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Lit + Art

805 (ISSN 2379-4593) is a literary and art journal published quarterly by the Manatee County Public Library System. Online issues are free to read. A print anthology of selected works is available to purchase.

The editorial board is composed of librarians, writers, and a professor. The editors seek short fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and art that is unexpected, striking, and moving. Unsolicited and simultaneous submissions accepted. Submissions are free.

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Lit + Art

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From the Editor

When we founded 805, we hoped our little publication based in Florida would eventually get a few international submissions. Flash forward three years later, and we've published artists and authors from the U.K., Brazil, Saudi Arabia, Germany, Russia, Thailand, Pakistan, Bermuda, Sweden, Honduras, and Cuba.

This issue in front of you is our most international issue yet. The pieces inside will transport you across the world. Our art will take you to the streets of Nepal and Ethiopia, and our prose will take you to Saudi Arabia and the London Underground. And these pieces won't just move you geographically, they'll yank you back to the person you were in college, yearning to make it as an artist. They'll propel you forward past the end of your life, hoping your children cherish your memories together as you cherish the memories of your parents. When you read these pieces, you'll step into the shoes of people who are judged for how they look or who they love, and you'll pull on the clothes of those doing the judging.

As librarians, writers, and citizens of the world, we hope you enjoy your travels within our pages. Next month, we will literally travel to Orlando to accept an Innovation Award from the Florida Library Association, which we could not have won without the talent of our contributors and the support of our readers. Thank you.

Stephanie Katz
Editor-In-Chief

Contents

Fiction

Christopher Adams, <i>20:43</i>	19
Jill Caugherty, <i>Real People</i>	7
Kelsey Landhuis, <i>Rapture Shoes</i>	24
Jennifer Leiker, <i>Stranger Things</i>	14

Nonfiction

Julia Kantic, <i>Button Tin</i>	4
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Poetry

Haley Karin, <i>Loss of Face</i>	2
<i>Thoughts and Prayers</i>	23
<i>When They Came for the House</i>	12

Art

Cover: Bredt Bredthauer, *Children at Play, Durbar Square*

W. Adams, <i>Mr. Jones Tea 2897</i>	16
<i>Rescue Party 11471</i>	17
Bredt Bredthauer, Kathmandu Series	
<i>Anonymous Man Sitting on Thamel Street</i>	18
<i>Nepalese Soldier Guarding Temple Ruins</i>	22
<i>One Pedicab, No Tourists</i>	13
<i>Woman as Seen Between Between Stone Lion's Legs</i>	5
Julia Justo, <i>The Women's March</i>	10
Nat Kasper, <i>Ethiopia Square</i>	6
Matthew Morpheus, <i>The First After God</i>	21
Jamie Stoneman, <i>Noon Sunlight</i>	11

Bios



Children at Play, Durbar Square, Bredt Bredthauer

Loss of Face

Haley Karin

A black man on bicycle approaches
two uniformed officers enjoying
their lunch on the patio of Santana Row

The black man yells
Obbbb man San Jose PD, do I have a story for you...
and dismounts, wielding a clapped on
grin and pushing a casual hand into his jean pocket

Officer Smith transfers careful blue
eyes to his partner, his pupils a scalding bowl
of soup he is suddenly carrying upstairs,

with one hand he leans back

unclips

his holster like the turn of a page

and looks back at the man as he begins.

A few tables over a father
palms two quarters into his kids' hands
releasing their barreling bodies
towards the gumball machine next door

In the corner a woman curtains her face
with thick red hair, looping shaking fingers
through her dog's harness as it pants
for the fallen shoe-string fries at her feet

The waiter

stutters

the daily special

somewhere else a cough

a fumbled knife

an email notification

a tripped over punchline

Menus gliding open like parasols

This far west we may not have many confederate statues
But plenty of pale spotlight faces
artfully
looking the other way, waiting
for this tale to end
and a headline to begin

When it does
the man laughs like a carousel
and his missing hand reappears clutching gold-
rimmed glasses and every tugged lung exhales,
mouths finding the burgers they were there to eat
eyes confidently plotting their credit card's
war path through the polished designer store fronts

And no one
spoke
of the hand
still holding a gun
long after
the story
had finished.

Button Tin

Julia Kantic

When I arrive in Manchester, my brothers will come and get me. They'll be smart and shower-fresh, tall and protective. I'll be travel-weary, bedraggled, and crumpled. We'll drive "up North," gazing out of rain-splattered windows. The light will likely be dismal and the Fells beautiful as we wind through them, rattling over cattle grids, a careful eye out for random sheep.

There'll be no one to greet us, nothing keeping warm in the oven or stocked in the fridge for our arrival. The house will be cold and echo with absence. No matter, we'll share some whisky with russet peat tones (brought for the occasion) and warm hugs before sleep. Alone, I'll stare at the ceiling in the dark and listen for memories, a sign, anything. I'll make a list of worries in my head. No, I'll rearrange and add to the list of worries in my head. They'll collapse like a heap of piled pebbles when one too many has been added, then I'll sleep.

So many drawers and cupboards—we'll rummage through them all. I'll cover myself in bubble wrap and tape. We'll share stories, tears, and smiles as we dole out which ones belong to whom, decide who will guard which memory. We won't fight over these. Our family is good at sharing.

