euphony

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Euphony is a nonprofit literary journal produced biannually at the University of Chicago. We are dedicated to publishing the finest work by writers and artists both accomplished and aspiring. We publish a variety of works including poetry, fiction, drama, essays, criticism, and translations.

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CONTENTS

Prose

Addenda

WELCOME TO THE WINTER 2022 ISSUE OF EUPHONY

Dear Reader,

Euphony, like most things, is strange. When I sat down to write this letter, I stopped for a moment to think about what exactly *Euphony* is.

If you think this sounds like I was basically just procrastinating on my editorial duties — then you would be right, you caught me. But hear me out.

You must understand, I just wanted to know who to thank. That's what you usually do in this sort of letter! Just thank the right people, say a few sweet words, and then I don't have to worry about it any more. That's what I thought. But *Euphony*, like most things, is strange.

This issue, the first of the twenty-second year of the magazine, is *Euphony*. It could never have come about without it's stalwart section editors, Laura, Henry, and Tula, who are also *Euphony*. I must thank them for their efforts leading discussions and preparing packets without fail! I also need to thank the reviews editors, Maddie and Chris, always on standby for a review request or an editorial board task. But the editors and the issue aren't all of *Euphony*! The staff make it what it is too! I sincerely thank everyone who came to our meetings for their votes and their insights! Not just the people who got their names in the issue — everyone who comes, even for just one day, even if they never speak, leaves their mark on *Euphony*. And I can't forget the people who only vote online, or who just read the weekly packets but never come, and...

Of course, *Euphony* is not just the club. I said that it was strange, after all. The more I think, the more I see that it is barely a discrete thing at all, it has no clear borders. It is all the readers, and our printers, and the whole tunnel through time of students who have joined, graduated, or even picked up a issue over the twenty two years of its and my life, and our submittors, our crowded email, our website, our big cozy room in Reynolds club, all the strange noises from the radiator and even the thick lawbook on the desk than no one ever moves, all our brilliant feats of hermeneutics and all our bickering debates, every car that cuts through the slush out the window on South University Ave., every mask and every week suddenly online! There is no end to it. For good or ill, all the University, all Hyde park, all Chicago, all of everything is tangled up in Euphony. And I want to thank every bit of it, each by each, until I am so lost that I don't remember what gratitude is anymore. For making Euphony exactly what it is and for keeping this thing I love, this strange thing, alive.

Enjoy,
Rory Nevins
Managing Editor

POEMS

LETTER FROM THE POETRY EDITORS

Dear Reader,

One does not need to be too knowledgeable of poetry to feel that there is something astounding about how it imparts the joys, sorrows, and insights of life in voices sometimes rhythmic and metric, other times roaming and unrestricted. When the genuine wish to create and share a poem and the meaning behind its inception shine through the composition, a deep connection is forged between poet and audience. We seek to facilitate those connections through a stunningly human collection we curated over the past few months. We hope that these poems resonate with you, the reader, as you respond to the images, emotions, and experiences contained within. For our part, we have drafted certain inquiries—outcomes from our interactions with the poems—which may provide you with a guiding basis before reading them yourself.

We invite you to wonder what it was about a Flemish painting that stirred somebody to contemplate its inhabitants' struggle as if they were real and alive? What makes a landscape ruthless in the simplest ways? How do plants and borrowed cars reflect our lives? Why is grief so unavoidable, unpredictable, and unrelenting? Can two Chinese artists bridge the gap of centuries? Can rusty nails and peaches evoke the same household grandeur? You might also consider how autumn can always feel new when perceived through another's creative mind and how the exchange of postcards encapsulates the happiness of parenthood. How can gender shape a series of paintings based on a Middle Eastern book of fables?

As editors, we wish you to consider pondering these questions and more as you read the following issue, and we hope you enjoy your time reading the poems we curated for you!

Yours,
Tula Hanson and Henrique A. Caldas
Poetry Editors

Three Dogs in a Larder

Claude Wilkinson

after a painting by Frans Snyders

Were it not for this bounty
of gristle and bone, they could
dash like brothers on a hare's trail
or declare tug of war with any
old rag they found. But here,
each is part of a muscles taut,
muzzle baring, fiery axis of greed.

I give the two bigger, outside hounds
better chances of survival, or at least
to come away with meat, especially
the brute assuming dominion, reared
onto a butcher's block to snag
a bloody quarter of boar or venison.

The smallest of the three
that may be part spaniel,
snarls from behind the table's leg
at a hunkered, bristled black-and-tan
over choice morsels fallen to the floor
as beatitudes on sharing, which each dog
clearly would rather die than accept.

landscape

Sammy Aiko

bone-white moon.
frog disappears down
the night-heron's gullet.

soft splash of red rubber rain boots
in the marsh-water.

homey hint of rot
in the humid heavy air.

who goes there?

like eggshells underfoot.
like marrow on the tongue.
like winter in the hand.

heartbroken wind.
mosquito fat with blood
flees the hunting bat.

Impatiens

Ivana Mestrovic

Hardy up, she said to the plants,
feeling a cold wind start to blow,
but knew well they would not.

Weather changes—
words that gardeners learn
to know in their bones.

Hardy up, she said to herself,
hardy up, before the bright petals
blacken and fall.

Loaner

Sharon Kennedy-Nolle

Our dinosaur Lexus was in the shop,
I was granted a loaner for the day.
Odometer under twenty, that V-8 sure purr taking-off...
Though slow to know the digitized controls,
I complied, a little giddy
from breathing the new interior,
air, as of twinkie; so unlike us,
loosey-goosey with our car lives—crushed coffee cups,
tossed socks, stale Starbursts—
Picking up your younger brother from tennis,
you went along for the ride
(that summer, writing elegies to bees
he couldn't spring from the camp's hanging traps)
he slid in front, while you hung on, always taking a back seat
because I'd sniffed out the risk early on
after you started totaling yourself,
cutting down our porch shrubbery with a machete,
nixing the learner's permit
you hating me for it.
Today, just laughing
fisting the fools we'd pass,
cruising by your old prep school
hooting at the banner, "Building for the next 100 years,"
their glacial construction pace.
(Lonely there, pants unhemmed, cotillion wallflower)
But then, everybody unbuckled,
as I cut the corners
tight; windows down
a rogue tennis ball ping-ponged in the careen,
out of the corner of my eye,
I could see nothing coming,
nothing in the rearview.

Grief Work

AG Compaine

Crows circle in a murder, caw to mourn their dead,
rifling this ordinary corner, gunning for the culprit.

I lie back on a new webbed lounger.
These are the waning days of summer,

season of solace. Black birds smaller and higher
than I remember. Neither placated nor gracious,

not the type to gather quietly 'round
a survivors' table, their keening unnerves me,

like outrage I can't muster. Cruelty's
bred and braided, knows no surfeit--

crows darken their line of flight, scribble
in black crayon, mark the perimeter

of this crime scene. It's instinct. We know
the pitch and tempo of such harrowing.

Why?, they cry. *Why not?* Even so,
sorrow's raw, bearing down,

this racket won't be mistaken. Behind me,
a bowl, rugged, unsettled. No one would dare

build there. I still learn to scout the limits
of my own safe standing. Closer now,

fear seeps. Audacious cries that dare
not drive away the comfort we crave.

What's savage defies plans, hard-earned,
or magical. Compromises I once wished

would protect me... until I bargained away
hope. Sorrow spreads wildly,

any beasts'.

