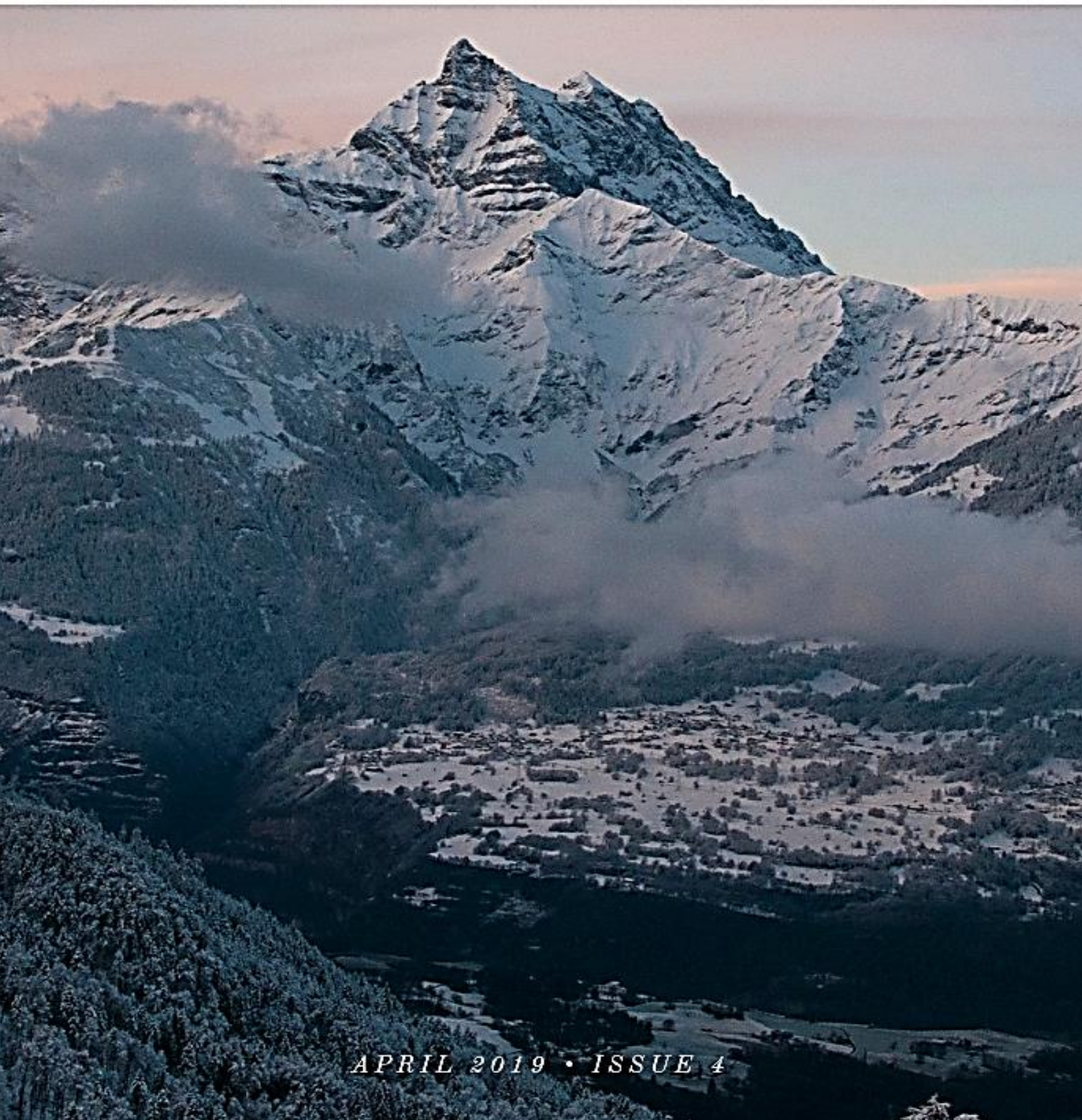


# D R A B B L E Z

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*A LITERARY MAGAZINE*



*APRIL 2019 • ISSUE 4*

# DRABBLEZ MAGAZINE

April 2019 | Issue #4

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# MASTHEAD

ALEXA FINDLAY

(Founder, Editor-in-Chief)