I'll fill cartons and mark them carefully with the prescribed names of the contents within, mark down the inventory of physical items, while all the time tallying a list of moments and memories, scrabbling and routing out what might be important later. A list to prevent a longer list of forgotten memories, regrets, lost moments.

My list will not convey the actual contents, but rather, what I'm really placing in each box. Where it reads "Button Tin" in scrawled, failing black marker, there'll be a box of memories, assorted colours, sizes, shapes. Rattling in an old biscuit tin with a hinged lid, just like a treasure chest, small enough for a child to shake.

It's the memory of a mother saying, with an exasperated smile, "Go fetch the button tin then." My eager legs and hands run and grab it, shake and rattle the tin, explore its treasures poured out on the table. I search for the right one, or the one "that'll do." My small eyes and hands watch and mimic, fascinated, as they learn the way to make a button work. Watch as the thread is wound around a thousand times at the end in a strangle. My mother flicks the button to show how it can still wobble, I tidy up the buttons, slow as I like, reluctant to put the tin away.

Needles have eyes, buttons have eyes, memories have eyes, but not to see with. The eyes of memories only look one way, in their own direction, they are not accurate, and what they see changes without even the need to blink.

Such a tender utterance to replace a button, the use of tired eyes, the lateness of the hour, the needle pricks, tiny work for work-worn fingers. My mother had beautiful hands, slender, long, delicate. Grief changes perspective on even the most mundane of things. A tear in my eye, a thread through the needle, a needle through the button, sewing on the memory.

My parents are gone, but I can stack some memories in a packing box so they can be shaken, so they might rattle, the tin opened and poured out at will and one chosen, just the right size and colour. I'll call to my youngest "fetch the button tin." She'll go quickly, anticipation jiggling and jittering in all her limbs, she'll shake it to hear the rattle of what's inside. The tin has a hinged lid, just like a treasure chest. She'll struggle to open it, then pour the buttons out. "Find a good one," I'll say, watching the colours of the bright buttons reflect in her eager eyes, seeing her slender fingers slide the buttons out into an array, grabbing one then another, holding them to the light.

And when I'm gone, I hope my daughters will think to keep the tin and all the new buttons inside.



Woman as Seen Between Between Stone Lion's Legs, Bredt Bredthauer



Ethiopia Square, Nat Kasper

Real People

Jill Caugherty

When she hikes back to the turn-out, Myra is surprised to see a battered Ford, circa 1980, parked beside her Prius. Even more surprising is its owner: a girl slumped on the hood. She wears cut-off shorts and a black tee that hugs her chest. Her hair is twisted into a long, honey-blond ponytail. Cradling her waist with one hand, she smokes a cigarette with the other.

As Myra crunches across the gravel, the girl glances up in alarm, like a deer ready to flee. Her face relaxes as she assesses Myra's sagging jawline, paunchy belly, and laced-up hiking boots. With a dismissive flick of her cigarette, she looks away. Feeling self-conscious, Myra tugs at the worn sleeves of her cardigan. The girl blows a cloud of smoke from the corner of her lips like a leading lady from the thirties.

"Hi," Myra says, "I didn't expect to meet anyone out here."

The girl gazes at the clearing in the trees where Myra has emerged. "It's the only turn-out I've seen in miles." Her voice is gravelly, as though she has been crying.

"Are you lost?"

The girl shakes her head and puffs. "I know where I am, all right."

Myra turns to unlock her car.

"Do you know how far we are from the nearest gas station?" the girl asks.

"Not far. Five miles up the road?" She straightens and studies the girl. "Do you have car trouble?"

The girl draws her knees to her chest, taps cigarette ash onto the hood. "Sort of. One of my tires is going flat, and I don't have a spare."

"You can follow me to the gas station if you think you can make it. I'm heading that way myself. I need to fill up."

For a while the girl says nothing, until Myra is ready to accept her silence as a no.

But then she says, "All right," and slides off the car, squashes the cigarette.

At the gas station, they emerge from their cars at the same time. The girl leans over suddenly and clutches her stomach, then recovers, steadies herself. Myra flags down the attendant, who explains that he'll have to charge extra for the spare, and he can't get to it for a while. The girl crosses her arms and glares.

Myra says, "Are you hungry? I'm starving." She doesn't know why she asks. She could leave the girl here and drive away.

"Yeah. I haven't eaten since breakfast."

"I've got some snacks in my trunk. We could sit on the bench behind the station and eat while you wait for your car."

The girl's eyes travel across Myra's face. She shrugs. "Okay."

When Myra returns with a box of crackers, granola bars, and trail mix, the girl declares, "I could eat about five Big Macs right now."

Myra smiles. "And I've sworn them off for life. I'm Myra."

"Leigh."

When the girl says nothing more, Myra adds, "I'm just up from the Bay for a hike. I didn't want to be indoors on a day like this."

A snort. "Every day in California is like this. Perpetual sunshine."

"That's what so many people love about it."

"Not me. That's what I hate. Everything looks cheerful in a bogus way. Like Disney Land."

"You live around here?"

"No." Leigh reaches for another cracker and stuffs it into her mouth. "I'm headed to Portland."

Crumbs gather at her lips, and she frowns, chewing, while simultaneously grabbing several more wafers.

"That where you're from?"

Leigh tilts her head in Myra's direction. "I wish. I might move there, though." Her voice wavers, and she looks away. Myra knows how it feels to have no concrete plans.

"What's in Portland?" she asks gently.