Li Po's Awakening

Peter Bethanis

It is always better to write poetry
In a half-dream. To be too logical
Is to be afraid of the word soul,
To be too logical is to see a horse
For only labor and commands.
Li Po almost wants to weep
As if half in the non-thinking sense
Of neither past nor present, some unavoidable
Notion in the veining of each leaf,
The day moon translucent as water,
The ordinary solemnity of what is otherwise
His petty complaints, his irascible temperament,
The prejudice polluting his filthy ego,
Harbored for too long in a conscious dream--
Half-groggy, half-trying, after many scars, half-alive,

The poem gongs through fog.

Li Hua's Commission

Peter Bethanis

Li Hua wonders if his paintings
will preserve the truth.
He is suspicious of Li Po,
who floats his poems
in paper boats down the river
and drinks all day,
rumored to be a murderer.

Li Hua paints a battle scene.
A trite picture of a flag
raised in victory by a soldier
atop the fat rump of a statuesque horse.
Unlike Li Po, Li Hua has been commissioned
to create art. He cannot bring himself
to give up his possessions, his title, his grant.

He fills in the spaces
that mark the date, the battle, the town,
signs his name as if to freeze history,
afraid to face what he cannot document or collect
or wear like a ring on his hand.
Outside the mountains and trees and birds
bear the invisible message
"It will pass. It will pass."

The Rusty Nail

Benjamin Harnett

Lately
I have been digging them up
out of the garden
when I plant,
bent old nails caked by rust.
This is a new occurrence,
as if the ground said to itself,
"He's bored of stones
and bits of broken bottle;
let's try this."

They sell such things
in blister packs
with a copper Roman coin
and a splinter of tamarack,
memorabilia of the Bible.
But by now
I have lived long enough
to make my own
rust, the nailhead
holding up the corner
of some siding

I drove in myself
is weeping
the stuff.

Should I take it for a sign,
this sudden burst, this clawing
out of earth: that we
must abjure
our worldly designs,
or perhaps,

make smarter choices
at the hardware store.

Looking Backward: Looking Forward

Alisha Wong

That summer, I collected existence,
created a picket fence cordoning my youth.

I was too busy exhuming skeletons
near flower-footed pastures,

pockets of chrysanthemums
spilling across patio—lily-white

and untamed—coffined by
Georgian air and piety.

My feet sink into riverrun,
drifting below starched air.

There's an old house buried beneath
forest and above root, bleeding into shadow.

The whisper of wings slip inside twig-twined
nests, made like a vantage point above the headstones.

I grab a peach marinating under summer's smear
and sit beside the plaques and graves—

they're sweet and ripe,
flesh softened by the lurid southern sun.

It was then I sighed, watched
the constellations dim and peaches decay;

birdsong to fade and windrush to wane;
all bookmarked eulogies.

Chicago Autumnal

Stuart Jay Silverman

As Keats' last days ooze faithlessly away,
a scrim of smoke ruffs this pewter air.
One maple pines, its leaves strewn everywhere--
all those pretty ones--bark gone cracked and gray.
Meanwhile, the po-faced pumpkins on display,
pyramidal in stacks in markets, stare
incuriously through a stringy glair
at faces lurching up the aisles to pay.

The lake has seen its final scrap of sail
pose chalk-white, as though scribbled on a slate
by a fretful wind, failing without fail.
A drafting Hummer, imperious as fate,
jockeys for position riding my tail,
and hangs a roscoe, Michigan to State.

Happiness

Monica Adams

While she is away, every poem I write
begins “Dear Lucy,” and ends up in the mail,
not a poem at all.
Her first summer camp,
her first time on her own, she’s happy as
a grass snake. She writes about salamanders,
letting a copperhead go, precipitous lookouts,

a friend who slipped in St. Mary’s River,
broke her wrist in two places, went to the hospital,
came back with a pink waterproof cast,
perfectly pleased!
Well, dear Lucy, is happiness
the skink’s blue tail? or just breathing the breath
of the forest, the forest breathing yours.

KALILA WA DIMNA: AN ANIMAL ALLEGORY OF THE MONGOL COURT

Jean Kane

Jill Sanchia Cowen ("Faddle"), The Istanbul University Album, Oxford University Press, 1989

Women don't often appear in the Mirror of Princes,
a book of advice from a merchant father
to his unworldly son, mostly through animal fables—
lions and crows, foxes, snakes, mice, and larks.
Women pose in the paradise of margins, sway through doors opening on the garden
in mallow roses, take to the horizontals,
on beds or floors.

Still Mongol women enjoyed prestige, in the fashion
of invisible interiors, of implication.
The merchant's wife, for instance, lies serene
on her pallet, her face an oval unrippled, her raven hair even-paneled
while her husband beats a thief
in the moonbeam outside below.
Only the folded crisscross of her kilim
registers agitation.

How precisely her pose rebukes
the old madam in the room of another couple

she's felled, like the thief.
Her big breasts flop, her hands fly overhead
as she tumbles, dropping the poison
she would use on the drunk and sleeping lovers.
The mess of her robe answers the gnarled plum beside the structure.

What might have happened, I wonder,
if they'd entered the same frame, the long-necked beauty
and the bilious crone; would one
cut and climb into the hidden garden of the other,
would the rug release its rage?
Would they, like their wild cloth, become confused?
I wouldn't have asked when I was younger.

PROSE

LETTER FROM THE PROSE EDITOR

Dear Reader,

Welcome to Euphony's Winter 2022 prose section! This is my first year as a prose editor for Euphony, and I am excited to present you with this selection of short stories.

The three stories that appear in this issue all handle different questions about family, community, and loss. In "Three Bowls of Rice," a daughter struggles with jealousy and unfulfilled expectations when her mother unexpectedly returns to China.

Next, in "Four Our Fathers, Three Hail Marys," a woman tries to make sense of two family crises: her nephew's recently-failed marriage and the death of her best friend's brother years ago.

Finally, we have "The Sun Never Made You Laugh," which follows a man in the aftermath of his best friend's death. It also includes a mysterious incident involving fish.

Happy reading!
Laura

Three Bowls of Rice

Stella Lin

I always knew Ma would leave us. All she talked about was growing up in Hangzhou, China. She described her family's apartment: fourth floor, white walls lined with books, scallions growing in pots by the window, her parents' wedding photo taped on the wall. She told me how she and Jingyi explored the mountains around West Lake, how their hands froze in the winter when they walked to school, how they took their bikes up a hill and raced down without hitting the brakes. "I always chickened out midway," she said. "But I wish I hadn't."

She described how she and Jingyi visited the countryside and walked barefoot to the farms. "We watched the farmers dry tea leaves over a da bian guo.[1] Jingyi and I bought some, and the farmers wrapped the leaves with paper."

"You can buy tea in America, too," I said.

Ma shook her head. "Bu yi yang." Not the same. "Everything was done by hand. It tasted better, more earthy."

Loyal to her memories, Ma believed nothing could beat her past. Hangzhou's landscapes were greener than California's dry hills. Impromptu adventures with Jingyi were infinitely better than menial conversations with neighborhood moms.

My mother's mind was filled with a foreign place and a mysterious girl, and her life in California was nothing but grocery stores, dry lawns, and sinkholes of regret.

* * *

I scoop two cups of rice into the pot. As I wash the grains, the water turns white and silky like diluted milk. Forty minutes later, I open the lid of the rice cooker, put my face over the pot, and let the moisture seep into my pores. Ma told me steam was the breath of the gods. It would give me the clarity to choose the right direction in life.

