
and despairs, "No one missed Jack!"

I have taken to listening for him
in the afternoons, waiting for his feet
to patter across the wood floor- *he's up!*

I lay myself along the light
of the door's jamb like a carpet,
an old toy waiting

for him to come and play:
his adoring and only mother,
telling him, *I am here.*
I have been waiting for you all along.

Mental Illness ABC's

by Karli Henning

Anxiety is a snake of caring tightening around your ribs
baking a cake for the neighbor's ex-wife's birthday
crystalizing your plans to take a shower

Depression is getting your foot caught in mud and lying down
escaping a party to wonder if God exists

forgetting to pay bills and pretending it matters

Growing up with both is skipping across broken beer bottles
hanging "glass half-full" reminders on the bathroom mirror

imploding with doubt when you forget to feed the cat

justifying three hours spent scheduling on Sundays

killing silence with sitcoms and laugh-tracks

loving to consume and consuming to love

missing your therapist like a family member

noticing the couch has moved three inches to the left

opening old wounds and pouring in soy sauce

perfecting the act of acting perfectly normal

quickenning heart rates and slowing productivity

reliving your fifth grade spelling bee

surviving, but not living

twitching fingers and bloody cuticles

understanding that you'll never understand anything

visiting your grandparents because time's running out

wondering if you will ever finish anything

x

y

z

Nicole

by Taylor Card

She was so alive
that at times the death-craving would come to her
Little pulses of risk it and wildness
that would twitch her bones and prick at her blood,
edging her up and out of the house
The song that played the skies was
a flash photo taken in a darkroom
and the thunder deep a door slammed
as her bare toes lipped through the grass to the street

There she laid down across two lanes
and trembled with terrible happiness
I could do nothing else but lie down next to her
and witness
Rain melted her curls into indistinguishable asphalt rivers
The light coming towards us,
steadier than the strobing flashes all around
I heard a car cry out
I honked at her to move

But it was too late
She soaked into the pavement
lightning struck
and she was forged in unmovable memory

Twilight through the trees
by Domenica Dalla Vecchia



Sway

by Elizabeth Austin

I turn in circles, my daughter
balanced softly on the tops
of my feet. We're dancing
to the slow, sad music I listen to
when I can't focus on any one thing
and the only way to hurt less
is to hurt more first. I think
this is what dying is- swaying,
rocking gently from foot to foot,
arms out, twirling at the hand
of whatever will eventually twist you
into itself, hold you tight to its chest
and shift at the hips, a mouth
near your ear and a hand
on your waist, like dancing
only you're not dancing,
you're closing your eyes
and there's no floor below you,
only space to fall, and there's quiet,
so much quiet it's a pleasure.
Never needing to hurt, never
having to feel life peel by
while you sprint to catch up.
No one's breaking your heart,
and there's no worry for the future,
no nagging past. It's just a fist
closing around a flame,
a beat that slows in tempo
until all that's left is echo,
and echo fades to black.

On a Piece of Paper You Were About to Burn

by John Rybicki

*How do you hold the dead
when they're hammered into a room
so flat you can pick your teeth*

*with one corner of the picture? When you were the one
at that moment aiming the cheap camera
wanting to fold her light*

*into a square locket of time.
You could see Noah's ark and the earth,
all the light in the world concentrated in her brown eyes.*

*The Dixie Chicks were playing "Cowboy Take Me Away,"
and that didn't hurt your cause.
But now that she's a crumb inside the earth,*

*the song punches little whispery nail holes
in the bottom of your boat
so the fountain sends its fine mist raining up.*

*You rock on the kitchen floor hugging your own legs,
weeping and kissing a face so tiny
you could cover it with a penny.*

*You repeat the same prayer to her over and over,
as if your heart were the governor on death's engine.
How could God smash a room flat into a photo*

*and do it over and over again?
She's standing in the doorway to your bedroom
in that apartment you came home to after your I do's.*

Soon she'll peel off her shirt for bedtime
shivering even before you drive the needle into her arm.
You miss the bird's nest made of hair on your dresser,

the kissing and kissing her baby-bald head
when you were young and in love with as much
blood as rain pouring out of your shoes.

*

My lass and I were citizens of that magnification.
We were blood tulips. Wreaths laced with ribbons
circled each of our throats as I stood there in my socks
on our cement slab porch, replicating the gesture,

willing my arm to tear out by its root and chase
after her. Julie would ease off the brakes at the apex
of our little world and let gravity take her.

She'd surrender downhill to that river sweeping

her toward her own death. Sometimes I'd cry
or she'd cry around the bend to the elements,
"I love you, Dude, I love you, Dude," her voice
always softer the second time with distance.

Previously appeared in John Rybicki's *When All the World Was Old*

Spotlight Piece

External Verifications that Your Doppelgänger is Stalking You

by John Urdiales

People say I look like their friends, their brothers, sons, dead husbands. I would not know what to do if I ran into myself. It would be as if looking into a mirror, but wearing different clothes and perhaps slightly variant glasses—or no glasses at all—and a swaggering stride which I might find overtly aberrant. What would I do? What would I say? Would words even be necessary? How might I prevent a row, a scene in the street? Would the hand of God descend from the clouds and pick one of us up to prevent some catastrophic event from happening—an event which He has always-already ordained by allowing such an encounter? Would I even believe in God? Might I, in fact, play the harp? Would I orchestrate melodies of rich undertones without having a conception of the soul? without having a clear identity of mind, body, spirit? Would I have a spirit? I would have spirits bountiful enough to live in ecstasy—perhaps ecstasy, too, and other inhibitors of hallucinogenic transformation. And would I live in an imaginary setting, filled with the wonders of material love, of a love so free it could not be chained, could not be understood by the roving masses? Perhaps the moon might crash into the earth, into this comfy, cozy town; or might the governing political bodies break into civil war? Would life be worth living after such an abominable confrontation? Would I remember how to pray, how to think, or how to read, to write, to sing or how to dance? No—perhaps reality would crumble, would find itself in a situation where nothing could continue as it always-already is, was, will come to be. ‘I’ would no longer exist: only ‘we’. Then again—he might have great taste in music and coffee.

