Dirty Chai Magazine
Issue 10 | Summer 2016

Editorial Team

Azia DuPont
Alex Vigue
C.M. Keehl
Erica Joy
Isobel O’Hare
Samantha Fischer

On the Cover

Hanged Woman by Jennifer Lothrigel

www.dirtychaimag.com

“A voice is a human gift; it should be cherished and used, to utter fully human speech as possible. Powerlessness and silence go together.”
Margaret Atwood
# Table of Contents

Shadows & Chaos: An Interview with Christopher Morgan...29  
A Kidney for Christine...59  
Contributors...60  

**Poetry**  
Sara Ryan: With My Lost Saints...4  
ISMS...6  
Kyle Harvey: Example Theory...7  
Joseph Brockway: Two Poems...8  
Russell Jaffe: Civil Coping Mechanisms: A Kingdom...10  
Civil Coping Mechanisms for Likes...11  
Eric Allen Yankee: Consumer Poem...11  
Lindsey Lucas: Crossword of Nameless Things...12  
Ariel Francisco: Two Poems...14  
Nyk Robertson: Bound II...15  
Binary System...16  
Linda Ashok: Gift...16  
The Unmaking of an Astronaut...17  
Kenyatta JP Garcia: Like...18  
Reminder Of...20  
Teo Mungaray: Two Poems...23  
August Smith: Endlings...25  
Alexandra Naughton: 3 Erasure Poems...27  
Jessica Morey-Collins: Turn Down For What(Ever)...33  
Adam Phillips: Robots...36  
Jacqueline Boucher: Toward a Comprehensive List Why I’m Crying in 2016...38  
Sarah Frances Moran: La Botella (The Bottle)...39  
Genelle Chaconas: Two Poems...40  
Jennifer Macbain-Stephens: Girls Glow in Synthesis (Part IV)...41  
Christine Tierney: mega awesome mind blowing ways to cope with a serious incurable perilous illness...42  
Hanna Tawater: Two Poems...43  
Miranda Romano: Cattle-Jumper...45  
Izabella Grace: Two Poems...46  
Nathan Tompkins: The Drive...47  
Sylvia:...49  
Amy Baskin: Mimcry...50  
Kelly Rae Williams: Eve Leaves Adam for Yvette...50  
Nathan Logan: Two Shakes of a Lamb’s Tail...51  
Ashley Mares: Three Poems...52  
Rosie Allabarton: Two Poems...54  
Sarah Ann Winn: Dot & Bo in the Floating Farm House 55  
Dot & Bo Build a Minaret...56  
Alicia Hoffman: Future Perfect...57  
Nature, Verses...58  

**Art**  
Jennifer Lothrigel: Two Photographs...5  
Christopher Luna: Two Pieces...9
Am I Being Gentle Enough or Too Gentle?...13
Emma Ensley: Who’s This?...15
Nazifa Islam: #88...19
   #69...37
St. Germain: #4...21
   #1...22
   #5...24
Susan Yount: Save Myself...26
   Hidden Waterfall...44
   This is How We Became Birds...48
Wess Haubrich: Dominion Over the Dead...40
Rachael Kucher: O’Happy Day...56

We asked our readers, “How would you describe poetry?”

Poetry is a life-giving force. It is the intersection of beauty, justice, tenderness, and ferocity, and it is one of the highest forms of truth that exists. I don’t mean that everything a poem contains is factually true. Rather, it communicates the truth of what people go through, how they think, what they feel, and what they actually experience in their most authentic, innermost souls. It has the power to reflect injustices in individual lives and society. It is radical and fights to change how we view the world and other people. It strives for equality and renders every voice valuable. It alters our relationship to language and disrupts the ordinary, surface-level speech we are accustomed to. It is sonic and lyrical; it engages our innermost ear. I have seen poetry change my students' lives, my friends' lives, my life, and the lives of strangers. It is worth living for. Poetry applies to all of humanity because it taps into subjects that affect us all, including mortality. It transcends time and space. It is a solitary act, a craft, a muscle that can be strengthened, a way to celebrate and grieve what happens to us. But most of all, poetry communicates truths that often cannot be communicated otherwise.
- Madeleine Barnes (Brooklyn, NY, USA)

In the now, a loop of muchful happening—too bright an inferno for us to accept with open arms.
- Orooj-e-Zafar (Islamabad, Pakistan)
WITH MY LOST SAINTS by sara ryan

My throat a question mark. It bubbles forth a scroll of lists. The magnolia the shape of ache, your body, the forest breaking under the night and nectared fruit. The man is lying; he says

my eyes are milk or grassy tea but doesn’t know the orbs are more than what they are. They flit around my head like hummingbirds. I think what they’re afraid to say is leave me here. The sun

and candlelight are dimming. Freely, you say that you’re afraid of death. Who knows what lies beneath this love. You say the word, I say nothing, but thanks, because I’m sweet, polite.

Your throat a red eclipse of ruse. I did not ask for this. Don’t say I did. I fly—a fog of birds.

I HOPE YOU’RE HUNGRY by sara ryan

when water spills into my pockets, brush me quick with death. you file me under lost or engineer of slipping light between the trees. the only secret: freezing fat

before you make the bread. before i lose the devils underneath your skin. when blood becomes the bone or honey—season’s shred and thaw. you instrument of pain. you crow

of dust and eagle’s grin. my dad will buy a record player, just for mom. it cracks and bursts in bolts of black. the vinyl breaks in piles of onyx. fog is rising here—

it’s under crust. it hurts and feels above the clouds. but craven, weak, it’s only you.
Law of Attraction by Jennifer Lothrigel

Journey’s End by Jennifer Lothrigel
ISMS by sara ryan

1.
You are a mosquito in a room full of mannequins, their bloodless necks, smooth and full of milk.

This is how hungry you are. You lick my arm— you want what I have there, under the hair and skin

and stringy muscle. Maybe it tastes like hot metal, or honey from a spring-bloom of color. If I were you, I’d try to be braver

about the whole thing. I dare you.

2.
Everything is reddening. You are a long-tailed cat in a room full of rocking chairs. Proud, but missing.

Tall, but forgetting what it means to fall back, the air pulling around your body like a heavy frost. Is this

how you challenge me? Your dance from room to room, the familiar and unfamiliar of your form—

if I were you, I’d take the stairs.

3.
If I were you,

I’d forget seeing me on that corner one time two months ago,
I was wearing blue jeans

and you were crying—

You looked awful—you
know what I’m saying.

Forget all that. Let the silence
remain. Wet on our hair.

Example Theory by kyle harvey
**Datumation** by joseph brockway

I perambulate unaware of, perhaps hypnotized by, the virescent incantations of LEDs and filament bulbs bobbing all around my incandescent mind entwining my eyes—dizzying, revealing the truth of consumerism: I am agent and object; I (am) consume(d).

I am consumed by globalization: markets that assume I am a datum in their logs to be datumated and aggregated . . . I live hacked: wiped of trace of being.

My human rhythm decimated, algorithms interpolated, my data collated and translated, I am . . .

<p>new creation/</p>
<p>avatar/</p>
<p>whilom me.</p>

**Pop-culture Populace** by joseph brockway

I am 112,063 results on a Google search. I am marketed, packaged, bought, and sold. I feign individuality, existential, transcend-time, leave-my-mark-on-the-world individuality.

In reality I have reduced myself to condensation on a treinta iced coffee, 7 pump vanilla, non-fat milk, light-ice life-less self on reserve until they call me by name declaring my mass-produced, trending hashtag, pop-culture individuality.
This is Who I’ve Always Wanted to Be by Christopher Luna

A Dirty Word But it Comes Out Clean for Stu Jackson by Christopher Luna
CIVIL COPING MECHANISMS: A KINGDOM by russell jaffe

In the parking lot of the CVS
Seeing legacies fray.
I'm thinking about asking
For more lives
On Facebook to see if
And what
I'll feel, and if
I hate myself after.
It always feels like something can, and therefore should, be
Done.
But that isn’t always the way.

I come from an unrequited legacy of
Men.
They named every star in the sky after
Men
Or beasts men had conquered.
Men made the world safe for men
Like me, full of windows and operating theatres.
They poked their preindustrial fingers into the wound.
The hurting’s almost never documented. My infant daughter is strapped in in
the back.