When the heat starts to suffocate me, I scoop the rice into two porcelain bowls and carry the food to the table. Ma used to say dinner should be set with three bowls of rice and three pairs of chopsticks. No phones, no laptops, no homework. But now I'm at the dinner table scribbling differential equations, spoon in one hand, pencil in the other. Across from me, Ba hunches over his keyboard and barely touches his

1 Big shallow pot.

food. He's been working more, often past midnight, computer code glaring off his glasses as he sips what Ma called lan cha, trash tea.

We scarf down our dinner like savages. As Ba leaves the table, I think about calling Ma. I wash the dishes, grab my phone, and dial her number. I wonder if she's found a trace of her past in Hangzhou.

Surprisingly, she picks up.

"Hey," I say, standing over the kitchen sink. I dry my hands with a rag that smells like fish. I should wash it later.

"Hi, xiao bao bei." Ma's the only one who still calls me little treasure, and I'm five years old again. "Press the video call button. I want to see your face."

I do, and Ma shows up after a few moments of blurry screen. Although Grandma now spends her days in a wheelchair, my mother's cheeks are pink, her hair is shoulder-length, and she wears a yellow blouse. Her wrinkles are still there, but they're softer.

Ma opens her mouth to say something, but a different voice comes from her end of the call. "Shei a?" Who is it?

She turns and waves the person over. "My daughter."

A woman walks into frame, places a hand on Ma's shoulder, and leans towards the camera. It takes me a second to recognize her straight brows. Jingyi. I've seen her in Ma's best photo album: arm around Ma's shoulder as they stood in their long-skirt school uniforms, sitting with Ma in a bookstore, holding Ma's hand as they strolled on a beach. Jingyi now has glasses and crow's feet, but her square smile is the same, and so is her hair.

"Annie?" Jingyi asks. She says it like Ah-nee.

"Hi," I say. "Ni hao."[2]

Ma props her chin up with her hand. "Why did you call? Is everything okay?" She's not wearing her wedding ring, and the tan line on her finger is barely visible.

"How's Grandma doing?"

"She takes a lot of naps."

I wait for Ma to ask me how I've been.

"How's school?" she asks.

I tuck one arm under my elbow to avoid drumming my fingers. She hates my nervous habits. "Alright, I guess. My grades are fine." Does she know what classes I'm taking? I consider telling her that I won a poetry award, but why bother.

Ma nods. Her smile is the kind I flash at strangers when they ask me how I've been.

"Can I come see you?"

"I don't think that's a good idea."

A phone rings on her end, and Jingyi squeezes Ma's shoulder

2 Hello.

before shuffling out of view. In the background, I catch glimpses of the apartment: morning sunlight, sliding doors, and a row of potted plants lining the window.

"You have school," Ma says, "AP classes."

The line falls silent. My fingers march in place on the counter. Ma says she has to go make food, so we say our goodbyes.

After I hang up, I pocket my phone and grip the edge of the kitchen sink. As I cram the bowls onto the drying rack, I remember the time Ma explained what chi cu—eat vinegar—meant. "Chi cu means you want what someone else has," she said. "Jealousy."

A bitter taste coats my tongue.

That night five months ago, the July heat had woken me up early, and when I heard the front door slam, I climbed out of bed and peered outside. Ma was dragging a suitcase down the driveway, wearing a long orange skirt I didn't know she owned.

As she loaded her luggage into an unfamiliar car, I thought about opening the window and asking her if Grandma was the real reason for her sudden departure. But the car drove away.

* * *

For months, I go back to my life. I do well in my classes, and Ba gets a promotion. We replace old furniture with what he deems 'higher-quality' because he says we should invest in things that last. Costco stops selling 'trash tea,' so Ba starts drinking coffee instead.

One evening, Ba closes his computer as I set his bowl of rice on the table. Taking off his glasses, he explains that Grandma passed away, and Ma will be coming back after she arranges the funeral. The news is like a weather report. I'd only met Grandma when I was too young to remember her, and the mention of my mother numbs me.

A week later, I open the front door. Ma stands fiddling with the ring on her finger, avoiding eye contact as if she were a child who broke a porcelain vase. I take her suitcase, lug it upstairs to her closet, and unzip it. Still damp with Hangzhou's humidity, her clothes smell earthy.

"Why'd you come back?" I ask, studying her frown wrinkles.

Ma's in the middle of hanging up a jacket. "Grandma passed away, so–"

"No, really," I say. "I thought you were happy."

"I was." She sits down on the bed. "Xiao bao bei,[3] I may not love Ba like a wife, but you are my child."

As she folds a pair of shorts and avoids my gaze, I spot the orange skirt and pull it out of the suitcase.

"Where'd you get this?" I ask, examining its pleats.

3 Little treasure.

Ma's gaze lingers on my face before she runs her fingers over the skirt's embroidered hem. She brushes the pattern as if she were reading some secret braille message through the white threads. "Jingyi made it for my eighteenth birthday. She sent it in something special, too."

Ma opens the drawer of her nightstand, takes out a wooden box, and sits next to me. "These are plum blossoms," she says, pointing to the yellow flowers on the lid. "Jingyi painted them."

I lean forward to get a closer look.

For the rest of the night, sitting next to the half-unpacked luggage, Ma tells me stories about her life in Hangzhou, and I listen. I listen knowing that she has pulled something sacred out of her center to make room for me. As the sky gets light, I fall asleep next to my mother, and I dream of a steam-filled landscape of tea farms and creeks. I dream of a girl taking her bike to the top of a steep hill. She pedals forward, lets go of the brakes, and laughs as the wind billows her shirt. She flies down the road, her silhouette getting smaller and smaller until it disappears on the horizon.

Four Our Fathers, Three Hail Marys

Carla Panciera

Avondale. A place where yard sales surprise you or offend you, depending on whether you live in town or in Avondale itself. Definitely the former, so we stop, Emmy and I.

My family asks me if I'm ever going to get married. I say: I'm only 29, by which time my mother had been married a decade. Emmy, however, wants to get married and is beginning to worry about her chances. I worry, instead, that I won't know that my husband is thinking the same thing I'm thinking the way I know Emmy is wondering now: What do these people part with for money? For more money? And aren't they just a little ashamed?

The man carrying out some old wooden frames looks like Jimmy Buffet. An uncombed man. A man averse to ironing. A man in love with well-worn cotton. The girl (his daughter? his pathetically young and fleshless girlfriend?) is cradling something. A guinea pig? A yard sale and a guinea pig on the lawn of the historic common? In Avondale?

We sit in the car.

"Is that a rabbit?" Em says. "Is she holding a rabbit?"

We study the girl for a few more minutes and then she sets the creature down. Maybe it's a dog?

"It is a dog," Em says, as if I've asked this aloud.

Or an incredibly fluffy cat who prances around like a dog. It gives me the kind of creeps miniature horses do. What kind of genetic aberration squirts these kinds of creatures out? What kind of people crave the sideshow pet?

Wicker furniture. A lamp. A clothesline (!) strung with tea towels (!) and a white chenille bedspread so worn, the sun's rays flicker through it.

"It's some kind of stunted Pomeranian," I say. That word, Pomeranian, makes me throw up a little in my mouth. It's the kind of dog my nephew's wife wanted. Had they made it that long, he would have bought her for their first anniversary. He'd already found a breeder.