"My boyfriend. Real people. Not stupid shit and smiley fakes."

Myra flinches. She guesses the stupid shit includes everything in California.

"So what do *you* do?" Without waiting for Myra's answer, Leigh digs into her pocket for the pack of cigarettes.

Myra clears her throat. "I work at a department store in San Jose."

Leigh nods, unimpressed.

"I was an art major in college," Myra adds, feeling compelled to explain. "After I graduated, I painted in my free time. I even wanted to move to Mendocino and open my own studio. But one day I realized that I hadn't touched my paintings in months. And that's when I knew I probably wouldn't again." Funny how it had happened—no dramatic parting, just a gradual withdrawal like a relationship that both parties have agreed to let die.

"That's too bad," Leigh says under her breath. More of the stupid shit she's trying to avoid, undoubtedly.

They are silent for a while, the girl smoking steadily, and Myra wrapping her arms around her shoulders for warmth as the shadows lengthen.

At last Leigh stands up and stretches, cranes her neck toward the gas station. "They're taking forever." Taking a drag from her cigarette, she adds, "I'm never going to make it before dark at this rate."

"Can you go back to where you started out?"

Leigh makes a hollow laugh. "I won't make it back there before dark, either, and anyway, it's the last place I want to be."

Continuing to peer toward the station, Leigh gobbles down a granola bar, then swipes at her lips. Maybe because her hunger has abated or because she's eaten Myra's food, she offers, "If you know what USC is like, you'd understand. The kids who go there have mansions in Beverly Hills and Palos Verdes. It makes me sick. And I don't even live on campus. I'm stuck with my parents, because they say they can't afford to pay for a dorm when we live so close. I couldn't stand it there any longer." She paces

in short, angry strides, all the while squinting toward the station.

"So you decided to pick up and go."

"Yeah. But it's been on my mind for the longest time." She slouches back down on the bench.

Myra feels the girl watching her, perhaps deciding whether to say more.

Leigh must decide that Myra is a harmless bystander, because she draws a breath and continues, "A couple of days ago, my parents overheard a conversation I had with my boyfriend. I was in my room on my cell, but that's how they are. They eavesdrop and pry. So they got the idea that I was pregnant. Maybe I am, but I don't give a shit. So A, they shouldn't have been listening to my private conversations in the first place, and B, they had no right to accuse me without knowing any better. I didn't deny it. Why should I? It's none of their business. Last night we got into this huge shouting match. I mean, cursing and screaming. The neighbors were probably getting ready to call the cops. My father called me a slut. So I threw a book at him, and he tore after me, and I slammed the door and locked myself in my room. Later that night, I called my boyfriend and told him everything. And he told me I should get the hell out of there and drive up to Portland. And you know what? It was exactly what I needed to hear. I was thinking of leaving—I just needed somewhere to go. So I stayed up last night packing, and slept for like three hours. When the alarm went off, I threw my stuff in the car. At least I've got a credit card for emergencies." She nods toward the station.

"Did you leave a note?"

"Nope. Why should I? They'll figure it out sooner or later."

"I'm sure they'll be frantic."

"For all I know, they won't even know I'm gone until tonight. They'll think I got up early and drove to campus."

"What about your cell?"

"I've switched it off. I'm only turning it back on if I need to call Jared about directions or something. When I get to Portland, I may ditch it."

"Maybe you can leave them a voice mail."

"No way. I don't want to deal with them right now."

It's the same expression that Myra recited when she was Leigh's age. Only she used it to refer to a host of nuisances—exams, assignments, deadlines. "I can understand why you're upset. But you should let them know you're okay. They'll probably call the police."

Leigh shrugs.

Despite her better judgment, Myra asks, "Are you running away out of spite, or because it's what you really want?"

Leigh's knuckles whiten against the elbow that she clenches. "For the record, I'm not running away. I've made up my mind that I'm not going to stay in that house a minute longer."

Myra hesitates, then chances, “Your folks may think you’ve run away. That’s how it might look to them.”

Leigh blows a cloud of smoke in Myra’s direction. “You know what? I don’t care what they think. I’m not going to sit around while they call me a slut and spy on me and monitor my phone conversations. That’s bullshit. They want their daughter to speak to them, they’ll have to come and find me.”

Myra is about to say more, in a strange desire to help this girl, but Leigh cries suddenly, “Jesus. I don’t know why I told you all this.” She lowers her head, presses her fingers against her temples.

A grayness washes over Myra. She touches Leigh’s shoulder. “I’m sorry. I just wanted to help.”

Leigh’s thin body stiffens. She straightens and leans away. Her eyes shine with a smattering of tears.

“Never mind. Thanks for the food. I guess I’d better find out if my car’s done.”

Myra watches her helplessly. “If you want a place to stay for the night...”

“No thanks. I’ll be in Portland sometime tomorrow.” Rising, she brushes crumbs off her shorts and marches toward the station.

Several minutes later, Leigh emerges, triumphantly rattling a ring of keys. Giving Myra a cursory wave, she hurries toward the side of the station, where her car must be parked. The Ford’s tail pipe sputters as it swings onto the interstate, and Myra glimpses the girl’s head, swallowed in the driver’s seat.

Myra gazes at the receding tail lights. She can’t understand why a numbness has swept through her core, as if she were back in college, breaking up with a boyfriend. She probably should have kept her mouth shut. There was no reason to do anything but listen.