And O that blood bringing her into
The world.
We have a history of castles
To live up to.
CIVIL COPING MECHANISM FOR LIKES by russell jaffe

Recognition is the greatest human resource.
And congratulations!
We’ve got the technology and the talent and the ability
But we invented money and excuses and use those to
Not do things.
But yeah, anyway,
Congratulations!

The best learning happens when everything is flowing
One thing into the next, remember?
In all directions,
That’s the problem.

Consider your open Facebook page.
How many of these people are your deep friends?
How many of these people are you listening to? How many of them are clinically Depressed? How many of them are hurting so badly?
Not to discount listening to them. But how much are you playing? How much are they Flowing through you? How much are they
You?

Consumer Poem by eric allen yankee

You
always buy
the shit
they sell
you.

They sell you.
Crossword of Nameless Things by lindsey lucas

Across
1 To ignore the growing gaps in one’s sneakers
4 A cupboard, once thought to contain something, empty
5 The point in a morning that separates it from yesterday
8 To drink vodka with crushed cherries
9 The realization of loss after checking expiration dates
10 The negative alternative to self-awareness
11 To apologize for replacing emptiness with mass
13 The sound of wind chimes on the porch at 2 a.m.
15 An anatomical trait of apathy
17 Being too cold to leave the house in summer
19 A graph depicting growth patterns of silence
21 Moonlight in the third beer on a Tuesday
23 Something that only exists when unobserved
24 Fear of the streetlights burning out
25 Fear of the headlights burning out
26 A desperate affinity for lighthouses, unexplained

Down
1 To set bare feet on hardwood in winter
2 A chart of the patterns in a new rug
3 The rediscovered uses of language
6 Cloud formations that resemble unknown gods
7 The curvature of a fresh coffee mug stain
8 A newfound ability to drink the sun
10 The force that counteracts daytime infomercials
12 To discover that calla lilies are blooming
14 The misunderstood nature of a light switch
16 The motion of a thing unnoticed
18 A daily ritual involving quiet and red wine
20 Fear of being blinded
22 Fear of being shameless and awake
Am I Being Gentle Enough or Too Gentle? by Christopher Luna
READING SYLVIA PLATH BY THE LIGHT OF A BURNING BUILDING by ariel francisco

There were supposed to be more lives, you promised nine, one year in every ten, remember? Or have you forgotten the art? I can hear the rising wail of fire trucks in the distance. How many times have I tried this, thrown Ariel into a burning building, watched my name become nothing but ash? Did I tell you I was born in the year of the horse, last one of the millennium? I search for shapes in flames framed in windows. Fire trucks arrive, lights flashing red as your hair, cutting the night. They are too late or too early, I still can’t tell. As men rush to the fire, one asks if anyone’s trapped inside while smoke and ash eat the air, and all that rises from the doorway is fire.

FOR THE MAN PRESSURE WASHING THE GAS STATION NEXT DOOR AT 1 A.M. by ariel francisco

Enough PSI to wake up the whole block, to rival the airplanes idling across the street, blast the concrete clean enough to reflect the neon pink trim of the Airport Diner. You might as well scrub at the light pollution to reveal the stars. You’re in for a long night. No one will care. No one will notice. I suppose you could say the same about this poem. Don’t worry, I wasn’t sleeping anyway.
**Bound II** by nyk robertson

Letters bound with an asterisk  
Disclaimer excusing my existence  
As I attempt to fit into a box  
around my neck  
choking my voicebox  
into a footnote

Labels rest on my shoulders  
weighing my feet down  
into your expectations

Binding breasts to chest  
changing shape  
from round peg  
to defined box  
to fit into  
square hole  
dug 6 feet deep

Let your greatest creation be yourself

*Who’s This?* by Emma Ensley
**Binary System** by nyk robertson

Trapped in Saussure’s chains  
Trying to break free  
To remain significant without a signifier  
Will I ever gain the right to capitalize my R  
and be more than a reflection in the mirror  
Can my value be determined outside of the binary system  
A zero attempting to become a 1  
so that I may become one part of two halves  
For the fraction of me could never add up to  
something worth a whole  
You take pieces of my identity  
to build your walls  
that hold me out  
Hold me in  
Hold me together  
I’m content being held at all  
There has never been a place for me  
in this binary system  
of zeros and ones  
I am eternally trapped  
as 1/3 of anything you understand  
0.333333  
Always repeating myself  
Always searching for an end  
Round me up, closer to one  
any one

**GIFT** by linda ashok

A necklace  
Of sugared fireflies  
A lighthouse  
Full of wrecks  
A sea wasp  
That obeys touch  
A yarn  
Of sinking  
And distance  
That keeps us together
THE UNMAKING OF AN ASTRONAUT by linda ashok

I.

i was counting the change when you drew closer
...your shirt smelling of God's own sweat

then i rolled you up in a lane that led to my budget space
the lacquer on your tongue, your nails reconfirming the address

the metro is indistinct in the morning smog. it isn’t the monorail
i wish i could remove the window and have the geraniums nap in the rain

but you pulled the curtain... took the roof away
defied gravity and thrust skyward

i careened in the air

asking for blackness
asking for water
asking more of you

II.

another day:

your skin almost as thick as light
an aquarium
in it, a girl with a bowl of dead moths

traversing a space built of snow, trying to bury them

III.

yet another day:

silence manifests itself
in a plate of rice and tandoori

i paint the wall: an ocean, you offer the mast;
we become the hull.
Like by Kenyatta jp garcia

what we have left in us is our similes liking their own graves.

* 

on the face of the moon
there is no smile seen
when going in paid
and coming out empty

money lost to be regained again someday.

still a laugh
full of half hearts.

* 

together we bought
experiences
invested

surviving on spare change
will do
but we know what we’re
missing out on

don’t let the bourgeoisie
get you confused.

* 

you have any idea how much it costs to disconnect?
ever wonder what
our similes said about us
as they compared
what they were
to what they’d seen?

how empirical are we? what kind of analogies are we? what are we like?
#88 by Nazifa Islam
Reminder Of
by Kenyatta jp garcia

there was never enough time
as there was never anybody
to talk to
besides the ears in the walls

and the face of the clock

* 

one can get used to anything after awhile, it’s when
one can’t
that one has to keep
options open
for how to go out of the way
to find out what comes after
after awhile

when the clock’s face sags and wrinkles
when the hands
succumb to arthritis
when walls go hard of hearing
when one has to go to nobody about everything again and again

* 

there’s a spam folder in heaven

* 

if this was another nightmare there might have been some changes with less worries and more creeps.

a shock is better for the system than stress

- 

who jumpstarts the car

with paranoia?

okay, some do. somewhere. someone.

but there’s a shock in there too.
it’ll take a lifetime to meet and another to separate

that’s what personal history spelled out

in the cursive of these curls

if anybody else could read the script on this head

they’d never have any reason to listen

neither a boy nor a girl anymore

ever again

just an adult until the end of time

with so much left to say

about when there wasn’t nearly enough of anything.

death is the final reminder of poverty.

#4 by St. Germain
#1 by St. Germain
**Riftia Pachyptila** by teo mungaray

Scientists must be careful when harvesting *Riftia pachyptila*.

At such depths, the body resists
   A mile of water above.

The worm recedes into its casing,
   shrieks at the change.

Its body cannot stand the lifting or the release.
   Scientists must be careful,

When you lift a body under pressure
   to a waking peace, free from constraint.

The body bursts.

---

**Supraventricular Tachycardia** by teo mungaray

Do not move your leg.
We went through that vein,
Fried your heart with radio waves.
We call this an ablation.
   Isn’t it a wonder
That to fix you, we must scar you,
Must cut into you, slip wires through
To that miraculous engine
And damage it with precise care?
#5 by St. Germain
**Endlings** by august smith

According to the plaque by my exhibit I am
“Martha, the last living passenger pigeon.”

But mostly
I’m just tired.

Tired of the Cincinnati Zoo.
Tired of the children banging on my cage
when the guard isn’t looking.
Tired of the guard who is never looking.

Still, better this than three years ago,
when the scientists would bring in those final few of our males,

*boorish old men!*

and watch anxiously from behind glass, taking copious notes
as we somehow failed

to hit it off.

---

Is naming me “Lonesome George”
some kind of fucked up joke?

I haven’t seen another tortoise like me
in four years,
my only company the kind woman
who feeds me those grotesque pellets of food
from the Charles Darwin Research Station,

where I can’t help
but take

“survival of the fittest”
as an insult.

These are the things
I can think about
as I wait.