"You're going to look foolish walking that thing," I told him. He's 6'3", and he would have been the one to walk it -- early mornings, icy nights, anytime Amy asked him to or didn't ask, just raised her perfect eyebrows, her very not-Calabrian eyebrows.

Em says: "Necklaces," and we get out.

We had been on our way to Saint Claire's, the beach parish, to have some votives blessed. Emmy's mother maintains a shrine for Em's dead

brother, a diabetic who went into shock and died on the floor of his apartment. Ex-high school football player, not star, but the kind of kid who gets voted captain anyway, who gets his last name, Dupadiarno, shortened to Dupa. Six girls and then this miracle son. And he shorts out just shy of his twenty-third birthday. Em's mother won't leave the house for things like buying candles anymore. Three years later and that flame -- forget about Arlington National, this is a two family on Pierce Street -- still burns.

That is one of the things we're escaping from.

The dog grosses me out and fascinates me which is how it goes with animals like these and headwounds and even the details of Dupa's death (just back from the gym, new wife at Pampered Chef party, dog scratching its way through a panel of the back door. This is what people live with. Someone had to replace that fucking door.)

The girl picks the dog up. Rodent-faced, he wiggles to get down. A car would squash him like a squirrel and, is it me, or do small dogs never seem to listen? So she's calling him (Sully! Sully!) and he's running around and around our feet.

He's so little you could scoop him up with a soup ladle.

An idea starts to form. The kind of idea I would only ever share with Emmy, so I say her name, but she waves me off: not now when all we have to think about is someone else's junk.

There is one picture of Emmy and me sharing a bath. She has so many sisters, she never got a tub alone, but her mother must have filled it for us. Funny to think how she must have humored us. She would never have put Dupa in a tub to play. Too afraid of him drowning. But she had lots of daughters, so.

My mother thought it was weird, me coming home with wet hair, but I thought we'd discovered something, me and Em. We washed each other's hair. Wrote soapy letters on each other's backs. My family never wasted water like that. The well, the well, Jesu, the well, Nonno was always saying. All my life I thought we had a well, but no. Town water. And Nonno's memory of something from the old country. Maybe Em and I had loved each other before then, but I remember loving her every day after that.

What I am escaping from: Being responsible for my nephew's impending divorce and not believing, until this very moment, that there is a way to fix the problem. But could we do it, Em and I?

Roger has reminded me he isn't divorcing Amy. She is divorcing him. He tells me this when he shows up at the house, after 10 o'clock most nights, with a pizza he's made on the grill. He has always done this late night pizza thing. Pulls up in his truck, windows steaming, just

when you're about to brush your teeth and call it a day. Then he wants to watch you take a bite, wants to watch you love it. You can't resist, of course. You try every combination of cheese and soppressata, of vinegar peppers and freshly dug clams. He eats none of it himself these days.

I know that it hurt Amy to leave him. That she did something inexplicable to onlookers. Something she will always refuse to explain even after a few glasses of wine. Even when everyone is playing an informal round of True Confessions That Will Wake Me Up In A Cold Sweat In The Sober Morning Light. I'm grateful for her discretion and also full of remorse.

The necklaces are costumey and paste, but Emmy loves this stuff. Where did it all come from: the necklaces, the linens, the wicker? Some woman, that's clear. And why now, Jimmy Buffet, have you set it all out for bargain hunters to paw? When my Nonny died, Nono carried all of their wedding photos over in a fireproof box and asked my mother to keep it under her bed.

"Don't let them burn," he said.

Em glances at the yardsale guy and says, "He doesn't need to keep any of her stuff. He's got too much of everything already."

Emmy keeps Dupa's class ring in her change purse. Once, when I was looking for a sweater to borrow, I found some of his t-shirts neatly folded, freshly laundered, on the top shelf of her closet.

She heads to the wicker chair just as the dog squats down as if to shit, though the miniscule product is impossible to detect from where I stand.

Dupa had one dimple, and was so used to being loved, he assumed we all were loved the same way. "You have very good manners, Deana," he'd say to me. "Your parents must be very proud."

We'd chat, Dupa and me, when I came over to get Em for a party at Napatree beach when we were in high school. He'd say, "Gee. Your hair came out great."

We hairsprayed the hell out of our bangs in those days, so they stuck up straight, but he'd stare at them and ask me how we managed something that fantastic. Even though I'd known him all his life, it always surprised me -- his complete lack of sarcasm.

"What kinds of shoes do I wear?" Em would be asking. You had to walk way out along the dunes and, if there was no moon, it was dark.

I had to talk her out of heels. It was not easy. I wore Walgreens flip flops.

"Dupe," I said, "why don't you come?"

But he'd say, "You girls have a good time."

He was only a freshman. He didn't even have a chest yet. He would've

spent the night asking kids questions he'd be genuinely interested in hearing answers to: So what's your favorite Billy Joel song? Have you ever tried tripe? How'd you get a name like Cameron? But I wish he had come, wish he hadn't missed out on anything. For every memory of him, I add myself saying: You should definitely come, Dupe. You only have 16 or 12 or 8 and a half years left and it seems like a long time, but the speed at which it will disintegrate will astound you.

This is how I ruined my nephew's life.

Thanksgiving last fall. Roger and Amy came in just as we were about to sit down which drove my mother crazy, but she'd never say that to Roger. She'd say that to my sister. Blame Margaret for it. If she was any kind of a mother wouldn't her son know enough to show up on time? Amy is a somewhat -- let's say innocent -- redhead. We had no redheads. We liked that she tried everything -- eels on Christmas Eve, our Nonno's pickled pigs feet. She was Catholic. She admired my mother's collection of Thomas Kinkaid memorabilia. And we all knew -- from Nonno to my angry brother, to my youngest niece who is desperate to babysit -- that Amy wanted to get pregnant. That she was seeing a doctor. My mother's prayer group was saying novenas. Margaret had been to see the priest. They'd only been married a few months, but we weren't used to waiting for babies. We didn't like lulls of any kind.

Roger, meanwhile, said it didn't matter to him. They could keep trying. They could adopt. Or it could just be the two of them forever. "Whatever she wants," he said. "And everyone, please, I know it will be hard, but keep your mouths shut."

Thanksgiving, we had Nonno's homemade wine. My mother insisted the table be set several hours before we ate, and tradition dictated we drink wine while we set the table and ferried folding chairs from the shed out back. So we had been drinking for several hours before we sat down.

My brother Junie offered a toast, but had trouble standing. Then, he struggled to say his s's so whatever he said was lost in laughter. The rolls burned, also a tradition. The smoke alarm screeched. My mother screamed as if the house was really on fire. Nonno heard nothing, but assumed the toast was over and said, "Salud!" and spilled his wine down the front of his shirt. My cousin's kids cried because they only eat rolls and they didn't like when anyone raised their voice and this finally pissed Junie off.

"Shut those pussy kids up," he said. The kids' mother started crying and told him to shut up himself and find an AA chapter while he was at it. Nonno was calling for somebody to get him a napkin. My mother was busy flinging open windows and waving a dishtowel at the smoke detectors.

I turned to Amy who had reached for my hand and who tried not to laugh just in case someone might be offended, and said, "This is nothing. You should've seen them when Roger got arrested."