“Oh God,” she groans aloud, feeling a jolt of heartburn below her rib cage. It’s almost dusk, and she’s at least a couple of hours away from home. She doesn’t relish the thought of driving into a turn-out somewhere and sleeping. She’s getting too old for these adventures.

She wonders what the girl will do—pull onto the shoulder and nod off or keep driving all the way to Portland with the help of caffeine. It might take her twenty years to realize that she should have done things differently. And even then, sometimes twenty years does little to correct youthful follies.

Hugging her shoulders, she considers Leigh’s choices. Finish college or get a job. Stay in Portland or return home. Make up with her parents or break with them completely. Marry the boyfriend. Have the baby.

Back then, when she was roughly Leigh’s age, she often stumbled sideways into things, avoiding the blow-by-blow planning that she viewed as pointless and stressful. It was simpler to let circumstances decide for her. Overslept and missed her philosophy exam. The guy she liked preferred

her roommate. Because no one better came along, she dated a junior who owned a sports car. Missed the deadline for applying to graduate programs in art. Post graduation, she learned about a temporary opening at Macy’s.

She remembers waving a hand dismissively when asked to explain her choices. “Twenty years from now, am I really going to care which classes I took in college, which grades I got, or who I dated? None of this will matter.”

After a while it had blended together, a medley of false starts. She leans forward, drops her head into her hands. Her palms are clammy, as though she’s a student, unprepared for an imminent exam. As a real-life student, she hadn’t been nervous. She had laughed at the professors behind their backs, made snide remarks about the exams and the pomp of graduation, mocked her classmates who suited up to find jobs.

In the end, the classes, jobs, boyfriends, artwork had slipped away, inconsequential, as she had predicted. Or maybe it was she who had drifted by. Breaking with boyfriends, losing touch with friends, filling their spaces with ever-changing acquaintances, letting the art go bit by bit.

She thinks of the girl barreling up to Oregon and shudders. All it would take is a single careless move to send the car into a ditch or into the blazing headlights of an oncoming truck. And then gone. Snap. Finished.

She doesn’t know where the wail comes from. It’s a low keen, dark and bleating, like an animal’s, and she wants to tuck herself into a cocoon and steal away from it. A wounded coyote? A female dog seeking its young? Then, to her horror, she realizes that this sound has escaped from her own throat. Her forehead is damp. Something leaks down the sides of her nose.

The attendant hobbles out of the shop and peers at her. Without meeting his eyes, she rises jerkily from the bench, passes a hand below her belly to quell the rising bile. And then she makes her way back to her car, stumbling into the driver’s seat.

The engine starts with a growl. She sits for a moment, willing herself to pull it together.

Maybe the girl will find her way in Portland. Maybe she’ll find that the people there are real. She may even become one of them herself—someone who’s able to grieve and celebrate and make decisions. Someone solid. There’s always the chance.

At the highway entrance, Myra remembers something that seemed significant years ago: this station sits halfway between the Bay and Mendocino. For a minute she keeps her foot on the brake, and then she slips south, toward San Jose.





The Women's March, Julia Justo



Noon Sunlight, Jamie Stoneman

When They Came for the House

Haley Karin

They drove their names straight
through mother's azaleas

told me to hide my '92 del sol
around the corner, swapped
the house plants for plastic

filled the notches carved into my window sill
for the boys I thought I'd loved,

pulled up the handprints pressed
into the backyard cement

locked away the wedding
china, grandma's antiques,
and grandpa's art.

They walked the property with measured steps,

practiced their compliment template of 3 syllable words
hummed in sing-song voices—

looked through boxed hands,
closed one eye and scanned the walls for potential
while glazing over the holes we made
when we hung the family next to mirrors.

When they finished,
the house was a gutted bowl of vanilla
ice-cream and they stood legs wide
and chests puffed, bellies full of their new aesthetic:

They staged the perfect habitat,
a pristine steam-cleaned suburban family
backdrop fit for anthropological study.
Each room was an efficient lie,

and our shadows had nowhere left to hide.



One Pedicab, No Tourists, Bredt Bredthauer

Stranger Things

Jennifer Leiker

Under the bright atrium light of the food court between our buildings, I told Fati about the kiss. In Arabic. This was no time to make my cousin practice English.

She said nothing at first, just tented her veil away from her face and slipped a kebab beneath it. A blonde expat stared from three tables away. They expect to see women like Fati, in head-to-toe billowing black, to be out haggling at souqs or hurrying into mosques—not taking a late lunch break at the headquarters of the world's largest oil company. I wear Yves Saint Laurent and coordinate: headscarf to lipstick, pantsuit to pumps. People think I'm the one with all the opinions, but that shows how little they pay attention. Even with only her eyes visible, my cousin can speak volumes with one raised brow.

Which may be why I've kept this thing with Mark—whatever it is—quiet until now.

"This is the American? The tall one with the Mickey Mouse neckties?" she asks.

"Donald Duck. And his daughter picked them out. From the hospital."

She'd heard countless stories about my co-workers, though usually I kept it light: Hassan's pink prayer beads, Abdullah's eczema. A few weeks ago, I started getting careful not to give Mark too much airtime. I didn't want to jinx it—the playful texts, then the phone calls at night. Innocent stuff, really. Nothing that would attract attention from the muttawa. Not that Fati would ever call the religious police on me.