---

One could say I have a complex relationship with guns.

Once, they were peeking from dense walls of foliage like strange branches

gripped in sweaty hands on the backs of beige trucks
a few times from helicopters—which are surprisingly beautiful—gunning our populations down
to the lonely three of us, always the chainsaw at the hip to cut the horn from the skull, hardly enough ivory to be worth it anymore.

And now?

Day and night, six armed guards huge rifles stoic faces beige trucks same as the others just prolonging it, everyone’s natural, unironic fate to die at the hands of those who kill us.
Erasure Poems by alexandra naughton

a rose i suppose

the stench of death

Your rose I suppose

62
disciples

we touch

Within tombs

a bunch of words

enough already

SHADOWS & CHAOS
An interview with Christopher Morgan
by erica joy

When sending a text re: Christopher Morgan’s recently released chapbook, Shadow Songs, my phone autocorrected “chap” to “chaos”—and at no other moment has a failed autocorrect seemed so fitting.

You could call him a writer, an editor, a mentor, even a chess player—but with a schedule that puts most of us to shame and a passion for the indie writing community that leaves us all inspired to do more, Christopher has collected all the chaos of his past and bundled it into a neat little collection of poetry that will keep you up at night, salivating, craving just a few more words and possibly a well-timed line break.

So, here is Christopher Morgan to talk shop with me. We’re breaking it down. We’re getting really real.

By day, Christopher is the director of manufacturing, hardware expert, and lab coordinator for RedSeal Inc.—where he has worked for nearly nine years doing cyber-defense for major corporations—and because the job is so different from his creative work, his brain is constantly stimulated by a swirling tornado of projects.

Taking up most of his “other” time is Nostrovia! Press, for which Christopher is the co-manager and chapbook editor. After retiring as the Editor-in-Chief for Arroyo Literary Review (where he worked for a record three years in a row, even though it was supposed to be a one-year gig), he became an Editor at Large for the publication.

CM: I answer a lot of questions, and kind of serve as a database of procedures and records. I want people to succeed at what they care about.

EJ: That must help out others there since you have the experience under your belt.

I had to learn a lot of stuff a la trial by fire, and I really love sharing whatever I can.

I like that you describe yourself as a "hub" or a "database." That’s very telling.

I’ve always been a math-brained person, which is funny, because I’m here in the arts and whatnot. I’m a big chess player; been studying chess since the fifth grade. When I was at my prime, I was a strong expert at blitz (5 minutes or less).

Oh wow. Do you do tournaments or anything?

Eh, nothing official, though I did spend a lot of time at chess clubs—interacting with players who did [enter tournaments], so yeah, close enough. It's mostly just messing around online these days; 1-minute chess is my version of minesweeper. I love the intuitive side of things.
That’s cool—having a hobby that’s different from the creative things you enjoy but is also another source of stress relief.

Christopher is also the Reviews Coordinator at Alien Mouth, for which he aims to write one review per month—sometimes more, sometimes less, but as he’s always reading, he figures he might as well write about it. Lastly, he shoulders a varying workload for tNY Press—depending on the projects he’s involved in and when he’s needed.

To sum that up: N!P, Arroyo, Alien Mouth, and tNY. In addition to his day job. In addition to “having a life” or whatever. Oh, and did I mention he just published a book and is consistently working on new material? Yikes.

Do you mostly focus on poetry these days? You had mentioned in an earlier conversation that you started as a fiction writer. Then kind of transitioned into formal poetry. And now you’re obsessed with prose poems.

Yeah, mostly poetry these days, but started with fiction, long stories, then moved to formal poetry too—then moved to prose poems, which is what I mostly write and publish these days.

I find prose poems particularly interesting because I feel like they border right on flash fiction or flash nonfiction. It’s like structure without structure.

Yes! I mostly write fables these days. And my fables are quick little scenes based on the feelings from my life, so there’s always that gray-zone.

I noticed that going through not only your chapbook, Shadow Songs, but also your pub list. Little snapshots of what was, or processing and figuring out what will be.

Yeah, I spend a lot of time in reflection; probably part of my PTSD to be honest, plus having been in therapy most of my life.

You know, though—I bet that helps you dig out and deal with all of the past that really drives your writing. Therapy and having a neutral party to talk to.

Yes, I’m definitely somebody who’s been acknowledging my problems for a long time now; and their causes; and I try to carry that over into my writing. My fiction pieces, of which almost none have actually been published, are pretty much nonfiction portraits of my PTSD and past. In my poetry, it’s funny because I have a lot more distance—in the sense that I reshape and transform.

I think that’s a healthy way to deal with the past, or as healthy as can be—there are so many potentially destructive ways one could go in dealing with painful memories but writing is such a better option, plus it has the potential to help those going through similar issues.

As I browsed through Christopher’s publication list, some of his earlier work—
including work that’s not included in *Shadow Songs*—really had me stunned. Seeing Red + Feeling Blue, for example, had such personal and telling imagery. Like I could crawl in next to it and let it consume me. Turns out that was one of his very first prose poems, which he describes as two different styles of reflection—a “fiery self-destructiveness.”

Another (earlier) piece, Bomb Boy, had a similar effect on me—and my main point here is that Christopher has a real knack for introspection. For cutting a hole in your heart and digging out what’s there and arranging it on paper somehow. It’s very pleasant to read even when the subject matter isn’t so pleasant.

If you want to check out more of Christopher’s earlier work—now, I’m talking about the formal stuff, the pre-prose poem era—Gathering The Serpents and The Only Stories We Know are two pieces that really make you appreciate the planning that goes into formal poetry, and the art of the language. Christopher won his school’s poetry contest for Gathering The Serpents, a rattlesnake villanelle—“I am very proud of it”—and The Only Stories We Know, a sestina, was a runner-up a different year.

I do want to return to form—but I need to have material that relates. Prose poems are so ultra-loose. That’s probably a lot of their appeal to me: After doing very fixed form for so long, having that freedom was a wonderful change of pace, and I get to channel my fiction background.

But yeah, I have an idea to write a sestina about a guy battling ants in his house, where his obsession with the traps and poison and watching their trails very much goes with the form.

Christopher’s works in progress include: more of the fire + water dynamic; a few chapbook manuscripts; and a handful of other ideas that are brewing and begging to make their way from brain to paper.

They are all part of the same big full-length that all my writing has been working toward these last three years. But one chap is called Promised Detonations, which is all the fire and explosions and trying to hold the monsters inside; and then I have To Breathe Deep, which has all the somber, sad, watery, drowning kind of poems. But even then, there’s a lot of overlap between the two, both sides trying to get things under control.

He shares the majority of his work with his therapist, who the 29-year-old has been seeing since the sixth grade.

For most readers, even if they don’t ”know” the background, I hope they can at least feel it.

*I think the feelings you transfer to the reader come across—even if we haven’t experienced exactly what you have, we can think of a time that was similar and we*
relate and that is what draws us in and keeps us reading.

While the material in Shadow Songs is dark and deep, it had that “pleasant to read” effect that only someone with a keen grasp on the language could relay to readers. The deliberate use of line breaks and slashes to indicate pause has a certain profound effect. Christopher explains those poems actually began in chunky, more prose-like forms, and: “Catch Business, my editor for this chap at Sad Spell Press, did a really great job of exploring different shapes and forms for these poems.”

His process then became to narrow the pieces down to their core and really focus on the images and messages. Everything seems very tightly knit.

I was writing in all directions to start; but as I write, I look back and reflect and see what kind of stuff I’m really focusing on. And then, being aware of those themes, I can write about them more directly.

That makes sense. The rough drafts are all about figuring out your themes so you can really focus on the craft itself.

It was a transformative writing event for me, as moving forward I’m now much less likely to just go with a block for my fables. I’ve begun doing more line breaks, etc., which I think in the long run is an improvement.

The opening quote for Shadow Songs is the end line from a James Galvin poem, and it compresses much of the feelings of the subsequent text into just a few lines: “Everything / That threatens us / Threatens to save us.”

This line is something I came across years ago, and it really struck me. I wonder a lot about who I would be if I hadn’t gone through a lot of the stuff growing up that I did—but I know it’s really shaped me, and for all the bad that came with it, which I’m still wrestling with, it also brought about a lot of good in how I view others and try to treat them.

That’s actually a note I made somewhere in your chap. Umm. In Hate Song. The line "the man who molded / my family". My note was: "how the past shapes us into better beings so that we can be better than what we've come from.”