Roger was a beautiful baby. Maybe everyone says this about the babies in their family, but it was true. And he grew into a handsome man. Tall, a rectangular face and gray eyes. Gray! in this family of near-black stares. He bleached his teeth. He had my sister's cheekbones. And, as Amy turned to me, I saw his face over her shoulder. The face of a boy all grown up, a boy who used to send his army men parachuting through the ceiling vents in my sister's kitchen hours after we thought he'd fallen asleep. A boy who took his crazy Nonno for monthly haircuts and sat with him while he had a coffee and a Boston cream afterwards at Bess Eaton Donuts though it took Nonno a ridiculous amount of time to consume anything and you had to keep reminding him to wipe his chin.

Amy stared at me: "Arrested?" she said. "What for?"

The yardsale guy looks annoyed when I ask the price of the pink necklace. I expect him to say, Christ, why are you bothering me about such a piece of crap? But he shrugs. "Eight bucks," he says. Bucks. That sounds weird coming from a rich guy, but I pay it.

I pick the necklace up, and smell it, expect perfume.

Emmy is staring at a tiny painting of the Virgin mother. Folksy. Not like the statues at the cemetery where her brother is. Those Madonnas in blue cloaks, white hoods. Sometimes their fingernails are painted red. I hand her the beads and she fingers them the way our mothers try their rosaries.

"I owe you one," she says. Which I knew she'd say. This is how we do it, find each other again and again. One upmanship. Debt exchange.

The girl is prying something from the dog's beak-like mouth and scolding him as if he's a much larger creature. I prefer that to the babytalk I'm sure Amy would use on him. God, would she love the ugly thing.

Dupa loved to sing. Also to play music of any kind. It was something you knew about him that you weren't allowed to tell. Fine to say it on the streets where we lived, but at school? No. He was a crooner. Sinatra. Rat Pack. For a few years, he took accordion lessons, but Emmy protested.

"You're killing this kid!" she said to her parents.

Once at a christening for one of the Bruno kids, Dupa played the tarantella. He was maybe ten. We had to stop dancing every few seconds until he figured out what to do next. He had his hair slicked back and wore a suit. We never thought he'd be anything anyone would be attracted to. We joked we'd have to send back to Acri to get him a wife.

We walked home that day after the wedding, a group of us, while

our parents moved to the bar in the dark hall. The streets surprised us with their sunlight.

"If you could sing any song, Deana," he asked me, "I mean, really sing it, what would it be?"

I said something stupid like "Benny and the Jets." I didn't want to talk to him, really, he was so odd. He smelled sweaty, too, from all his work, and he'd refused to leave the accordion behind. We knew our parents would drink too much and forget stuff there. We were always sent back to the Calabrese club to fetch our mother's purses, our father's cigarettes, the next day.

He said, "That's a tough one, De. You're really set your sights high on that one." I hurried up so I could distance myself from him. He couldn't walk fast with the stupid accordion.

In confession that week, I told the priest I had been mean to a younger kid. "I didn't consider his feelings, Father," I said. Was he listening or cleaning his fingernails in there? These were the kinds of questions I would ask Emmy.

"Four Our Fathers. Three Hail Marys."

This is what Emmy and I said whenever we made out with boys at parties just for the sake of gaining some experience. Or when we got so drunk we puked in Domenica Falcone's hydrangeas on our way back from the woods behind the high school. Four Our Fathers. Three Hail Marys. It is what I said, just to cheer him up, after Roger came home from a night in jail. Or after his name was in the paper: solicitation. A stripper at a stag party for someone he didn't even know. The cousin of a guy from work.

We hid the newspaper from our mother and when she complained that it hadn't come, we lied and said Nonno had used it already for his weeds, listening as she scolded him and thought he was doing his usual routine of pretending he was deaf.

"We'll tell her ourselves," Junie declared. "When we're goddamned good and ready."

Margaret cried so much, we also hid her from our mother.

Single file, we went to confession, passing one another in the parking lot of St. Pius. Emmy was in the parking lot when we pulled in, though I hadn't told her we were going.

"He's still the kid we love," she said. "Stupid ass that he is." Six months after Dupa had died.

Afterwards, Emmy and I went to the Knickerbocker. Whiskey sours are what we drank the first time we tried alcohol. During times of anxiety or depression, other people have comfort foods, a favorite ripped t-shirt, a cat, make-up sex.

"Why don't you want to talk about it?" Emmy asked. Instead of dark circles under her eyes, she gets tiny lines when she doesn't sleep.

"Emilia," I said, the way her mother used to say it when she called up the stairs after noon to wake us up. The bartender had left us alone. "I'm embarrassed for him. Embarrassed. That doesn't seem like much in comparison."

"Sometimes I think we're old," Emmy said. "That, just because we aren't married yet, time is running out on us. Then I think of my brother. I think of how I should've been kinder to him. How I would have taken more notice of him if I had known. We have so much time to regret things yet. But we also have lots of time to get things right."

Dupa had invited us to see his kitchen renovation a few weeks before he died. New cabinet hardware. Tile floor.

"A real handyman," Emmy had said, maybe a little jealous. She had thought she'd move into this apartment with her own spouse. But Dupa thanked her, brewed us a pot of coffee in the same kind of Farberware pot his mother used.

Even his wife was less appreciative than she should have been.

"Formica," she said, when we looked at the counters he'd installed.

"We all need forgiveness, Em," I said and motioned for another round. The bar was dark, empty except for us.

But I was speaking for my nephew, really, because I hadn't yet done anything much that required it.

The next day Roger's arrest appeared in the newspaper. I gathered in the garage with my brother and sister. My mother's soap operas would be playing in the house. Fridays, especially, she couldn't miss.

Margaret sat in an old lawn chair, weeping into a paper towel. I paced around the space where my mother refused to park her car (What if someone was hiding in there? Once, her best friend, Minnie Lupica, found a whole family of raccoons in her garage!).

"What kind of an idiot!" Junie said. We kept telling him to keep his voice down. "He can't go to law school, you realize. Christ. He probably can't even become a cop." Junie in his white shirt, fresh from the cleaners, his pleated jeans and loafers. He slicked his hair back, his nose hawkish, his eyes bugging. When he was younger, girls loved him.

Margaret pawed around in her purse for more tissues and threatened to kill herself. Junie kicked an antifreeze container her way. Outside, Roger stuffed newspapers into the burning barrel, doused them with lighter fluid and tossed in a match. Smoke billowed beneath the grapevine Nonno had planted in our yard when our father was at work. Our father, when he lived, had not liked gardening. This was not exactly unforgivable, but it wasn't something my grandfather understood.

"When they going to come," Nonno said of the grapes, "I pick." Which he had until he grew more unsteady. Now Roger did that for him.

Junie's best friend, Richie Gradilone, the lawyer, pulled into the driveway. Junie waved Roger into the garage, but he didn't make eye

contact with anyone.

Richie said, "If he pleads guilty, he'll get some kind of diversionary program, a combination of community service and counseling. No criminal charge."

"So he can still go to law school?"

No one understood where this came from. Roger wasn't particularly bright, but Richie nodded.

"Thank you very much, everyone," Roger said. He had not made eye contact with anyone but Junie. "Uncle Jun," he said. "I'll make up for this. I swear."

Junie said, "You're a very lucky sonofabitch," but he was laughing. His eyes were wet.

Christ, I thought, surprised because he could be such an asshole, he loves the kid.

Then Roger left to tell his father, who did not take a day off from his work with a paving company because he feared the legal bills and didn't get sick time, and who is not Italian but an only child from a very nice Swamp Yankee family who we've really only spoken to at weddings and funerals.

The rest of us passed beers around from the garage fridge. Emmy walked in and sat beside me in a metal folding chair, leaning forward to rub Margaret's arm. We got silly with relief, even Margaret, and then my mother called outside to ask us what was going on.