"The one who came over on Bachelor status? Wife and child back in Houston?"

"His daughter *died*, Fati." I punched at the ice in my Diet Coke, ears burning. "That's why he was gone for most of the summer. I know I told you all this."

She glanced over at the blonde, thoughtful. "But his wife's still there. So...why come back? Because of you?"

I blinked. Put my fork down. I didn't need my cousin to call me a whore. I got my degree in California, so half my country already thinks that.

"She filed for divorce, Fati. There was nothing left between them. He just—"

I stopped. What could my cousin know about love or the loss of it? She clerked downstairs in accounting, alone, at a job my father scrambled to get her.

A week after I left for college, my aunt called our house in tears. Fati, who'd enrolled herself in the women's college down on the Corniche, had gone to only a handful of classes then quit and would no longer leave the house. "No point," she told them in typical Fati logic. I called her—same thing. She wouldn't elaborate. Sometimes I fantasize my cousin has a secret Internet life, some nightly chat room connection with a star-crossed

lover from far away. Otherwise, there is no Allah.

"Forget it, Fa." I sighed, clearing my tray. "It was only a kiss. *Barely* a kiss."

But I ducked my head and smiled, remembering how he'd tilted my face up, those big hands cupping my ears. My own heartbeat roaring beneath his palms. How his thumbs had traced the seam of my headscarf, loosening a memory: my friend Julie's wedding, San Diego, senior year. At the altar, her groom's thumb grazing the edge of her simple white veil.

"Nada. Please. Listen to me, habibi."

Since when did Fati call me "dear one?" I thought. Since never. I shouldered my bag, moved to stand. She put a hand on my arm.

"This faranji wants only distraction. You think he won't get over his grief, wake up, and realize you two will never work? What future could this have, Nada? Did you think of that?"

I jerked my arm free and stood up, chin high, so the tears wouldn't spill.

"I think of my future all the time, Fatimah. Don't you?"

She flinched.

We'd all assumed, growing up, that Ahmed or Farid or Abdulrahman—one of my brothers, anyway—would marry Fati. My uncle, who'd advanced above his own family the day he married into ours, was desperate for it. His disappointment reverberated through our family long after my brothers' weddings.

Soon after I came back from California, I overheard my father chuckling to my mother about an odd call he'd received at work. Twenty minutes of polite conversation, and then my uncle had inquired—casually, of course—if any of my brothers was considering taking a second wife.

The anger that'd blazed up in me! The shame, on my cousin's behalf. But later, after it dwindled? A guilty flicker of relief.

We were born in the same month, Fati and me. This spring, we'll turn twenty-five. Between us, we are too old and too educated. We will never marry a Saudi, either of us. I'd known this for a while. Was it possible she didn't?

"It's different in the West, you know." I said. "There, people fall in love and marry whoever they want." I looked at her. "At any age, Fati."

Her eyes hardened. "And this foreigner...he'll marry you?"

"Stranger things have happened," I said in English, chin lifted. I would not look away.

"Stranger things?" Fati echoed, her accent harsh. "Let me tell you about 'stranger' things, Nada bint Mohammed Al-Jishi. A 'stranger' thing is that bleached hair"—she stabbed a finger at the blonde—"in *my* country, when everyone *else* has the decency to cover up!" The blonde scrambled to her feet, tray clattering, and fled. "Your 'stranger' things are on every grocery aisle. We import beef for the Australians, Marmite for the Brits—reminders everywhere. 'Stranger' things are the red roses and stuffed bears

you and I bought every February as kids. Banned now, did you know that? Because Valentine's Day is a 'stranger' thing, Nada. Not ours. Never ours. No matter *what* you tell yourself. You think you know this man, over what... a *kiss*?" Her voice cracked on the word. "Your heart is lying to you, habibi. Never forget: *he* is a stranger."

She sat back slowly, trembling. Her dark eyes glittered. I stared at her, this person in my cousin's skin. I couldn't look away.





Mr. Jones Tea 2897, W. Adams



Rescue Party 11471, W. Adams



Anonymous Man Sitting on Thamel Street, Bredt Bredthauer

20:43

Christopher Adams

Harry had missed the seven forty-five and his round face was in panic. He wasn't sure if he was too late, or if he'd forgotten to get on again. The trains came and went while his head broke. Any of them could have been the one he needed, but they stopped and started too quickly, and he couldn't read where they were going. They didn't wait long enough and when they did, even doors sliced open and spilled out faces.

Men, children, women, old, fat, the beautiful and the disgusting, going about the air in quiet wildness. Others filled their place before the cold screech of movement. Ingestion and regurgitation, three hundred and sixty-five days a year. A dizzy of birthdays and Thursdays.

Harry was angry at them. They were boring and plastic and not like the ones in his head. No smoke or clatterings or whistles. No men with coals or shovels. He could never tell which end was which either. He'd watched drivers come out from what he thought was the front cabin and go in to what he thought was the back and this made him think of the heavy thing in his bag.

There were other people on the opposite side. Some were surrounded by luggage and others had only enough to wear or carry. A lot of them were in suits but some were bagged up in overalls, those were the ones with woolly hats and bad faces. But none looked like Harry. None looked lost like Harry. They knew what they were doing. They knew when to get on or move away.

Harry moved from person to person, studied those left over.

Had any of them ever missed theirs? Had any of them forgotten to get on the right one at the right time?