That’s a beautiful note.

And then, in the same piece, with the line "and I take / another drag / to become the smoke / in my lungs" I wrote: "but at first becoming all that we loathe and what suffocates us.” And by that I mean that before we can start dealing with any issues we have to be consumed by them.

Hate Song was very much an anthem for me. This search for a savior, safety, some sort of self-preservation—and how memories from our past lurk within us and creep up in otherwise happy times. I think a lot of artists deal with that. We are so introspective that even when we are happy we still
have that deep buried sadness living within us.

Hate Song was a very personal piece for me. I was trying to break away from compartmentalizing things in fables, and just speak directly to what I was feeling. I kind of swam through that piece.

It's almost stream-of-consciousness type of writing, another "form that isn't a form" that I enjoy.

Over the course of a few days I wrote it, slowly building it, three steps forward, two steps back—but even then, I had to use a meta device, the Hate Song itself, to explore parts more deeply. The more confessional my fiction back in the day, the more meta I'd get—my own kind of defense mechanism.

Down the Long, Long Hallway has a line: "Days may happen, yes, / but not inside this hallway." And that made me think of how we are transported back into those memories so it's hard to even exist outside of them.

And the hope is that one day instead of living within all the painful memories, we will exist only in the good ones. But it's a process of getting there, as everything is.

That's a parable of sorts for PTSD, and remembering, and being trapped about remembering. My therapist said: I like how this poem thinks about thinking about thinking.

That line, "watching myself let it happen."—did that come from you feeling like you were to blame for any of the bad that happened within your family growing up? I think at some point all survivors of abuse or trauma instinctively blame themselves even if they know they are not to blame.

Yeah, that's something I've battled a lot.

It's part of the healing process maybe. To wonder who is to blame, like "if not me, then who?"

On a logical level I know all the ins and outs of survivor guilt and abuse and feelings that aren't true, but the feeling is always there—and like Hate Song says, I blame myself for a great deal of things in general. I am very, very hard on myself, but I also tell people that so much of where I am at, with my therapy or my writing, has been from my high expectations, and I more or less know I'm not to blame—that I have done what I could—but yeah, the feelings are strong. They take a very long time to sort through.

My father beat and molested me, and did a lot of emotional abuse and physical abuse to me and my family. My mother divorced my father by the time I was in the fifth grade and we moved across country, and she fought him in the courts for 12 years. I didn't tell people I was molested until I was 20—though people knew I'd been beaten, etc. My mom was the only person to have it worse than I did with regards to my father. I
mention in Hate Song hearing my mother and father fighting below me and then hearing her go silent—stuff like that.

I can only talk about this stuff with any kind of frankness because I’ve been repeating some of these words for almost 10 years now—and writing about it a lot. That’s the thing, I wrote about all the abuse very directly.

So sorry to hear these things happened to you, but so glad to hear you have been able to deal with it in healthier ways than most.

When I came to this community, I thought I could start over—not be known for that stuff—but I still had to talk about it. So I dressed it up in different ways. But now and then I write a poem very directly about it, like Hate Song, because I still have to.

It’s a part of you, you know—back to how the past shapes us and gets us to where we are. I often think if I hadn’t been through some of the bullshit from my past, I wouldn’t be where I am now, which is a pretty great place all things considered.

And I recognize that, too—that my past was awful—but things are generally pretty great right now. I have an awesome lady, a nice little place, a solid job, and I work hard in a community I care about. So life is good. And, regarding all the bad feelings and PTSD and whatever—it gets better every day.

Which is all we can really hope for—the getting better. In Simple Sentence Staccato, one of the pieces, number 17, states: "A falsity is repeated, repeated, repeated, until it’s believed”—in my notes, that one I put a big star by.

All of his one-sentence stories offer so many different characters and sentiments in such a small space. Christopher had about 18, but when Catch initially looked at his chapbook, she mentioned how much she loved the sequence—so he started writing more, including the second half of what’s included in the chap, which contains number 17.

It’s a super fun form; like horror haiku.

It’s very condensed yet there is so much room for interpretation, and within Shadow Songs it offers a little bit of breathing room amid the rest of the pieces.

How do you feel about Shadow Songs being out in the world now? Like does it feel better to have your words out there in this very put together bundle of book, or is it still kind of terrifying to share this part of you with other people (and strangers)?

I am very proud of that collection—even though it is so small, it has no fluff. They are all poems I care about and the feelings are very important to me.

I felt that. Every line hits hard.

Thank you. I have been sharing myself in my writing for a little
while now, and like I said, often in more personal ways—so having these dark little fables out there isn't too scary. I sometimes have that common insecurity—am I doing enough as writer? have I accomplished enough?—so it's easy to feel bad about yourself, and self-pity is dangerous. But I feel good, motivated to submit more, and even a little validated. Find more of Christopher Morgan via twitter @AndLoHeSpoke and his website: andlohespoke.tumblr.com.

You’ll also enjoy some minor amusement by following @DirtyChaiMag, and you can read more author interviews by exploring previous issues of Dirty Chai and the blog section at dirtychaimag.com.

TURN DOWN FOR WHAT(EVER) by jessica morey-collins

Lost at the grocery store. Wants to fall in love but the echo of everyone she’s ever met deafens—everyone who gets in echoes forever and ever. Went to the store for eggs and potatoes and came away with fists full of topsoil. What was it she wanted? Lost at the grocery store, kid kicks at the grid of a shopping cart—gets outside and spins in the parking lot until god rocks the lot and flops her onto it. No cars. Only snow on television. Wants to fall in love, runs into trouble. God is the lick of misty air streetlight sliced. In some years, she’ll slip into a club-kid moment, hold every damp hand that passes through hers. She lives for the grip of skin when a sweaty handhold splits up. Holds an egg in each hand, though, so can’t handhold anybody. The eggs contain the echoes of everybody she’s ever met—hums through her hands until her hands vanish. Just under-shell the warble deafens. Credible little jellies melting their bellsongs at her each hip. One’s wet mouth one’s crooked nose and kinked finger one’s face freshly shaved and rasping one’s rasper one likes legs tangled one takes his time one makes her wait. Everybody accuses ecstasy: can’t she just be just happy. Then everybody claps—palms flap at each other in the face of spatial paradox. Zeno asleep at the wheel. Zeno between each slap. Happily, how fast atoms rattle is a vanishing point. The fastness of atoms sets everyone in some kind of bubble. You only think you’ve touched me. Runs into trouble, loves like a crooked wheel on a shopping cart, drags her asks through snow. I get more bored with myself by the second. Everybody makes the same sound.
Robots by Adam Phillips

The engineers shrugged; no one knew where the robot had acquired the sword and it was troubling,

watching it hack
as the rockets on its fingers

sat unused, the atomizer dropped God
knows where—
when the dinosaur men

showed up, shrieking and smirking, pounding their muscular chests, brandishing their long black
forked tongues and loincloths, the robot, programmed to cleanse, held them down and crushed the backs of their skulls, stepped on their feet and threw uppercuts—

during subsequent attacks,
the giant crabs, their oozing shells stove in, the cyclops, confused and weeping, smashing through buildings, taking a knee to throw up, skull crushed with the hilt of the sword, in every case a battalion of tanks and police cars tumbling uselessly underfoot—

it developed a propensity for posing, the robot, foot propped on a corpse, fist thrust in the sky, grim set of the eyes—by then we'd forgotten the promised miracle of chips, gears, oil, wires,
metal, pegs, axel, input, batteries, bolts—all of it drowned, fried in a rain of blood—still, we held out hope of rectifying our mistake, one way or another, stockpiling brains and weapons

until the day the robot floated into town
cradling the homunculus, tiny machine, in its cupped hands. I have a message, it said.