"You better not be keeping any secrets," she said, so we composed ourselves and said: "We're fine, leave us alone. We're just talking."

"Look at us getting all upset," Margaret said, grasping Emmy's hand, "and, God forbid, Emilia, you know this is not the worst thing that could happen."

Sully, the freakish dog, claws at something in the grass. Reminds me of one of the Miragardas' stray cats always pawing around in sandboxes until they're comfortable enough to shit.

When Amy got pregnant, Roger talked his mother into taking their cat. "She can't be around the kitty litter," he said.

"You can," we told him, but he said he wasn't taking any chances.

"Those particles can get into the air," he said.

But Amy miscarried. Twice. And when she couldn't get pregnant again, decided to get little dogs. Lots and lots of little dogs. Roger, who is from a family that has never willingly owned a pet of any kind, (except the one billy goat Nonno had that he tied out back and that he finally had to get rid of because it butted him so hard, it knocked him down busted his elbow) played with her hair as she announced their intentions to the rest of us as if they were pregnant again and, this time, it was going to stick.

Dupa was terrified of dogs. Because of his mother, most likely. She worried something would happen to him. That's how she lived. Worried about the quarries down the street, the way people drove through our neighborhood, bee stings, electrocution.

The Mains, who lived above their television store, had a horny dachshund who humped our legs on the rare occasions we were invited over to their pool. You could only get the dog off by climbing the pool ladder until he couldn't support his own weight and fell off. Mrs. Main, a woman with bosoms, not breasts, not knockers, not tits, just this gigantic, shapeless mass, usually kept the dog in the house, but not the one day Dupa could go with us. The one day his mother allowed it because, that day, even their father said, "Mathone, already. You're making him into a sissy," and she had to give in.

"I can swim, Ma," he said. This was true. Private lessons at the YMCA which his sisters never got.

He was so excited, he opened the gate and instantly Oscar clung to his leg. Dupa screamed and screamed as if the animal was gnawing right down to tibia. The neighborhood kids were screaming, too, but with laughter, until Emmy swooped in, ripped the dog off his leg, and booted it across the yard.

Dupa kept hollering until she shook him and got right into his face. "Shut up!" she cried, over an impressive volume. We thought she might hit him or send him home alone, or laugh like the rest of us. Instead, she pulled him into her bare stomach and said, "You stupid idiot. Do you think I'd ever let anything happen to you?"

Mrs. Main and her bosoms told us to get off her property. To never come back.

"What the hell's the matter with you people anyway?" she said.

You people. We ran up the street together calling back: "Get your stupid dog a girlfriend! Don't suffocate Mr. Main with those things! We pissed in your pool a hundred times already anyway!"

More customers stop at the yardsale. Jimmy Buffet goes inside to make change for someone. The girl is busy unpinning linens from the clothesline.

I haven't thought about that in so long. How Emmy had kept her arm around her brother all the way home, how she never turned to say goodbye, just walked him up the front steps to their house and closed the door on the rest of us standing quietly in the street where they had just been, our mothers' dry bath towels around our necks.

There are only so many kinds of love like that.

That Thanksgiving, when Amy didn't return to the table, I found

her in my mother's bedroom where the shades are always drawn.

"Tell me everything," she said.

"It was stupid," I said. "He was drunk."

But she closed the door, leaned against it. "I'll go right out there and ask at the table," she said.

"Please," I said. "My mother and Nonno can't know."

She grew very still as I spoke. Remained dry eyed. "I had two miscarriages," she said. "No one could tell me why. But what if -- I mean, those women carry diseases."

"No, Amy," I said. "He's healthy. He loves you. He didn't know you then. You didn't even live here."

She found her coat among the pile on the bed.

"Wait. You can't go. What will I tell everyone?"

She zipped her coat up to her neck, pulled the sleeves down over her bare hands. "You people," she said, "have all kinds of secrets. You'll figure something out."

When Roger finally realized Amy had not just gone to the bathroom, he left his full plate and went in search of her.

My mother had been busy closing all the windows she had opened to let the smoke out. "What's going on?" she said when Nonno asked where Roger and Amy had gone.

Someone said Amy must be sick or something. Someone else said, "Maybe she's --" but Margaret shut that person up. "Don't jinx it," she said, making the sign of the cross.

Amy had walked home. Five miles through a wind that had made sitting at the football game earlier that day an exercise in perseverance (though Em and I never missed it, sharing a flask of blackberry brandy and wearing Dupa's #65 jerseys after we snuck into the high school basement and stole them one summer when one of the neighborhood kids got a job painting with the maintenance crew). I had called Roger's house and let it ring until she answered. But by then, my family was uncharacteristically quiet, scraping uneaten food into the garbage and waving off the cream pies.

"What the hell did he do now?" Junie said.

My hands shook washing the dishes I insisted on doing alone.

If Amy ever told Roger how she found out what he'd done, he never told me. Only said, "She found about my record, Auntie. So there were consequences after all. Uncle Jun said I could ruin my life."

He moved back home and lost too much weight. Once when I went to drop a pepper and egg grinder my mother had made him, Margaret was rubbing his back as he sat doubled over on the sofa, sobbing.

"I did that," I said to Emmy.

"He could have told her himself," she said. "But it still would have destroyed what he imagined they had. So he had sex at a stag party?"

"It was a blowjob," I said.

Emmy shook her head. "I know you like this woman, but what kind of life is she prepared for?"

It didn't matter what I thought, only that Roger still loved her. That he couldn't forgive himself and yet I was the culpable one.

"Emmy," I say, the yardsale busy with browsers now. "I need that dog."

She doesn't advise me to contact the breeder. Instead, she reaches inside her oversized purse for the car keys, and then hands the purse to me.

I use the rubber spatula to mine what's left of the Nutella so my kid won't throw the kind of tantrum he throws that makes him miss the bus, then I scroll through my phone waiting for the waffles to pop up. On the Westerly Talks Facebook page, someone's caught a woman on a doorbell cam stealing someone's windchimes. DO YOU KNOW THIS WOMAN? the caption reads.

I screenshot it and send it to Emmy who's on a bus tour of Lancaster with her in-laws, the highlight of which will be a musical based on a Biblical theme and lunch at a smorgasbord restaurant.

Four Our Father's, Three Hail Marys, she texts. Laughing emojis.

We love this stuff -- the You Can't Get Away With Anything Anymore Era, we call it. Not like the good ol' days we talk about the way our nonnos talk about how every family in the neighborhood butchered its pig in January, the men going house to house with sharp knives and buckets to catch the blood, the women moving their bedroom furniture into the kitchen so the meat could be stored in the coldest rooms in the house until they were done salting it or making it into sausage.

You know what it was like when I was a kid? I could tell my son. You could put a fucking dog in your purse in broad daylight, drive away and no one would ever know. You could open up a phone book and thumb through to the right page -- you had to know how to alphabetize! You learned how in school! -- and find the address of someone who had walked out of your house one day and knock on her door! No porch cam, no texting: Here! from the confines of your car. And she would look at you -- really stare into your eyes, both of her hands so free that you could reach into your bag and pull out the ugliest pooch anyone ever laid eyes on and say, He's the best man there is on earth. And I'm not just saying that because he's family. I'm saying it because the other man I might have said that about died young, so it's true what they say: It can happen to anyone.

But I say none of that when Amy answers her door that day. Instead

I only hand her the dog and say, "I know you always wanted one."