He rested his eyes on a man pacing to the arrival board. This one paused and raised his head skywards. Then checked his watch, paced back, and eyed upwards again from the first place, reminding the numbers to get a move on.

Did any of them have heavy things in their bags?

This wasn't the first time—Harry had missed trains before and learned that tantrums didn't work. Nobody listened last time. He knew he'd have to be brave and that was sometimes hard. He eyed a bench at the end of the platform, there were always less people that far down and he could eat his sandwich there. Chicken and bacon on brown bread. That would calm him down.

Harry sank low on the bench and listened to the chewing in his head. The cleaner lady was just finishing in the gents' and she re-balanced her headphones before moving off. He was glad that most of the people were going away and he didn't mind the place when it was quiet-er. He had what he wanted too: bag, sandwich, and heavy thing close and tight and safe in the steadying hush.

Across the platforms, voices and conversations were shrinking as most had made it home. The seven thirty to Edinburgh was delayed and he'd be fine as long as he didn't miss the ten to nine—there wouldn't be

another service till way after ten.

He didn't see the old eyes on him.

"Excuse me, could you tell me when the next train is?" She spoke strangely, from a different place. Harry was sure he'd never seen anybody so thin. A flash photograph would have finished her.

"I'm not sure if I am on the right platform you see." She sat down when she spoke, settling on Harry's bench and leaving one seat between them.

"Twenty forty-three," he said at her and drew his bag close, waiting some time to look again but she hadn't moved. A gradual roll came from left and right. Hundreds of tonnes and lives skimming together and then nothing again.

She looked confused and Harry knew he didn't like her. He hoped she wouldn't talk too much, but she did speak. "What are you doing with that now?" She was looking at his bag and then at him and it all happened too quickly. Her face was as close as his mother's. Buttery perfume breathed from her skin and cigarettes were on her words when she spoke. The white around her pupils seemed to quiver and stretch as she gnawed into every noise and rattle and squeak inside his head. She tilted her eyes to the bag again.

Harry really didn't want to hurt anyone. He'd cried for hours after crushing a frog in year three and still felt sick when he thought of those shoes. The heavy thing just made him feel grown up and big, like an action man with dress up bits. Touching it made him safe.

"I wouldn't think nice boys like you were interested in that type of thing. What else do you have in there?" Harry was back in the playground—teacher had just caught him with liquo-rice and time was falling from the Thursday.

"I—I just have a sandwich." He showed her, thinking that proof might absolve him.

"What kind?"

"Chicken and bacon."

"What bread?"

"Brown."

"Yes, I'll have some of that." She stretched out her hand.

A buzz was jolting and banging behind his forehead, grabbing at something deeper down in his middle parts. He knew he mustn't be sick and thoughts of stopping her were falling through his brain. The heavy thing squirmed in moisture and clam.

Her hand was slow and Harry was convinced it would end on his knee—his hand and hers and the heavy thing in a nauseous proximity. Though the thin cotton would separate them from total contact, Harry could imagine the skinny years and knowing seep through and warm over his skin.

Clumps were in his throat and ready to be free—but she made

two pats on the canvas bag and said brightly, "I'm flattered honey, but it wouldn't be worth it. You need to find some-body your own age, somebody you can share it with." She withdrew her hand.

A slow train stopped on their platform, but few got off. Through the silvery glass, Harry saw coated men and women squeezed against the doors and aisles. Clear views to the other side were dammed by them. Some didn't move and some latched their eyes into books and magazines. Others rested heads against windows, brains miming weightless sleep. Harry wondered how long they had until they got off, or if any of them had forgotten they should be getting off here.

He wanted to get on. He wanted to jump up and fit himself in but the screech of wheels gained and the opposite side was visible once again. "How can you know?"

She must have been a police officer, but she seemed far too ancient and thin and didn't wear the right hat. She didn't wear a hat at all. "I'm afraid it's obvious," she said. "Does your mother still get your trousers in for you?"

Harry thought of home and his tea in the kitchen. "I don't know why I have it, I don't know what I'm doing," Harry said, surprised at how he could have cried. He wanted to be a brave boy.

"When does yours get in?" She pressed. He knew he shouldn't even be talking to strangers.

"I don't know," he said.

She didn't speak back and Harry was glad she had stopped looking at him. She was facing the tracks herself and watching the cleaner lady go about her bags.

They sat in the evening calm, both holding a half-sandwich and Harry's bag squat between them. Harry wasn't worried about the trains anymore. He knew he wouldn't even want his tea when he got home.

A nine o'clock arrived, waited, and departed into the far sight.





The First After God, Matthew Morpheus



Nepalese Soldier Guarding Temple Ruins, Bredt Bredthauer

Thoughts and Prayers

Haley Karin

These days we still don't stop for death.
Instead, we pass by and outside the window
lining the suburban boulevard one tree gleams
in the morning sun—the trunk wound tight in tinsel.
This week earthquake hands find their epicenter
and staple letters to the bark from a mother pushing
old baby strollers stuffed with windmills
through the weeds to dress her son's killer
in the ribbons of her regret.