I have only ever had one message.
I will repeat it one more time.
Toward a comprehensive list of reasons I’m crying in 2016 by jacqueline boucher

for Ross Gay

i.
In my chest, there is a choir. And in my choir, there is a tone deaf child named Bruce because in every choir there is a tone deaf child named Bruce, or Thomas, or some other name that will make him a good grandfather one day. He sings louder than everyone. Maybe because he can’t hear himself, but probably because he can, the yawn of his cheeks turned up in a smile. His belly a trumpet of walrus flipper slapping sheets of tin: How sweet it is to be loved by you.

ii.
When Texas Chainsaw Massacre actor Gunnar Hansen dies of pancreatic cancer, a painting surfaces of Leatherface sitting in a chair. His back bows slow and steady like a plywood bookcase and he presses his palm to tan and cracked approximation of his left temple. An axe’s handle holds his sagging weight, and it’s as though he’s slumped into exhale. Months later, I look at this and wonder what good is hell magic and immortality when you keep getting left behind.

iii.
I am a patron saint of lost causes and super villains. I know this because I’m the girl who stays hoping Aaron Burr doesn’t pull the trigger, that Doctor Doom is getting enough to eat. That wait, that stop, that this was all just a misunderstanding when life gets too big and too fast for right or wrong. I’m the girl who’s pulling for every maybe-he’s-a-good-guy theory, every reach-so-hard-you’re-gonna-pull-a-muscle theory, stretched thin as lace that trims my Sunday socks.

iv.
My landlord sends a text one Friday morning and, in so many words, tells me she thinks I’m a loser. I can’t remember if this is real. Then, I think of the wine glasses, remember
the way I folded to the floor like newspaper,  
spun sugar stem in one fist, engagement  
coasters in the other, and I know  
that it must be. To leave this stupid love  
means scraping cabinets to their dusty guts  
and throwing away the glass and ghosts it left behind  
because—

v.  
I’m twenty-seven years old and just now  
learning the word “bumblefuck,” as if  
it’s been hiding in the ditch of my molars.  
As if it didn’t know to announce itself  
when it was needed, stutter step shy and fuzzy  
like hair on lip. As if there were any other word  
for the way my heart is punch-dumb and palms  
open, thirsty and swimming and lousy  
with reckless hope.

La Botella (The Bottle) by sarah frances moran

La hermienta del borracho.  
The tool of the drunk.

He clung to it. White-knuckled the stem. Dropped a seed in the belly of our  
family. Took a long swig. Took too many touches that left bruises. Put his  
hand on the things he hadn’t made. Ruined them. Beat the Spanish out of her.  
Made sure he looked long and hard at the gold liquid in the bottle. Pondered  
how deep it went. Pondered his own children. Considered where his  
hands had been. Took the long walk home and found himself staring down the barrel of a  
stranger’s gun. Wondered again about where all his hands had been. About his  
children. About how deep that seed had rooted. Clung to it. White-knuckled the  
stem. White-knuckled the stem... White knuckled her stem...
The Mattress by genelle chaconas

The abandoned mattress found beside a bomb shelter whitewash wall there is no name for this disputed zone it lies outside the jurisdiction of any nation it is the perimeter of a martial cities is stained with old blood it doesn’t spray or splatter just pools leaks and drips through it could be a vision test a bent spoon scorched through the canvas wet white powder a rough clot of hair clings and scalp the moist canvas split with rusting springs the grease stain handprints like frantic leaking claws one high stiletto shoe the heel’s broken off one cheap tan nylon stocking the trail of a dead weight dragged awkwardly off into the grave you can follow the path just so far until you can’t anymore there is nothing left but the tires of an unmarked car and nothing to ask.

Vandalized by genelle chaconas

I want to live the way you did I want construct a frantic childhood like you had wild in the surrogate streets driven to an agile strength the slow corrosion neglect and rust your days like loss first a destruction then an overstructure of dignity I want to live in the wiry strength of your wisdom now you are older now I don’t have to tell you that the vandalized houses in this city are the impenetrable ones the frayed barbed wire corroded to a deadly sting.
Girls Glow in Synthesis (Part IV) by jennifer macbain-stephens

all text taken from the following songs: “Rebel, Rebel,” “Ashes to Ashes,” and “Let’s Dance,” by David Bowie.

oh no not again

a message from a happy man

wanna come

my mother said

I'm happy, hope you're happy too

don’t say it’s true

my friend said

pistol

I tell myself

I've loved all I've needed

kick

a flash of light

picture this:

a major planet

lighting up
**mega awesome mind blowing ways to cope with a serious incurable perilous illness** by christine tierney

one—don’t show your bruises. this means lifting your shirt or detailing the number of times a needle made your vein swell.

two—give. gifts will help anyone who sees their own sadsackofaface in the reflection of your glimmering ails.

three—let visitors know parking is pricey. also, let visitors know that there is no one with mother-of-pearl framed cat glasses and a two-foot beehive hairdo who will stamp your parking ticket for a discounted rate.

four—try and stop yourself from using your x-ray vision to eyeball healthy pulsing organs underneath blouses, skirts, trousers, jackets, vests, and sports bras.

five—just do it. threaten WebMD with anthrax.

five.five—if the anthrax threat doesn’t persuade WebMD into disarming their neurosis-feeding web site, pull the plug on your computer whenever you feel compelled to rub battery acid into the pulsing fissures of your deep psychological wounds rereading the worst possible outcomes.

six—turn to page 71 of the “how to cope with the terrible shit that only happens to people like you” self-help book and rub it on your bare ass until the page tears.

seven—be patient when the woman with the bigwig banker husband and the two thousand dollar valentino tote complains for a good fifteen minutes about her earth shattering gluten sensitivities.

eight—take a quick rescue breath and live in the moment that unfolds a nanosecond after the moment you are trying like hell to be living in.
Mongolian Death Worm by hanna tawater

artist interpretation like my large intestine coiled around deserts like six degrees of separation between surface and subversion planting eggs in other surrogates eating through inside if everyone believes something does it really exist—girls should [solve for x] spit acid, discharge currents so current so to kill a man with air we are death, go ahead, touch us remote, snake of blood headless pooling in underwear acidic, liquified, yellow is my color we’ve led expeditions, too, but like isolation maybe we have reasons for hiding maybe we have reasons for being so corrosive maybe this is survival maybe staying alive will get us somewhere other than this wasteland because running underground is easier being myth is easier—all your words do work instead, say we are we’ve evolved to be mouthless.

Ayida & Damballah by hanna tawater

coiled seven-thousand times to keep from sinking cosmic trench down through otherside into sky and breath gushing blood into every ocean he took another snakewife tightening around continents until they split open newer mythologies other patterns on more twisted bellies more gaseous nebulae drifting into a newer symmetry - balance - father, I’m falling through her coiled so close falling past all thousands of lines stacked again and again and again you are sky, cosmos, creator and here is a newer ecology where even air is a snake womb star forming cocoon of ions charges attracting repelling pushing further from the other pole eating my own tail my own waste keeping every thing too heavy hovered in time in immaculate minutes until a newer goddess and with less burden it’s so hard holding planets inside me it’s so hard being the only one who’s here hard being here only hard being who’s here who is here
Hidden Waterfall by Susan Yount
Cattle-Jumper by miranda romano

In Ethiopia, boys become men
by leaping over cattle.
They rush the skinny, white cows,
and jump across the restless, twitching bodies
—one Maza holds the bull’s horns, another its tail.
The boys’ arms pump, genitals swinging with the movement.
Around the village, mothers, sisters
are begging to be whipped
by the Mazas to prove
their love for the jumpers.
They are singing and crying out. They show no pain.

I picture my little brother
naked in the dust like the other boys,
where he stands shining in the sunlight,
his skinny arms deep, deep brown, his shoulders russet.
Five Aprils ago we brought him across the sea on a plane,
his wide eyes, distended belly, pockmarked skin came into our home
where he screamed each night
in Amharic and cried for the nurses in his orphanage
until my father crept down the hall to soothe him.

I would lay on the couch and listen to him weep,
while I wondered about his father killed by Typhoid,
the baby brother he lost to starvation,
and the way she put her hand on my parents’ shoulders,
gifted them with a bouquet
of grass when they took him away
I want him to be a man of God, she said, teach him to be a doctor.