She received her B.A. Degree in Creative Writing Major from the University of California, Riverside. She spends most of her time writing fiction and poetry. She is currently pursuing her M.A. Degree in English. She hopes to one day become a Professor and write books in the process. She is the Founder and Editor-in-Chief of *The Mystic Blue Review*, *Cadaverous Magazine* and *Drabblez Magazine*. Her work has appeared in numerous online and print literary magazines, including: *Pomona Valley Review*, *Better than Starbucks Magazine*, *Adelaide Literary Magazine*, *Halcyon Days*, *Oddball Magazine*, *Grotesque Magazine*, *The Quail Bell Magazine*, *Blood Moon Rising Magazine*, *Scarlet Leaf Review*, amongst others.

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**ARTWORK BY REEM RASHASH-SHAABAN**

# STORMY WEATHER

BY AMY BARNES

One by one the clouds gathered above her. Dark. Foreboding. One gray, shaped like a distorted sheep like most clouds. Others were far more ominous. A witch's hat. A gun pointed at the sun. Two angry faces arguing. She searched for a cloud in more friendly form. There were no unicorn horns or arcing rainbows. All of the clouds converged at once. As she searches, the rain began to fall. On her face. Her arms. Dripping into her shoes. She reaches her hand to the sky and it comes away dry. The umbrella stays by her side unneeded.

# READING THE TEA LEAVES

BY AMY BARNES

Queen. King. Jack. Each face stares back at me. The deck has no numbers, only royalty. I hold the cards in my hands. They burn my fingers. I let them all go. They scatter around me. No order. Only chaos. All of them laughing as they hit the ground like a tornado swirling around me. I can't do magic. I don't know which card is mine or yours. Or the one that completes a royal sweep. I hold hands with Alice and jump. We have a tea party to attend. I hear there will be a magic bunny there.



# TEACH A MAN TO FISH

BY AMY BARNES

David wanted to be good at something. Like fishing. Riding a bike. Or football. Or tying his shoes. Instead, he was good at being hungry. His stomach growled at school when Mrs. Jones asked him a question. It growled at home. It growled so loudly at night that he couldn't sleep. The lunch ladies at P.S. 262 snuck him food like they were his moms. A peanut butter sandwich and an apple at noon couldn't cover the rest of the day's hunger. His eyes begged to be taught how to fish. He was too hungry to ask for lessons.

# ***LABEL SCARS***

BY AMY BARNES

There is a white-gloved, hat-wearing ghost at my local Target. I can feel her anger and sadness when she sees cell phones and granola bars where Christmas trees and evening gowns once stood. Time has written erasure poetry on the fronts of stores. Holiday shoppers step past into new stores without a thought. I pause and trace the old store name with my childhood finger. The ghost of stores past brushes past me. I whisper an invitation to the basement restaurant that long-ago disappeared. She disappears into aisle 6, the scent of Chanel No. 5 following in a ghostly cloud.

# **FEVER BREEDER**

BY BILL W MORGAN

She added another log to the fire, trying to sweat out the fever. She took a sip from a bottle of water and offered it to her mother who waved it away with a weak smile. She started to say something but her mom put a finger to her lips and pointed down the hallway. Her father was still sleeping in their bedroom. She wasn't allowed to disturb him. The fire started fading so she reached and grabbed another newspaper from the stack, barely registering the word pandemic included in the headline as she slowly started tearing it into pieces.

# REUNIONS RARELY GO WELL

BY BILL W MORGAN

Fast forward six years and she still has the pixie cut, blue eyes, and a smile that could warm the coldest heart.

I watch, unable to speak, my face stricken with some debilitating rictus. I wanted to know her life now, wanted to relive our happiness, but instead she caught me staring like some maniacal joker seconds away from drooling.

She smiles back but in it is the same look she had the last time we were together. The one that tells me empty conversations were still years away. Her smile as cold as the hearts it used to melt.

# THE LIGHT

BY CHERYL ZAIDAN

The light switched on.

It was 2 a.m. She lived alone. There was no one who could have turned it on.

She waited. Perhaps she was dreaming, but the light stayed on. And like so many nights before where she could not sleep she thought about the accident, the little boy, the trial. And again, as she

had for the past year, she tried to convince herself his death wasn't her fault.

She suddenly felt a small hand squeeze her throat and press hard. She couldn't breathe. She didn't

resist. It was what she deserved.