~

On a bridge up-state, chained
to the chipped guard rail stands a bicycle
spray-painted in white with rust peeking through the gears.
The school made sure to have an anti-bullying assembly
after the body was pulled up, and the whole class weaved
wildflowers through the spokes and signed the frame in black ink:

*we should
have paid
more
attention*

~

Atop dunes overlooking the coast
old palm branches, drift wood and incomplete
sand dollars huddle in circles. Bottles of liquor
litter the brush as landmarks guiding wayward
surfers back to their bonfires. Every year the row
of baseball hats and dog tags grow along the edge
and every morning the burial begins with the morning
breeze until only a jagged Aerosmith record sticks
out proudly from the dirt. Some served tours overseas
and yet they drowned in the water of home.

~

These technicolor shrines we make
with hindsight hands crystallize on curbs—
bloom in front of women's clinics and mosques;
universities and concert halls. Only after the stories
run and the cameras leave do we press the wilted
memorial flowers into compost. Only then,
are the posters of weather-rippled faces folded
gingerly by late-night jumpsuits who clean
the wound and stitch up our streets with garbage bags.

Next year we'll find ourselves standing by
the kitchen window and we'll overhear it
on the TV in the other room
happening somewhere else:

a car a gun a bottle
a wave a note an epidemic

of teeth sunk in,
maybe next time
we will all dare more
and look the world in the eye
*to scream for these names
that should have known*

more

breath

Rapture Shoes

Kelsey Landhuis

The summer of the flood, all of our parents made us go to work camp, but mine would have made me go anyway on account of my latent homosexuality. This had been discovered and reported by Madison Creely, who had seen me hanging out behind the tennis court with known lesbian Erica Jin. Not kissing or anything, just hanging out. I didn't even like Erica like that, but she was the only person at school who understood my Kristen Stewart obsession, and that was enough to crystallize our friendship.

Madison told her dad, Pastor Creely, who told his wife, Mrs. Creely, who told my mom, which completed the intergenerational Lutheran gossip chain. Mom took away my computer and my Twilight posters, which were now classified as homosexual propaganda. The next Sunday in church, Pastor Creely made an announcement about "Youth Work Camp" and stared me down the whole time, like a lion stalking an antelope in one of those PBS specials. I sat between my parents and nervously folded the corner of my bulletin back and forth, back and forth until it ripped off.

Monday afternoon there was a work camp application form in my room, right on top of my bed like it had floated down from heaven. That night I stuck it to the fridge, blank except for a Post-It note where I'd written out Ephesians 2:8-9: *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith, NOT by works.*

Emphasis mine, obviously.

On Tuesday, the form was back in my room with a new Post-It. Hebrews 6:10, which Mom had paraphrased for me: *Nice try, Cassie.*

All through camp, Madison kept trying to befriend me. I tried to ignore her, because the only alternative was telling her how much I hated her for outing me, and for having long, blonde hair straight out of a shampoo commercial and a laugh like Christmas morning and the prettiest eyes I'd ever seen.

Despite Pastor Creely's insinuation to our parents that our efforts at Youth Work Camp would help rebuild the city in the wake of this devastating flood, most of the houses we worked on weren't even in the flood zone. The "clients" as we were forced to call them—like we were \$50-an-hour contractors instead of high school kids performing free manual labor—were shut-ins, old and mean as hell.

All except for the weird old lady who scared the shit out of me while I was trying to clear the invasive vines from her bushes.

"Seven," she croaked from the threshold, so unexpectedly I almost sliced off a finger with my tree clippers. By the time I turned around she was out on the stoop, leaning against the screen door to keep it propped open. The sun was beating down from behind her on its way to a godawful late-July noon, turning her thin but stubbornly permed hair into a glowing halo.

"Um. What?"

"Your shoe size," she elaborated, "is it seven?"

"Yeah."

She nodded sharply, making me feel like I'd just aced a quiz I didn't even know I was taking. "Thought so. You can have mine, then."

"Sorry, I can have your...?"

"Shoes. After the Rapture."

Not having any idea what to say to that, I wiped my gritty, gloved hand across my forehead. It made me feel dirtier than before.

"You're Lutheran, aren't you?"

"I guess."

"Oh, that's what I was afraid of. You people don't believe in the Rapture. But that's okay, just help yourself to any shoes you like."

"After the Rapture," I repeated, to confirm that I wasn't suffering from heat stroke.

"For ye know not on what day your Lord will come," she said, which didn't really help.

"Right. Well, thanks."

"You missed one," she added as she turned to go back inside. The screen door rattled shut behind her.

I looked where she'd pointed and sure enough a slim tendril with a single heart-shaped leaf remained, bright green against the dark, flat needles of the hardy bushes. I plucked it free and dropped it in my bucket but it didn't really seem fair. The bushes were doing just fine.

Madison came bouncing around the corner of the house, which was really the only way she ever moved. Her hair bounced too, in a knot high on top of her head, with soft, wispy strands flying loose. I used the collar of my T-shirt to wipe the beads of sweat off my lip and envied how impervious she seemed to the heat.

"Hey, Cassie!" She held out a tiny paper cone filled with water, which I drank in a single gulp.

"Thanks."

"I can take your cup," she offered. "Do you want more?"

"I'm okay."

There was nothing left to say but for some reason she seemed reluctant to leave. I wondered if she was thinking of why I was there in the first place, of her role in triggering the Rube Goldberg machine of my fate.

"Ethel hasn't been bugging you, has she?" she asked.

"Who?"

"Ethel, the client? She pops out back about every five minutes to tell the boys to make sure they get the gutters completely clean. My dad keeps quoting scripture about patience but I think Scotty is about to lose it."