Now, when I come home at Christmas,
my brother is sprawled across the old couch, begging me
to watch cartoons with him.
And as we sit and fall asleep by the fire,
with quiet snow coming down outside and happy animals
dancing across the plasma screen,
I think of my brother in a different life
I can see the cream pads of his feet in the orange dust,
hear his yelps of triumph
as he becomes a man in his native land.
I imagine my little brother jumping cattle,
I imagine whipping myself for him.
if love was a sitting room

if love was a sitting room
its stone walls would be white

with a handwoven rug
to dress the creaky floorboards

you’d refuse blinds or curtains
so we could feast upon the valley and gulp sunlight

I’d cram the bookshelves
with old favourites: Keats, Dickinson, Plath and Neruda

on the mantelshelf
daffodils would shine in a terracotta vase

and the leather sofa
would sag beneath a heap of cushions

we’d carve our names into the lintel

drive me to nowhere

drive me to nowhere
let me sink into bluedark night

don’t say she needs you
leave me to bleed cold stars

paint me as a stranger
tuck my absence into your pocket

I’ll try not to dream of winter
and your bodies sleeping like magnets
The Drive by nathan tompkins

Grampa tells me as we drive
the snow brushed back roads
of North Idaho, how he took my mother

on a drive along the same unpainted asphalt paths,
the night before she married her first husband,
so he could explain to her it wasn’t too late to back out,

that it would be ok, and even preferable for her to call it off,
better to give the marriage an abortion, than to shove paper vows
in a shredder, to erase her name from the pledge. She felt

she owed it to the mystery man, the man I have only met once
on a visitation in Portland, when I was six...so she spoke
the words before the Bishop, placed her future on the contract line

down the line. If she hadn’t, he would never have donated
his sperm, his genes. I would never have been thrust,
screaming into this world, in that hospital by the Kootenai.

Sometimes, I think that would have been ok.
This is How We Became the Birds by Susan Yount
Sylvia by nathan tompkins

She was wearing his socks, that arvo, when we sat outside the classroom, her long greying hair, partially covering one lens of her glasses. Then she smiled, with her mouth, though the sorrow lines engraved beneath her eyes confessed her agony.

She told me how when her son was sixteen, he brought home a “tomato” plant, put it in his room, cared, and watered it carefully. She didn’t think anything of it, until her policeman husband told her the truth...they made him get rid of it, though she found out he planted it in the woods behind their house. She laughed, said she would see him disappear in the trees.

As she wore his socks, she told me how years later, she would buy it for him and his girlfriend to ease the pain, the suffering, to help them keep food down their throats, as the pharmaceutical cocktails poisoned their bodies, chemical leeches trying to keep breaths in their lungs, life in their AIDS pillaged faces.

But she wrapped her feet with his socks, before inserting them in the black tenny runners, and she lifted one leg of her light blue jeans, and showed them to me, as she told me she likes to wear his socks on Jewish holidays, curl up on the easy chair, or sometimes his bed, with a book and a cup of rum laced tea, she felt close to him then, and the touch of his spirit that still infused his clothing, the faint traces of his scent that still remained, gave her a comfort she lacked from God.
Mimicry by amy baskin

my son invited him
home for a play date
strong, tough, tan
he moved like his father
with a slow strong gait
spied the kitchen play set
in the corner by the window
stuck out his jaw he said
that’s for girls that’s stupid
but we told him that it wasn’t
that we played with it together
then I went to get them snacks
when I came back I found him
with a baby doll in his arms
rocking rocking back and forth
slowly gently and with reverence
while my son stirred pots of soup
there on the plastic stove
you’re my tiny baby he said
my teeny pretty baby and he
kissed her and he placed her
in the built-in seat spoon fed her
my son’s soup with wooden spoons
and asked my son to bring the baby
a warm bottle so his daddy
wouldn’t hear the baby cry

Eve Leaves Adam for Yvette by kelly rae williams

I do not regret the way our clay-colored hands
packed earth between these limbs
molded mountain ranges onto bare bodied backdrops
sculpted skies on the tide of our hip bones.
The way the dust rose as we breathed
Our outlines coming to life in the chalky air.
I do not regret the creation, nor the taste of you.
I only regret my willingness to devour.
The way you dangled, ripe and brimming with juice,
the last red indulgence. One invitation to nibble
your skin and I gave in. The way we bit fruitful flesh,
peeling back the evil to get to the good. Now,
when I daydream all I see are weeping willows
and nakedness. How we never got around to naming the cattle.
Too consumed with turning our own skin leather.
Sun-bathing in the immoral heat,
how our idle hands made the sin so easy.
Two Shakes of a Lamb's Tail by nathan logan

A grandpa shuffles out the door, coffee in his hand. Will I be like this grandpa someday or like one without grandkids. I have routines and will they change when my hair disappears or when my wardrobe becomes a striped-shirts-only club. I’d like to think the worst thing that could ever happen is my team never goes to the World Series again, but of course there are worse things. I am already thinking like a grandpa maybe. I have had to wear glasses a long time already, so that won’t bother me when I’m a grandpa. My vertical jump has remained virtually unchanged, too. I can think of only two, maybe three times an impressive vertical jump would be necessary. If I learned how to play the harmonica, I could be “that grandpa,” as in, the grandpa who could play harmonica. When I am that old, I could say, “I used to be 30 years old. In two shakes of a lamb’s tail, I became a grandpa,” and someone would listen. It’s like that Talking Heads song. If lambs aren’t around then, I’ll have to explain them and what farms were. But I’d like to think there’ll be more lambs in the future, one lamb for every person. I don’t mean to eat. It will be a new measure of population. The Lamb Index. But I digress, which is something as a grandpa I’ll do a lot more of. I’ll say, “I remember the 20th century” and “Where did I leave my car keys?” No matter how much of a grandpa I turn into, I’m going to drive. Even with a robot leg and robot heart. Jetpacks are an option, but I will drive.
The Asylum by ashley mares

Let's sit together in the dark and smooth out the wrinkles in the air. With blood circulating between your shoulder blades, saying a man can be gentle in the dark. Once that's done, I'd like to hear you fumbling over words until you say I'm as much yours as you are mine—like you mean it—in one long breath. I'm merely asking you to slice off a piece of your bones for me to tuck comfortably under my skin. Maybe we can gather the darkness until it is ours – drawn out and slurried, soaked in each other's sins until we are barely recognizable.

Romanticized by ashley mares

I want to watch you rip into the words that leave my mouth as you stare into the eyes of God’s image.

When you sleep beside me you come towards me and I can’t catch up. I should have died ages ago but I’m stuck in a moment.

Tall, slender candles have tears that slide down their neck but harden before they reach the floor.

The more they fall the more their bones are revealed.

Burning between the strings of moments.

When the flames sneak out of my eyes and roll down my cheeks they leave soot along my cheeks.

Uprooted from dirt of my dreams
**Vault** by ashley mares

My skin recognizes your touch from another life. I think we rested our bones in the same house. There were carvings above the door but I never saw what they said. When I walk alongside my dreams I’m lying down—pressed against the threshold until my blood pools in my lower back. When my bones were cleaved from my after-life they refused to come clean. I had to empty myself of my collar bones and ribs. You and I were held in close quarters—touching shoulder blades. We were an assemblage of blended etchings. Once we served our purpose we were burned.
**Horse** by rosie allabarton

My hair was a crown and
I was a horse
as you walked past the house
and I galloped across the road.
Hooves against glass
I peered through the café window,
only
to see us eating eggs
in the dark;
our smiles glowing over coffee,
butter that I thought was cheese
and
across the years
that have passed.
It was silent inside and
I snorted.
The chairs were stacked high
on the tables that were islands
and menus fluttered like leaves
to the freshly washed floor.

**Weekend** by rosie allabarton

Sieved through window blinds
light falls in stripes
on your eyelids and mine open.
Birdsong, also filtered by glass,
and the first I've heard all year
is still shrill in our duvet'd ears
and,
confused by the cold, poses
a question at the end of each phrase.
Birds' nests, like wedding hats, sit
in bare trees that flex with age.
Arms
outstretched like the ladies
who wear them.
No leaves.
You turn to me, face
avocado green (and sick of me),
your fists
curl and uncurl;
mine are pounding the sheets.
Dot & Bo in the Floating Farmhouse by sarah ann winn

...remember that you’re on the cantilevered porch...

We pasture our troubles
underwater. They glimmer blind

us, but vanish at eye level. They catch us
with current if we decide to go in.

Our kitchen shades a trout nest.
We see tadpoles at breakfast, and never cringe.

Dot asks Will we beat plowshares into paddles,
will we make the mortgage, will we buy a new tractor, what

will it cost us to winter our cares? Everything
is quilted, made to look candle lit, even

the wood burning stove
only burns wax and resin. Nothing is

what it really is, we have chores
and crops taken in from the river, we have hours

to farm, fields to turn. A doll sized concern
with a wrap around porch, a weathered winesap

orchard on the shore, clothes which never dry on the line.
Dot & Bo Build a Mineret by sarah ann winn

This is your new favorite bohemian
Dot & Bo blog, Design District, 1/6/2016

Let’s carve marble curtains, permanently parted. Let’s make

sure the story will last for one thousand years: hammer

driven, solid. Appear as iris or as tendril. Intricate flower

blooming out of olive wood. Through the varnished

leaves, a glimpse. How we aim for something built to last,

how we occupy our hours with chisels, how our

intentions gnaw at stone.
**Future Perfect** by alicia hoffman

As in this time tomorrow. As in I will. As in I am going to have, some day.