The light shut off.



# **DOROTHY DANCES THE JITTERBUG**

BY KATE FELIX

I flung my skinny legs over your shoulders and we spun like tops, bodies akimbo, while the ground  
slipped from underneath my cherry-red slippers.

My silvery tassels stung you on the rebound and hissed that you would always be mine.  
We left the dancehall together, and slap-stomped our way through a hailstorm of childbirth, pay-  
cheques, and small disappointments.

My legs thickened and your shoulders caved as we danced the two-step right to the edge of the  
basement stairs.

Our Jitterbug days were finished, so I closed my eyes, clicked my cherry-red slippers, and sent us  
back down to the ground.

# ***I LOVE YOU, SUNSHINE***

BY KATE FELIX

The weather girl on the Sarasota News is all I need in a woman.

She blasts into my living room nightly and smiles while she lies.

When she calls for sunny skies, it means that she loves me.

When it's thundershowers, she's trying to get past it.

Hurricane seasons are rough on us as a couple.

That's when I flip to the shopping channel and let Diane sell me her shiny rocks until the whole  
thing blows over.

I always come back to my weather girl, though. She's my main squeeze.

Storms come and go, but true love lies forever.

# DUMB GIANTS

BY DELVON T. MATTINGLY

Colossal giants storm wooden floors, every creak causing me to glimpse at a rising sun. I yawn over  
stentorian grunts and running water, growing thirsty.

I seek a sip but the giants shout. Fleeing to my cubby, the floor becomes wet, ruined. Worse, the  
giants can trace my damp prints.

Veils of water coat their bodies, hair as drenched drapes over their faces, leaving more of a mess  
than I ever do.

One picks me up. Many kisses in and I use my claws. Dumb giants, always rewarding me.

Bathing me in affection, ignoring the mess. As I remain thirsty.

# SHADOWGIRL

BY SCOTT HUGHES

Sophia's shadow had always done things for her. Hand her toys from the closet. Reach Oreos high in the pantry. Whenever Mom wouldn't buy her Starbursts, Sophia's shadow dragged them from the store.

It never hurt anyone. Sophia wouldn't let it, even when Dad bruised Mom's arms or blackened Mom's eyes.

Tonight, through her cracked bedroom door, Sophia watched Dad choke Mom.

"Let me," her shadow whispered.

Sophia flipped on her light and swung open her door. Her shadow stretched down the hallway. At Dad's feet, it rose from the floor and wrapped its elongated inky fingers around his throat.



**ARTWORK BY REEM RASHASH-SHAABAN**



# OLD BLUE EYES

BY SERENA JAYNE

Ruth spun Sinatra records in her mind while the other nursing home residents played bingo, gin rummy, and crocheted. The songs made cobweb memories stick. Each note a tether to life.

The melodies created nostalgia for days long gone. Provided respite from the horror of  
growing old.

One day her black sheep son finally showed. Asked about her will, her savings. Stole the  
wedding ring right off her finger.

He ignored her words of forgiveness and love.

She drowned the pain in sweet, old songs.

But the needle of her mental record player skipped.

The music faded; so did she.

# **HARMONY AT LAST**

BY ALEXANDER PYLES

The string broke under my bent fingers.

“You are too rough, Ann,” Mrs. Helen snapped. “You will never be good enough.”

The moment stuck with me, even as I took my chair in the back of the second violins. Was I good enough? I truly hoped I was.

Mrs. Helen was cruel. The impeccable curls of her hair haunted me, as did her voice. It cut sharper than any pitch I could muster.

The conductor took his place, a sea of faces behind him.

I turned the violin in my hands and brought it to my chin. Here it goes.

# TRAFFIC

BY PIYALI ROY BHOWMICK

Waiting at the intersection, he looks visibly irritated now. He is being rattled by the intermittent noise coming from the back. His disheveled looks suggest he hasn't shaved or showered for days. He is tapping the steering wheel. The perspiration, the sultry weather, and the crazy honking made him immensely furious. He wants to get out of the car and smash the brains out of the bugger who has been bothering him for the past two hours.

“Please let me out. I promise I'll not try to escape again!” cries the little boy from the trunk of the car.

# ASYLUM

BY ROBIN THRONE

Ren meandered the breached canal settling alongside the remnants purged from the river's bowels;  
the undesirable now exposed.