"Oh. No, she hasn't bothered me." As I lied I knew I'd never tell her about the rapture shoes, not even for the chance to hear that Christmas morning laugh. Madison Creely might think she knew everything about me, but she never really would.

"That's good," she said, walking away instead of bouncing for

once. "Let me know if you get thirsty again, okay?"

On the last night of camp, I could tell something was wrong. Every night we had a short service, with singing and prayer and reflection on how we were glorifying the Lord through our work or whatever. The tone was stubbornly upbeat, part of the camp's mission to convince us that Jesus was hip and cool and we didn't need popular music or R-rated movies to have fun.

But this time when Pastor Creely walked into the church basement room where the dozen of us had gathered after supper, he looked serious and much older than usual, his eyes sunken back in their sockets. He asked us to take a seat and we did immediately, on the industrial-carpeted floor or hard metal folding chairs, not jostling for position on the shabby couches like we usually did.

And then he told us that Ethel had passed away that afternoon, peacefully, in her sleep. He went on with some better place bullshit but I couldn't focus. I felt like there was too much oxygen getting to my brain, the image of Ethel standing in the sun with her perm-halo overwhelming anything else I could think or feel.

When Pastor Creely finished talking it was completely quiet. In that dark church basement, I thought about how all of us were really just slow-release capsules of joy and heartache and laughter and jealousy and pain and awe, until eventually you end up old and alone, sending all your money to televangelists in exchange for peace of mind and spending your final days fretting about clean gutters.

A loud sob popped the silence like a pin in a balloon, and I knew who it was before I even looked: Madison, red-faced and breathless like she was crying for her own grandmother instead of a complete stranger. A fat tear rolled all the way down to her chin before she wiped it away.

Although I couldn't say exactly why, my cheeks flushed with embarrassment. I looked down at the scuffed toes of my own shoes, still dirty from the day's work, and wondered what would happen to all of Ethel's.



Bios

Christopher J. Adams is a writer and poet from Shropshire, United Kingdom. His prose has been published in the *Apocalypse Chronicles* speculative fiction anthology by Almond Press and his poetry appears in *The Poetry of the Black Country* anthology by Offa's Press.

W. Adams' work has appeared at Hampshire College, the University of Delaware, and McGill University.

Bredt Bredthauer is an American freelance writer and street photographer currently based in Dallas, TX. He is interested in race, ethnicity, climate change, and international relations with an emphasis on the Middle East. Bredt is also interested in human powered travel as a method of immersive journalism. See more photos at www.bredtb.com.

Jill Caugherty is a Stanford graduate and award-winning marketing manager. She has pursued her passion for creative writing for years by penning short stories and novels and by attending writers' conferences. This is her debut fiction publication.

Julia Justo was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina. She lives and works in New York, NY. Julia received an M.F.A from The National University of Argentina. She also studied watercolor, and restoration in Rome, Italy. She has exhibited in Buenos Aires, Rome and New York. She combines digital technology, painting, and collage to create mixed media works. She often works with vintage pictures that she manipulates with modern technology. These old images give her work a sense of history, she uses them to illustrate the flow of time and to throw light on current social conflicts. She had said that present social struggles remain from what came before, and the role of the artist is to give society the tools to resist discrimination and to protest all other injustices.

Julia Kantic is a digital nomad and spends her time between England, Croatia, and France. This sounds glamorous, but isn't. She writes web content and builds websites for a living; mothers and builds blanket forts for pleasure; and delights in words in all the spaces in between. You can find many of those words scattered over the internet, including in *Unbroken Journal*, *Literally Literary*, *Moonchild Magazine*, and *The Mad River*. Follow her at twitter.com/peculiarjulia and medium.com/@juliakantic

Haley Karin is a poet and technical writer currently working in Northern California. She received her B.A in English from California State University, Sacramento in 2015. Her poems have appeared in several printed editions including *Calaveras Station Literary Journal*, *The Tule Review* and the 2017 edition of *The Sacramento Voices Anthology*. This year her piece "Cover Girl" was selected as a finalist for the Fortnight Prize by Eyewear Publishing Ltd.

Nat Kasper is an architect living and working in New York City. She received her NAAB-accredited B.Arch with high honors from Pratt Institute School of Architecture in Brooklyn and Rome. As a continuation of her education, she has traveled more than 60 countries to explore how people and mother nature design in other parts of the world and how tectonic structures emerge and interact with locals, light, and shadow.

Kelsey Landhuis lives in Iowa and works as a copywriter by day. Her work has previously appeared in *The James Franco Review*.

Jennifer Leiker lives in Saudi Arabia and writes in airports, undergrounds, and tuktuks. She holds an MFA from Lesley University, and her fiction and nonfiction have appeared in *Newfound Journal*, *Pithead Chapel*, and *Carve Magazine*. With roots in northern Canada and a heart wedged in the Colorado mountains, she's learning to embrace the gorgeous chaos of an expat life. Read along at www.JennLeiker.com.

Matthew Morpheus is an artist and author from Ukraine. His art has been widely published in journals, and he has won several international art awards.

Jamie Stoneman studied at the College of Creative Studies in Santa Barbara. Her images have appeared in *Unlikely Stories*, *Maudlin House*, *Spectrum Literary Journal*, and *Into the Teeth of the Wind*. Dancing, exploring, and environmentalism inform her work.





Lit + Art

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