Sure. As in America. As in dreams Are future truth. As in not now,

But soon, dear, soon, I promise You a boon of riches, a platter

To feast upon. By next year, bodies Will be reborn into a state near perfect.

Lungs will clear and mold will dissipate And every cell not only can be replenished

It will, it will. It will not next week decay. It will not next month crash like the car

Folding like a fan into the tree that came Out of nowhere as you turned the blind

Corner in the midnight rain. It will not Crack like the dropped porcelain plate

It will not cut itself open like a wound. It will be certainly sealed and bandaged,

Giftwrapped with a pretty silk bow. It will Be for you to open, this treasure tomorrow

I am going to give you. Someday soon The moon will hang perfect in a future sky,

The planets will realign and it will not be mercury In retrograde, it will not be the wrong sign,

It will not be the fortune unbecoming. Completed We are going to have taken. Soon we are going to be
Nature, Versus: by alicia hoffman

Fire and water. The whale and the escape.
Matches and snow. The survival instinct.

In moments of earth’s terrors it is us
and them, me and you, a binary

skewed to favor winners. But mother,
we are giving our blood, our bones.

We have let the thread of our hair
whisp into the mouth of the wind

in the name of saving. We have birthed
oceans of children raised on shorelines.

Teeming tide pools full of little things
intent on surviving. We have burned

entire cities for nothing. Destroyed
libraries through the simple step

of skimming over death. When he
did not ask I let it happen. When he

went ahead, bent on a ruining,
I stillied into a tiny silence, gave

till I could give nothing but salt,
sugar, sweet earth there for the till.

If you are intent on the wreckage,
plunder. If you are intent on demise,

destroy. For we have a tendency
to resurrect from winter, fruit

blooming stories of bearing, bellies
ripe for ushering another admission.
Dear Family, Friends, and Universe,

I am writing to you about my beloved wife Christine’s serious health challenge, and hoping you can help.

Christine is a caring, generous, and beautiful person with probably the best sense of humor on the planet. She has been working with children for the past 23 years as an afterschool director. She is also a gifted poet, artist, and animal lover. But most of all, she is the absolute love of my life.

Eight years ago Christine was diagnosed with Polycystic Kidney Disease (PKD). PKD is progressive and incurable. It causes clusters of cysts to grow inside the kidneys. As these cysts enlarge from fluid buildup, kidney failure can result. Unfortunately, Christine’s cysts are rapidly growing and her kidneys are losing function. She is now in need of a kidney transplant.

Christine was placed on the national kidney transplant list in August 2015, and is awaiting a deceased donor kidney, but this list is 80,000 names long, and the wait time for a deceased donor kidney is eight years or more. Christine is hoping for a transplant from a living donor because living donor kidneys have greater success rates than deceased donor kidneys, and nearly double the years of function. Through the living donation program, a healthy person can donate one of their kidneys and return to full health after a brief recovery.

I was tested to see if I am a match for Christine. Unfortunately, I am not. Both of Christine’s parents are now too old for organ donation. Finally, you may have read the article in The Boston Globe about a former Cambridgeport parent who was willing to donate and was a likely match, but has since been diagnosed with a medical condition that makes her an unsuitable donor.

So now we are casting our net wider, in hopes of finding someone who might be interested in donating a kidney to Christine. This would be a great gift to the both of us.

If you cannot do this, we understand perfectly. If you know anyone who might, please forward this letter widely. We are so grateful to you for passing it along to your family, friends, coworkers or classmates, congregation, or any other communities to which you belong. Also, please feel free to post this on all forms of social media.

If you would like to learn more about living kidney donation, please feel free to call me at (857) 334-9794 or email me at ljblanko@yahoo.com.

Thank you from the bottom of my heart,
Luis Julio Blanco
Contributors

Adam Phillips makes his living teaching at-risk junior high kids how to read, write, and dominate on the hardwood (these are three separate things; the kids rarely read or write while playing basketball). When not thusly occupied, he’s f**king s**t up old school on the coastline of Rockaway Beach, Oregon, with his inimitable wife and two small sons. His first novel is forthcoming from Propertius Press.

Alexandra Naughton is editor in chief of be about it press and creator of several poetry collections. Her first novel, American Mary, was published by civil coping mechanisms in March 2016.

Originally from Pennsylvania, Alicia Hoffman now lives, writes, and teaches in Rochester, New York. Author of Like Stardust In the Peat Moss (Aldrich Press 2013), her recent poems have been included in Radar Poetry, Word Riot, Amethyst Arsenic, Hermeneutic Chaos, One Throne Magazine, Watershed Review, and elsewhere. Nominated three times for a Pushcart Prize, she holds an MFA in Poetry from the Rainier Writing Workshop.

Amy Baskin writes and hikes. Both help her escape and interpret reality. Her limited concept of home decorating involves stacks of books—in corners, on tables, where the TV used to be. Her work has appeared in journals including Panoply, NonBinary Review, Sein Und Werden, The Gorge Journal, and Rat’s Ass Review, and is forthcoming in Delirious, a Prince Tribute anthology. She lives with her family in Portland, Oregon.

Ariel Francisco is a Dominican-Guatemalan-American poet currently completing his MFA at Florida International University where he is the assistant editor of Gulf Stream Literary Magazine. His poems have appeared or are forthcoming in Gulf Coast, Tupelo Quarterly, Washington Square, and elsewhere. His chapbook Before Snowfall, After Rain is forthcoming from Glass Poetry Press. He lives in Miami, FL.

Ashley Mares’ poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in Absinthe Poetry Review, Hermeneutic Chaos Literary Journal, Whiskey Island, White Stag, and others. She is in the process of completing her J.D. in Monterey, CA, where she lives with her husband. Read more of her poetry at ashleymarespoetry.wordpress.com and find her on twitter @ash_mares2.

August Smith runs Cool Skull Press, attends UMass Boston, and drives a donut van on weekends. His work can be found in tNY, ÔMËGÄ, Maudlin House, Reality Beach, Spy Kids Review, and other places. You can read a lot of it (including his five chapbooks) at august.mostlymidwest.com.

Christine Tierney’s work has appeared in Fourteen Hills, Skidrow Penthouse, Sugar House Review, Poet Lore, Monkeybicycle, Lungfull!, Toad Suck Review and other cool places. You can read more of her work at christinetierneypoet.com/site/.

Clark County Poet Laureate Christopher Luna is a poet, visual artist, performer, editor, and writing coach. He and his wife, Toni Lumbrazo Luna (formerly Partington), founded Printed Matter Vancouver, and co-host Ghost Town Poetry Open Mic, the popular reading series Luna established in 2004. Luna’s books include GHOST TOWN, USA and The Flame Is Ours: The Letters of Stan Brakhage and Michael McClure 1961-1978. Learn more at printedmattervancouver.com

Emma Ensley is an artist living in Chicago by way of North Georgia. She has published artwork in Shabby Dollhouse, Library of the Printed Web
and Pop Culture Puke. Find her on Twitter @emmaensley.

**Eric Allen Yankee** is a member of the Revolutionary Poets Brigade of Chicago. His recent work has appeared in The Fem, Crab Fat, The Miscreant, and the People’s Tribune. He is co-editor of Caravel Literary Arts Journal and can be found on Facebook at facebook.com/ericallenyankeepoet

**Genelle Chaconas** is genderfluid, queer, feminist, post employed and proud. They graduated from Naropa University in 2015 with a MFA in Writing and Poetics. Their first chapbook, Fallout, Saints and Dirty Pictures was published by little m press in 2011, and their work has been published or is forthcoming in The Fem, Crab Fat Magazine, Door is a Jar, Five 2 One, Third Wednesday, Bombay Gin, Calaveras Station, Late Peaches: An Anthology of Sacramento Poets, Six Foot Swells, and others.