# THE RAZOR'S EDGE

BY VINEETHA MOKKIL

The couple checked in at dusk, when the snow was falling, a silent rain of tears washing over the mountains, the peaks, and the valley below. All night, the snow fell. All night, I heard the sounds of their lovemaking – gasps, guttural cries, the man chanting the woman’s name like a prayer, a curse.

At first light, they breezed past the front desk to hit the slopes.

He returned at noon, out of breath, his face flushed a furious red. “There’s been an accident,” he said, marching straight up to the desk.

“She’s gone,” he said, without missing a beat.



# EX-DUMMY

BY SALVATORE DIFALCO

Lorenzo, the ex-ventriloquist-turned-magician, pointed to the black leather case where he kept his old dummy. Muffled raging issued from the case. You've awoken him, Lorenzo said to a group of magicians. Not good. What's he gonna do, said one magician, assault us? The case shook violently. Tell those charlatans I'll kill them when I get out of here! cried the dummy. The magicians eyed the case. How'd you do that? asked one. See my lips move? Lorenzo said. No, said the magician. That's right, Lorenzo said, reaching down to unlock the shuddering case, no one's that good.

# MAGIC 8 BALL

BY RICHARD MELDRUM

It sat on a dusty shelf in the store. David hadn't seen a magic 8 ball in years. He picked it up and shook it. The message appeared.

*You'll die today*

He shook it again.

*Today is your last day*

David called the owner over.

"Is this some sort of joke version?"

"Don't think so."

The owner shook it.

*Outlook good*

"Looks normal to me."

David left the store, freaked out. Must be his imagination. He started to cross the road. He was so concerned about his mental state that he didn't see the car until it was too late.

# WRONG WAY

BY RICHARD MELDRUM

Kate never usually walked through the underpass, but she was in a rush. As she descended towards the tunnel she sensed someone behind her. It was a man.

“Stop!” he called.

She sped up.

At the other end of the underpass, Kate saw a female figure. Kate ran towards her. As she got closer, Kate realised something wasn't right. The skin on her face was loose, sagging. Kate stopped. The creature, realising it'd been discovered, reached up and removed its mask. Kate saw red eyes and teeth. She started to run, back towards the man. Unfortunately, the creature was quicker.

# SPOTTED

BY ADA PELONIA

I was inside a coffee shop with my colleague, talking about random stuff when I heard her grunt. Anne told me she doesn't want hunky men with hairs spiking like that of a hedgehog's. She wailed at me for having those type of men scattered on her Tinder account. Anne said she prefers the lanky ones with round-rimmed spectacles which reminded me of someone. When I asked her where could she possibly find a guy with traits that general, [he] came. Anne stared at my shoulder where my boyfriend's hand was placed and whispered, "I already found him."

# THE DEFINITION OF INSANITY

BY NEEL TRIVEDI

I'm not insane. I'm just not.

The textbook definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.

The first time I pushed my boss down the stairs, his ankle broke. The second time he was paralyzed.

The third time was when he *finally* kicked the bucket.

Same action three times, different results.

I stabbed a banker fourteen times before he stopped screaming for help. Same action fourteen times, different results.

So psychiatrists or any other “experts” claiming to know me better than myself can go to hell!

I'm not insane. I'm just not.

# GONE

BY MEGAN RUSSO

I packed my bags after you left for work, leaving my cellphone on the kitchen table before slipping out into the chill of the midmorning. We were an over watered plant, drowning in our feeble attempts to salvage what we had once felt for each other. Endless depths of misplaced anger and strife.

But I was determined to swim to the surface, leaving you adrift as I packed my car and left.



**ARTWORK BY REEM RASHASH-SHAABAN**

# THE KALE OF CTHULHU

BY A. A. RUBIN

The monster withdrew his tentacle into the tepid water. He had no intention of eating the humans, but he had to scare them—that was its job. The eldritch tourist industry depended on their screams.

The monster was a vegetarian. The thought of consuming another creature's flesh disgusted him.

His coworkers teased him mercilessly. Still, they couldn't deny his talent. His appearance was terrifying; his technique perfect. He always drew the biggest wails.

If only the rumors were true. If only he fed on their fears. That might have been enough to fill the empty pit in his soul.