This is a new condo complex downtown. Walled off and weirdly citified with its patios and numbered parking spaces. You could live here and forget you were ever married into a family whose houses always had a spare apartment for newlyweds, an extra kitchen in the basement reserved solely for making sopressata in January and putting up tomatoes in August. Houses that might as well be planets away from the millionaires' seaside retreats instead of just a few miles. Just seeing me will remind her what she's lost, how easy it will be to return.

We're still here, I want to say.

And then she can call Roger and pick up where we left off -- waiting for Nonno to pass the cranberry sauce that he always hogs, Amy leaning into me, trying not to laugh at Junie being a maniac. Or marking times on the calendar when it might be best to try again for the baby. Or eating homemade pizza late at night that Roger's let cool just enough so it doesn't burn the roof of her mouth. Or looking ahead to tomorrow, Roger's day off, when he can take her quahogging in the brackish pond. While he digs in the shallow water, he'll attach her innertube to his waist and pull her along with him. On the way home, he'll leave her in the air conditioned truck cab while he hops out at Dusty's and buys her a cherry dipped cone.

But Amy says, "This place doesn't allow pets."

"It's my fault what happened," I say. "Please don't blame him."

When she says there are some things you can't forgive, I tell her that I hope she's wrong. "But there are things that are pretty hard to forget. So you just have to live with them. Maybe pray a little or wear something a little sparkly."

She asks me not to contact her again.

Emmy and I sit for a long while in the parking lot, Sully with his matchstick front legs on the windowsill yapping at squirrels.

"I have a confession," Emmy says. If you didn't know better, you might think we are sisters except her dark hair is very wavy and mine is pin straight. "I called my brother that night. My mother needed a ride to the eye doctor in the morning and I wanted to sleep over Paul's house in Mystic. I thought: Fuck him. Let the prodigal take her and have to get to work late. That's really what I thought: Fuck him. And, you know, he would've taken her. He would've told me to tell Paul hello, to ask him if he ever figured out what was draining his car battery."

"He had a head for those things," I say. And Emmy says, "The fucking minutiae."

We imagine him there, on the floor, dying or dead already, his sister's voice, her insistent tone. The message his wife would listen to later.

"Roger is going to have a better life without her," Emmy says. "You

know that now. He's going to build a life with a woman who deserves him, not a woman who feels she doesn't have to bank any goodwill. That her life will be that fucking lucky."

I know she's right and that poor Amy has it all wrong because I would forgive Emmy for anything.

We drive back to Avondale, slip Sully out into the fenced off garden next door to where the yardsale had been.

"Don't forget the votives," I say.

Because that flame has to burn, and we had been entrusted with all the ordinary ways in which to keep it lit.

The Sun Never Made You Laugh

Dominic Viti

"Jimmy's dead," he said, just like that. I couldn't move when I got the news. Bob Munroe, the manager down at the Elk Lodge where we all work, called me Friday morning to drop the bomb as I sat down for breakfast. "He went last night. Turn on your television."

It came on after a story about fish on the highway. You could see police at Jimmy's place, yellow tape blocking off the weeds he called a front yard, his wife Jeanie on the porch watching them take their son away. Apparently, Dave was back from the war and decided to prank his old man by jumping out of a bush. Jimmy dropped from a heart attack right there on the welcome mat.

"He never did like surprises," Bob said.

I haven't been the same since.

Everything's changed since Jimmy turned in. Being here, for instance. Being him. My restored Ford in his garage. Sitting in his chair at the head of the table.

I knew there'd be people glad to see Jimmy go. Lester Kemp, the dishwasher who was let go from Jimmy's Diner. He might be glad. Jake Fuller, the sideburned mechanic at Frank's Repair Shop, and Jeanie's boyfriend. He'd be glad. But I never thought I'd be.

Jimmy was the only man I ever loved outside of blood.

At the time I was all torn up inside. I couldn't eat or sleep. His death induced in me a continual state of anxiety and nausea. You'd think I was watching a soap opera, which Jimmy described as verbal abuse. Jimmy said all kinds of things that stayed with me. Like, I knew it was a snake when the stick moved. And, If you filled your suitcase with deer jerky and it went over the carry-on limit, it'd be the only time you could eat to make weight. Or, Today I saw a long-haired fella do his business on a pile of bricks. First time I saw my father in years.

Jimmy made me laugh. He had a way of lighting up the darkness. In those days, our town was no stranger to darkness.

Friday morning, I left the house after calling in sick at work. Bob didn't say much, only that he understood. That he'd do the same if he had someone to look after the lodge. "Jimmy would've wanted it this way," he said, though I suspected he just needed the money.

It was true, there were fish all over the highway. When I heard about it, I figured they'd fallen off the back of a truck, or a flood left them to gasp. This was something else. For miles, thousands of fish

scattered the road on snow that began to melt to slush. The people kneeled by their cars, like a procession for trout, heads down and hands steepled. It was something else.

I crossed the tracks toward the Larchwood, the bar where Jimmy and myself and Bob and Pudge Rogers and Zit and Ned Holsten and the rest of the guys hung out nights. It was a different crowd in the morning. You'd think they had someone close to them die, and they were all killing themselves to get closer. Similar to the road, they were lined up with their heads down and hands together. Jimmy told me the root of the word addiction means religious devotion.

Jimmy, the man sharp between the ears, who never finished high school and still made a decent life for himself. He married his drop-out sweetheart, scattered a few kids, and built several businesses that stand today. None of them went under, only Jimmy.

His seat was empty at the bar. I still sat next to him. There was a mirror behind the skyline of bottles so you could watch yourself drown. Someone had to replace the fish.

Jimmy taught me how to pull them in with the fly, tying the wooly bugger and teasing the water pool. On weekends we'd take out the thirty-two-foot pontoon his grampa left Jimmy in his will. The boat was uglier than hell and rasped more than gramps. The Aquaholic, he called it, red as a turkey beard with flakes of chipped paint. Jimmy fixed it up so it hummed like a song. Jimmy thought he could sing. He could not. You'd think he'd scare dinner away with the noise he was making, but he'd reel up whoppers on a whim.

I remember packing them on ice riding into shore. Lester Kemp's boys were on the dock. Jimmy fired Les from the diner for hiding unwashed pots in the ceiling, so Les stuck a knife in his ribs. It put Jimmy in the hospital and Les in prison. During that time someone broke into the diner, smashing the glassware, slicing up the booths, graffiting the walls. Nobody knew who drew those middle fingers, but guess how Lester's boys greeted us. Instead of giving them a piece of his mind, Jimmy gave them his entire catch. I was as shocked as they were. Driving back to the Larchwood, I asked why he did it. Jimmy said it looked like they hadn't eaten anything in a while.

That's the kind of guy Jimmy was.

Now he was dead.

Smoky, the bartender, had the television on. Jimmy's face was there and then it was gone. A commercial for Life cereal took his place and Smoky used a hockey stick to change the channel.

"It's not right," he said. "Why Jimmy."

"I know," I said. "He was like a brother to me."

Smoky poured two stiff ones. He shook his head and stared at his glass. "You know what Jimmy would say," he said, and killed his drink.

"Someone has to replace the fish."

A few guys, friends of Jimmy's, drifted in from outside. There must've been a lot of employees under the weather that day. A man at the end of the bar fed quarters into the jukebox. Smoky went over and yanked the plug out of the wall and glared at the man until he left. This was our moment of silence. That or Smoky had quit smoking again.