**Hanna Tawater** completed her MFA at UC San Diego in 2014. Some of her work can be found in Jupiter 88, New Delta Review, White Stag, The Radvocate, States of Terror vols. 1 & 2, and Amor Forense: Birds in Shorts City, as well as various online collaborative projects on Entropy and elsewhere. She cohabitates in California with two cats, a snake, and a man.

**Izabella Grace** grew up in London and now lives in rural Ireland, where she writes poetry and fiction. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in various journals, including Cease, Cows, Black Heart Magazine, The Molotov Cocktail and Black Denim Lit. Find her on Twitter @iza8ella.

**Jacqueline Boucher** is an MFA candidate at Northern Michigan University, where she serves as managing editor for Passages North. Her work has appeared in Superstition Review, Split Lip, The Butter, and other magazines. She can be found on Twitter @jacqueboucher.

**Jennifer Lothrigel** is a photographer and poet residing in the San Francisco Bay area. Her work has been published in Trivia - Voices of Feminism, Poetry Quarterly, Gravel Magazine, Apeiron Review, Cordella Magazine, We’ Moon and more. You can visit her online at JenniferLothrigel.com

**Jennifer MacBain-Stephens** went to NYU’s Tisch School of the Arts and now lives in the DC area. She is the author of two full length poetry collections (forthcoming). Her chapbook “Clown Machine” is forthcoming from Grey Book Press this summer. Recent work can be seen or is forthcoming at The Birds We Piled Loosely, Queen Mob’s Teahouse, Inter/rupture, Poor Claudia, and decomP. Learn more by visiting jennifermacbainstephens.wordpress.com.

**Jessica Morey-Collins** is a Pushcart nominated MFA student at the University of New Orleans, where she works as associate poetry editor for Bayou Magazine. She won the 2016 Andrea Sanders Gereighty/AAP Award and was a finalist for the 4th Annual Gigantic Sequins Poetry Contest. Her poems and lyric essays can be found or are forthcoming in Pleiades, scissors & spackle, The Fem, Animal Literary Journal and elsewhere.

**Joseph Ellison Brockway** is a poet, translator, and educator. He teaches Spanish at Mountain View College in Dallas, TX while working on his PhD in Studies of Literature and Translation at the University of Texas at Dallas. He likes to experiment with language and ideas that explore the human psyche and existence.

**Kelly Rae Williams’** work has been seen in several literary magazine including Requiem Magazine. Kelly Rae’s first chapbook was published 2010 by Sable Books and Jacar Press, Real Girls Have Real Problems. Kelly Rae is receiving her MFA in poetry at Queens University of Charlotte and will finish her degree in Chile July of 2016.
Kenyatta JP Garcia is the author of ROBOT (The Waste Land Reimaged), Yawning on the Sands, and Past and Again. Garcia has a degree in linguistics and has studied several living and dead languages. They were a cook for over a dozen years and is currently working the graveyard shift putting boxes on shelves by night, writing by day and being the biggest pansy of a supervillain in their fantasies.

Kyle Harvey was a finalist for the Colorado Book Award (Hyacinth, Lithic Press 2013) and winner of the Mark Fischer Poetry Prize. His poems have recently appeared in American Life in Poetry, HOUSEGUEST, Pith, SHAMPOO, Think and The Wallace Stevens Journal. He has published two chapbooks, July and Farewell Materials (Lithic Press). Reality Beach recently published a deluxe broadsides package titled, The Alphabet’s Book of Colors: Supplemental Notes for Philipp Otto Runge’s Die Farbenkugel.

Linda Ashok lives in Hyderabad, India. Links to her published works can be found online. She’s the Founder/President of RædLeaf Foundation for Poetry & Allied Arts. Linda tweets at @thebluelimit.

Lindsey Lucas’ work has appeared in The Fem, The Blue Route and elsewhere. She is an editorial intern for Sundress Publications and a content editor for Blue Monday Review, and she has recently been accepted into the MFA program at the University of Missouri-Kansas City as a graduate teaching assistant. She writes poetry and to-do lists, and once got lost in Bordeaux on a rented bike.

Miranda Romano is a recent college graduate sharing a tiny room with her old, fluffy, grumpy cat. Her friends, and probably strangers too, accuse her of wearing too much floral. Her mentor once described her poetry as rich, playful, passionate, sensory, emotional, and powerful and she likes to think that this describes her personality as well. You can find her work in Visions Magazine, Colonnades Literary & Art Journal, and TheFem.

Nate Logan is from Indianapolis, Indiana. His recent work appears in burntdistrict, Pouch, and Ohio Edit. He edits Spooky Girlfriend Press with Laura Theobald and can be found on the Internet at nateglogan.tumblr.com.

Nathan Tompkins is a writer living in Portland, Oregon, though his heart will always be dipping its toes in the cool waters of the Kootenai River. His work has appeared in many publications including Yellow Chair Review, Menacing Hedge, Big Smoke America, and Full of Crow. He is the author of four chapbooks, the most recent of which are Lullabies to a Whiskey Bottle and A Song of Chaos.

Nazifa Islam’s poetry and paintings have appeared in Anomalous Press, The Harpoon Review, The Fat City Review, and Fourth & Sycamore among other publications, and her debut poetry collection, Searching for a Pulse (2013), was released by Whitepoint Press. She earned her MFA at Oregon State University. Visit her website nazifaislam.com or find her on Twitter and Instagram at @nafoopal.

Nyk Robertson recently received a Master’s in Gender Culture Studies from Simmons College. Nyk has also recently been published in Damaged Goods, Diverse Voices, Glitterwolf, Iris Brown Lit Mag, Sidelines, Sinister Wisdom, and Skin to Skin. Nyk can be seen performing at Lizard Lounge and Moonlighting in Boston, MA.

Rachael Kucher is an artist living in Minnesota.

Rosie Allabarton is an English writer who lives in Berlin. A graduate of Birkbeck’s Creative Writing MA, she is currently working on her debut novel about the family unit and the strange things it does to us. When she’s not...
writing, or trying to write, she likes to
dance to ‘80s synth pop with reckless
abandon. You can see more of Rosie’s
writing here:
ipickedthisforyoumyself.wordpress.com

Russell Jaffe is a poet, teacher, and artist
living in Chicago. The poems in this
journal are from his collection Civil
Coping Mechanisma, forthcoming from
the press of the same name in 2017.

Sarah Ann Winn’s poems, flash fiction
and hybrid works have appeared or will
appear soon in Calyx, Five Points,
Hayden’s Ferry Review, Massachusetts
Review, and Passages North among
others. Her chapbooks include Field
Guide to Alma Avenue and Frew Drive
(forthcoming Essay Press, 2016),
Haunting the Last House on Holland
Island (forthcoming Porkbelly Press,
2016), and Portage (Sundress
Publications, 2015). Visit her at
bluebirdwords.com or follow her
@blueaisling.

Sarah Frances Moran is a writer,
editor, animal lover, videogamer, queer
Latina. She resides in Texas with her
partner and their chihuahuas. Her
chapbook Evergreen will be released this
summer from Weasel Press. She is
Editor/Founder of Yellow Chair Review.
You may reach her at
sarahfrancesmoran.com

Sara Ryan is a first-year poetry MFA
candidate at Northern Michigan
University and an associate editor of
poetry for Passages North. Her poetry
has been published in Boxcar Poetry
Review, Bear Review, Jai-Alai
Magazine, The Boiler Journal, Reservoir
Journal, Crab Fat Magazine and others. It
is also forthcoming from Storm Cellar,
The Grief Diaries, and Hermeneutic
Chaos.

St. Germain is wary of logic in art. His
studio practice alternates between
orchestrating controlled accidents and
piling up material to bury the past. Like a
happy-go-lucky fool, he goes wherever
his intuition leads. Find his blog at
mikesartnook.blogspot.com

Susan Yount is a self-taught artist, book
designer and publisher. Her collage work
has been published or is forthcoming at
Glint Literary Journal, Escape into Life,
Leopards and Limes, Masque and
Spectacle and elsewhere. Find out more
about her Poetry Tarot project at her
tumblr page:
susanyount.tumblr.com/poetrytarot

Teo Mungaray is a Northwestern
University alumnus. His literary interests
include trauma, mental health and the
extraordinary ordinary. His poems have
appeared or are forthcoming in Bellevue
Literary Review and Prelude Magazine.

Wess A. Haubrich is a photographer
and graphic artist from Western Illinois.
His aesthetic is heavily influenced by
film noir and southern gothic art. His
work can be found online at
facebook.com/gemcitynoir.