# **BEHIND THE GLASS**

BY A. A. RUBIN

The fine china, which had been inherited some years prior, sat unused in the cabinet peering, jealously, through the glass doors at the dining room table. At night, the delicate porcelain plates recalled the feast. They dreamed of food in the darkness—and plotted their revenge.

# **EARTH DAY**

BY A. A. RUBIN

On the anniversary of the Earth's destruction, we gathered to tell stories of our home world, of its beauty and of our folly, and swore false oaths not to ruin the new planet the way we had the old.

But we didn't believe our own lies. Already, the ships searched for new planets to colonize and destroy.

# SPACE CASE

BY. A. A. RUBIN

This room ain't big enough for the both of us.

Are you sure?

Quite.

We'll see about that. Wanna step inside?

After you.

[They step inside]

Well?

I was wrong.

This room is big enough for the both of us. It's freakin' huge.

See?

Let's never speak of this again.

# **OPPRESSION, BY THE NUMBERS**

BY A. A. RUBIN

Nine worked hard to keep eight down. One small flip and nine would become six. One small shift and eight would become infinite.

# DESPAIR

BY A. A. RUBIN

He stood by the broken guard rail at the edge of the precipice—a single child's mitten still in his hand.

# **A TWISTED SENSE OF CHARACTER REROLL**

BY DELVON T. MATTINGLY

We wore our most profound attributes, hovering as holograms above our faces, at the expense of never being able to discern our own. I've been told I'm incredibly compassionate, and like many people, I took pride in my characteristics.

Having favorable qualities provided no immunity to danger. The person who imprisoned me cackled as I awoke in a laboratory. Unveiling a mask, they appeared uninviting, nanotechnology holding their face together, a grimace curling at their mouth.

Then I saw their attributes, mirroring mine. They must've taken them, and I didn't want to know which ones I had received in return.

# FEAR

BY SUSAN CORNFORD

She never wanted to take the false step that led to a pratfall. So, she always placed her feet very carefully in everything she did.

There was only one thing that could ever tempt her out of her comfort zone and into the dangerous waters of potential derision. It was the chance that Bill Jones might love her in return.

Slowly she rose from her seat, crossed the room and stood right in front of his desk. Her valentine extended, she waited for his mocking laughter. But the whole third grade class saw that he gave her one in return.

# **FALLING**

BY CARYS CROSSEN

When I was a child, I would pretend that the pavement was miles above the road and one slip would send me hurtling to my death. I would walk along its edge, pretending, the controlled thrill vibrating along my bones.

There's no need to pretend now. I die a little every time I step off that curb. The crimson neon lights leaching life like radiation. A dozen little deaths for me, and at least one for every punter.

Another car pulls up. Another customer. I step forward, and I fall.



# **THE SHAKES**

BY CARYS CROSSEN

He was a straightforward lad from the North who signed up the day after war was declared. Somehow he survived and was discharged and came back to his little terraced house and his family, and never left the North again.

He never spoke of it. He said it was never to be spoken of. He didn't need words to remember. The doctors called it malaria. He called it the shakes, a legacy of the Middle East and those bloody mosquitos. They came, once or twice a year, and his steadfast hands would tremble, as they never had done under bombardment.

# AMATEUR ACCORDIONIST

BY CHLOE SMITH

Her lungs were like an accordion.

Every time they expanded and emptied, she let out wheezing unfamiliar notes. But she was never efficient at reading music - one moment they were shrill and shallow, making her feel dizzy, the next they were deep and sporadic, and she felt heavy and sick in her bed.

It needed fixing, but she was so tired...

Now she was shaking on stage - under the hot hazy lights, trying desperately to finish a tune - But she faltered on the last note, and the heavy curtains fell shut, leaving her in the cool dark peace and quiet.

# **IN YOUR ARMS**

BY CONNOR MCQUEEN JOHNSTON

I lean over and open the window, immediately to feel the breeze rise up through my chest, and touch my cheeks. Dogs wander; they rule the streets in the darkness below.

As sirens pass, I lay in bed, in arms that once protected me. Now they are weapons that bring fear.

They are snares that entrap me.

And if you were to ask me why I shake in your arms in the night, I would confess it was the cold of the open window. Convinced you are satisfied with the explanation, I could continue to cry myself into sweet goodnight.