"You want another one?" he said.

"Put ice in mine this time."

Jimmy played pond hockey. He collected gas station signs. He donated food to the soup kitchen. He volunteered as a fireman, built birdhouses, and boxed in the army. He said after the Cold War the wars would only get warmer until they got so hot they scorched the earth. To think he came out of the trenches alive and fell at the hands of his son doing the boogie man. Jimmy loved Dave and Alice and Jeanie. Don't get me wrong, they had their problems. They were a family and a family has people in it. Alice ran off with a boy never to be heard from again. Dave got mixed up with drugs before he straightened out. Jeanie lost one child during birth. And then there were the men Jimmy killed, the same men he took home with him. I think it was too much for Jeanie. She didn't recognize him anymore, even with all that good left in him. I never had the heart to tell Jimmy about her going behind his back. To him, family was everything. He took pride in providing for them, a warm meal and a comfortable place to lay their head.

I'd never realized a carton of cigarettes resembles a casket. Smoky brought out the empty box and put it on the bar. "A collection for the wreath." We passed it around and put our dollars in. Smoky took out a black marker and wrote FOR JIMMY across the side.

Jake Fuller came in and took the stool next to mine. "Shit," he said. "I heard it on the news this morning. My wife was getting ready for work and she goes, Is that the Jimmy you know? I was like, Yeah, the better one." He gave me a punch on the arm. "Beer, whiskey chaser."

"Everyone knows to call me Bud," I said.

"How's Jeanie doing? Anybody talked to her?" Jake was watching me out of the corner of his eye. Smoky set his order on the bar and said, "We thought you'd know."

More of the guys came in from outside. Every time the door opened, I looked up expecting to see Jimmy. The sun was there and then it was gone.

After a few more rounds, Jake turned to me and said, "You going to the funeral?"

I didn't answer. I stared at him in the mirror behind the skyline. Seeing him in Jimmy's seat, picturing him in his bed, I wanted to lower

Jake in the ground.

The bottle had its grasp on me. My hands were clammy and my pulse was pounding in my temples. I felt a cold sweat go down my neck as if bleeding from a head wound. I slid off the stool and thought I would faint. You don't realize how far you're gone until you try to stand.

"Take it easy, Smoky," I said.

"You too, Bud."

In the parking lot I leaned against my truck, trying to let it out. I never had breakfast. My insides tightened. What with the anxiety and nausea and confusion and depression, the drinks had mixed their own cocktail, and I didn't know how long I would last.

Then I saw her. She came around the corner, walking slowly, shoulders hunched up around her earmuffs. She held a wad of tissues in her hand. She stopped and wiped her nose.

"Jeanie," I said. "You have a booger."

"Are you alright?"

Her words came home to me. It should've been me consoling her, but I put my arms around her and let myself cry right there in front of the bar for everyone to see. She let go for a second and looked at me, then threw her arms around me again and squeezed me harder.

"I'm sorry about Jimmy," I said.

She sniffled. "Me too."

"It's hard to believe. I'm having trouble with it."

Jeanie put her hand on my face. Behind her, the clock above the town hall said ten to noon. The crucifix on top of the mountain looked over us. "Bud, I came here to tell you something."

"I'll try to remember it," I said.

"Jimmy's lawyer called. It's about the will. Jimmy left you everything. The lodge, the diner, the hardware store, the pontoon. He also left you the house."

I stood there. "That boat can't keep an owner."

"Jimmy knew about you know who."

"Oh."

"I'm not here to talk you out of what's yours. It's just, I have forty-eight hours to get my things out and nobody to help me. I'd ask Dave, but he's in custody."

Jeanie drove. We took the highway back into town. Trees reached for the sun. Birds flew toward it. A warmth came over me. The outline of a footprint marked the windshield above the dash, and I wondered if it was Jimmy's. It was then I noticed they were gone—the fish, the people, the procession—as if it never happened. What it was, I will never know.

Jeanie turned down a road that wrapped the frozen lake. She

cracked the window and lit a joint. She had glaucoma. We passed it between us, watching children skate around the ice. "Bud, why didn't we take your truck? I can barely fit groceries in this lemon."

"You really do have a booger, you know."

Jeanie laughed long and loud, and suddenly everything felt alright. Jimmy was always the funny one in the group. It was strange, taking a dead man's place.

You can probably guess the rest of the story. Jeanie and I saw a lot of each other that week. I still went to work—my jokes landed a lot more now that I signed their paychecks—but I let her stay at the house while she figured things out. We kept each other company. I went with her to the bank and funeral parlor. It's expensive to die. Before the service the guys at the lodge chipped in a hundred bucks for the casket. They delegated me to pick it out because I was closest to Jimmy and, according to Bob, they had big game tourists to fleece. They were trying to move on.

The next day I took Jeanie to the funeral and watched her collapse for the first time. Ned and Zit showed up in jeans and T-shirts. Pudge had elk on him. Jake Fuller and his sideburns were present, looking Jeanie over next to his wife. Guys who Jimmy hadn't spoken three words to in his life came up to hug her and give their sympathies. I couldn't stay inside the place. I sat on the church steps, watching the birds and trees, trying to remember Jimmy the way he used to be.

There was no funeral for Jeanie. Nobody knew if she was dead or missing. It was around the time Lester got out when it happened: Jeanie, who couldn't see with glasses, went for a walk in the woods at night. We figured she got lost and couldn't find her way back. What she was doing on the mountain so late, or what caused her to never return, the police and forest ranger didn't know. All we know is that the next morning she was gone and that crucifix couldn't save her. She simply disappeared. A week short of our honeymoon.

The night I proposed, we made love by the lake. In the middle of it she called me Jimmy. I didn't stop or get mad at Jeanie, nor did I bother to correct her.

CONTRIBUTORS

Claude Wilkinson's book, Reading the Earth, won the Naomi Long Madgett Poetry Award. Other honors for his poems include a Walter E. Dakin Fellowship and the Whiting Writers' Award. His most recent collections are Marvelous Light and World without End, which was nominated for the Mississippi Institute of Arts and Letters Award.

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AG (Andrew) Compaine is a psychiatrist and specializes in longterm psychotherapy with adults who have histories of childhood abuse. e and eis husband, together now 39 years, are part of the first generation of queer men to raise a child together (and she's now a freshman at Yale). AG has been reading and writing poetry for 25 years. Early on e had a few poems published in such journals as 'Slipstream'. Subsequently his work remained only in his writing journals throughout the years of eis active parenting. e has been living near the coast in southern RI,

since the pandemic, and working and writing from home. This has been the perfect opportunity to re-commit to eis poetry. As well, it is when e has finally come out as non-binary. Recently, AG had a long (7-part) poem published in the latest issue of 'Willlows Wept Review", one that will be the title poem of the chapbook e is working on, 'Salt Pond'. AG is thrilled that 'Grief Work' appears in Euphony Journal because it is deeply personal work concerning trauma in his own childhood, and, as such, it is the product of an year-long writing process and many revisions. Charles Wright is the poet who has most influenced AG's writing.

Peter Bethanis grew up in rural Maine. He is both a writer and an artist. Peter's writing has appeared in Poetry, America, and the Wallace Stevens Journal as well as more than 60 other literary journals. His work has been recognized by former U.S. Poet Laureate Donald Hall as well as James Dickey, author of Deliverance. Most recently, his writing has appeared in the Book XI, a philosophy journal of Hamilton College, and is forthcoming in Notre Dame Review.

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