# **BIOGRAPHIES**

## **AMY BARNES**

Amy Barnes has been published by a range of sites including Drabblez, Parabola, New Southern Fugitives, Flashback Fiction, McSweeney's and many others. She has two dogs and two kids that both hinder and inspire her writing.

## **PIYALI ROY BHOWMICK**

Piyali Roy Bhowmick is an emotional being who is enchanted with the quirks of everyday life. She is addicted to desserts and loves baking cakes and cookies. She can be found at [twitter.com/Piyali\\_RB](https://twitter.com/Piyali_RB) sometimes.

## **SUSAN CORNFORD**

Susan Cornford is a retired public servant, living in Perth, Western Australia, with flash pieces published or forthcoming in 50-Word Stories, 365 tomorrows, Akashic Books Fri Sci-fi, Antipodean Science Fiction, CarpeArte Journal, Cloudbank, Corner Bar Magazine, Curating Alexandria, Fewer Than 500, Ghost Parachute, Medusa's Laugh, Speculative 66, Subtle Fiction, Switchblade, The Gambler, The Vignette Review and Theme of Absence.

## **CARYS CROSSEN**

**Carys Crossen** has been writing stories since she was nine years old. Her first academic monograph is forthcoming from University of Wales Press, and her fiction has been published by Mother's Milk Books, Dear Damsels, Three Drops Press, Blink Ink, Palm Sized Press, Paragraph Planet and others. She lives in Manchester UK with her husband.

## **SALVATORE DIFALCO**

Salvatore Difalco's miniature works have appeared in many print and online journals. He currently lives in Toronto.

## **KATE FELIX**

Kate Felix is a writer and independent filmmaker who splits her time between Toronto and Cape Breton Island. She wrote in secret for twenty years, gathered her nerve, and started submitting her work at age forty. Her stories often feature strong female protagonists who are not afraid of the darker side of the fence. She has been shortlisted for many fiction prizes and appeared in several anthologies. Find her in Reflex Fiction, Room Magazine, Blink Ink, or online at [www.katefelix.com](http://www.katefelix.com)

## **SCOTT HUGHES**

Scott Hughes's fiction, poetry, and essays have appeared in such publications as *Crazyhorse*, *One Sentence Poems*, *Deep Magic*, *Redheaded Stepchild*, *Entropy*, and *Strange Horizons*. He is the Division Head of English at Central Georgia Technical College, and his short story collection, *The Last Book You'll Ever Read*, is forthcoming from Weasel Press in 2019. For more information, visit [writescott.com](http://writescott.com).

## **SERENA JAYNE**

Serena Jayne received her MFA in Writing Popular Fiction from Seton Hill University, and is a member of Romance Writers of America and Sisters in Crime. She's worked as a research scientist, a fish stick slinger, a chat wrangler, and a race horse narc. When she isn't trolling art museums for works that move her, she enjoys writing in multiple fiction genres. While her first love is all things paranormal, the mundane world provides plenty of story ideas.

## **CONNOR MCQUEEN JOHNSTON**

Connor has always written, from poetry and short stories, think pieces and articles, through to full novels, although only now is pursuing a lifelong dream to publish his works in their totality. His themes surround optimism, in the face of growing chaos and uncertainty, while style accepting the darker undertone of life and humanity. You

can find his regular writings at [www.dalriadahighlander.com](http://www.dalriadahighlander.com) or follow his Twitter account at @dalriadaconnor

## **DEVON T. MATTINGLY**

Delvon T. Mattingly, who also goes by D.T. Mattingly, is an emerging fiction writer and a PhD student in epidemiology at the University of Michigan. He currently lives in Ann Arbor, Michigan with his two cats, Liam and Tsuki.

## **RICHARD MELDRUM**

R. J. Meldrum is an author and academic. Born in Scotland, he moved to Ontario, Canada in 2010. He has had stories published by Sirens Call Publications, Horrified Press, the Infernal Clock, Trembling with Fear, Darkhouse Books, Smoking Pen Press and James Ward Kirk Fiction. He is an Affiliate Member of the Horror Writers Association

## **VINEETHA MOKKIL**

Vineetha Mokkal is the author of the short story collection, "*A Happy and other stories*" (HarperCollins, 2014). She was shortlisted for the Bath Flash Fiction Award June 2018. Her fiction has appeared in the *Santa Writers' Project Journal*, *Berfrois*, *Jellyfish Review*, *101 Words*, and the *Quarterly Literary Review Singapore* among other journals.

## **BILL W. MORGAN**

Bill W. Morgan's work has seen publication in *Yellow Mama Magazine*, *The Wildcat Review*, and *The Reno News and Review*. Capital Press published his first poetry collection *When We Awaken* in 2000. His second book *Showcase: Five Short Films* was published in 2013 and his third *Suffer Head* in 2016. He is currently working on a collection of short stories.

## **ADA PELONIA**

Ada is a writer from the Philippines.

## **ALEXANDER PYLES**

Alexander Pyles resides in IL with his wife and children. He holds an MA in Philosophy and an MFA in Writing Popular Fiction. His short story chapbook titled, "Milo (01001101 01101001 01101100 01101111)," from Radix Media, is due out fall 2019. His shorter fiction has appeared on [101words.org](http://101words.org), Zathom.com, and in River & South Review. You can find him at [www.pylesofbooks.com](http://www.pylesofbooks.com) or @Pylesofbooks.

## **A. A. RUBIN**

A. A. Rubin lurks in the shadows. He surfaces occasionally to publish stories. His work has appeared in Serious Flash Fiction, Pif Magazine, and Constellate Literary Journal. His story "The Substance in The Shadow" has been named a Fiction War finalist, and his story, "White Collar Blues" was nominated for the Carve Magazine/Mild Horse Press online short fiction award. His debut graphic novel, Night Prowler: In The Cross Hairs will be published by Golden Bell Studios. Mr. Rubin holds a BA in Writing/Literature from Columbia University, and an MA in Teaching of English from Teachers College Columbia University. A mild mannered public school teacher by day, he roams the street at night as a vigilante crime fighter. He does not believe in secret identities. He wants the criminals to know his true face. He can be reached on twitter and facebook as @thesurrealari

## **MEGAN RUSSO**

Megan Russo is a writer, baker, and amateur dungeon master. She attended the University of Cincinnati receiving a degree in Studio Arts and Creative Writing. Megan currently lives in Austin, TX with her husband and two pugs.

## **REEM RASHASH-SHAABAN**

Reem Rashash-Shaaban is a poet, writer, and photographer. After spending thirty three years teaching at the American University of Beirut, she decided to go back to her passion: art. Reem uses her original photographs to reconstruct a new view of life and cities and mixes collage, pastel, ink and paint in her effort to keep the culture, thoughts and traditions of people alive.

She has held two solo exhibits in Beirut entitled "Going, Going, Gone," and "To Keep the Memories Alive" and participated in two joint exhibitions. Her latest solo

exhibition, “The Qatar Series: Tradition and Modernity “ was held in Doha, Qatar.

Her poetry and short fiction have been published in international and regional journals. One of her watercolor paintings has graced the cover of *Twisted Vine* while her mixed media artwork has been published in *Sukoon* and *Goat's Milk Magazine*.

(*Instagram* reemrashash., *Twitter* sitreem)

## **CHLOE SMITH**

Chloe Smith is a disabled and autistic writer and poet from the UK. She is a Foyle Young Poet of the Year 2015, and her poetry has been published in *TERSE. Journal*, *Rose Quartz Journal*, *Cauldron Anthology* and more. Her flash fiction has been published in *Ellipsis Zine*, *TRAIN*, *Three Drops From a Cauldron* and *The Ginger*

*Collect*. For more about her writing, please visit her website: <https://chloesmithwrites.wordpress.com/>. You can also find her on Twitter, [@ch1oewrites](#).

Robin throne

Robin Throne is a writer + researcher who is inspired by moving water, especially rivers, oceans, and tears.

## **NEEL TRIVEDI**

Neel Trivedi is a freelance journalist & in the advertising business in Dallas, TX. His work has been featured in *Rhythm & Bones*, *Dodging The Rain*, *Mojave Heart Review*, *Chronos Anthology* & *Rising From The Ashes Anthology*. He can be reached on Twitter [@Neelt2001](#).

## **CHERYL ZAIDAN**

Cheryl Zaidan is a full-time marketer, part-time writer and hardcore dreamer who currently resides in Michigan.



