



circle
of seasons

summer

2022

basking

-

Cover art & editing by Katie Marrone

"I imagine what it must be like to stay hidden, disappear in the dusky nothing and stay still in the night. It's not sadness, though it may sound like it. I'm thinking about people and trees and how I wish I could be silent more, be more tree than anything else, less clumsy and loud, less crow, more cool white pine, and how it's hard not to always want something else, not just to let the savage grass grow."

- ADA LIMÓN, "BRIGHT DEAD THINGS"

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Kelsey-
-
Robin Pace

There's something about July
which wets the lips
a little.

Lets tasks lie and
bodies linger. Hot
sweat, salt oozing
sweetness. There's something

about July. Water honoring
season and water
melon eating and
water rolling
down skin, and off
leaves, and if lucky, from
the sky. Big full often
cloudless.

There's something about
July. Urgent need
to seek heat
and pray
under in on to for
shade and if
lucky
from the sky. There's

something about July like
honey
over ribs,
like strawberries and fresh
whipped cream on
shortcake, like cold
lemonade, like
feral poppies.
There's something

about July. Berries
popping against lips and
tongues and teeth
savoring craving needing
moisture. Contrast.
The sticky, the
smooth, lush life.
Water and sun.
More light than dark
and not too much
yet.

Let too much wait
too dry too hot too
crusty and crusted, and
too fast August.
Shifting September, and

and

hold purple stained fingers
dearly. Eat your huckleberry heart
out. There's something about
July.

If Not Safe

-

Claire Markwalter

There are no lakes in Georgia,
just dammed rivers
that twist and turn and tell half-truths,
and when you swim them,
your toes graze ghosts of flooded forests.

I bet there's a metaphor somewhere.
Something about choosing to be from a place,
laying claim and making lakes.

That water that takes you,
like the Gs that leap of my verbs
into the quiet current -

I know a woman who likes her lakes cold,
likes to see the stones at the bottom
to stand on one side and see clean across to the
other.

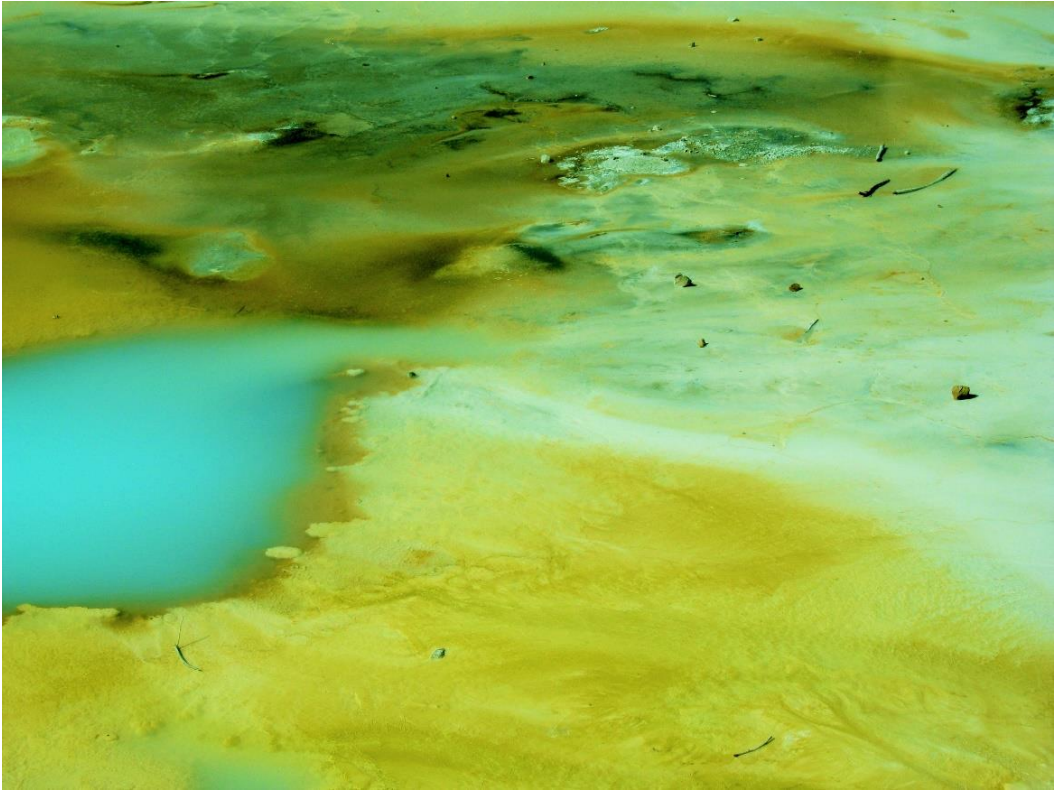
Lakes that collect and pool and hold,
cradled between mountains.

I do not want to be held.

I like my lakes with secrets.
Lakes where you cannot see the bottom through the
silt
because they are not meant to be lakes at all,
although you can feel the red of the clay beneath
your feet
like the clay that runs in my veins,
And know you are home, if not safe.

I long to leap into the current and float,
disturb the whiskered fish watching from the clay.
The water here is warmer than the air,
and will never taste the same anywhere but here.

Untitled
-
Caroline Leone



Nights Like This
-
Nancy Christopherson

Open the window if you can.

Let in some starlight, some cool air.

Now think of that night on the North Rim
in the meadow with your white coat on
and the conifers decked out like porcupines.

Stars so dense they sizzled.

First time ever you noticed they cast shadows
like that. First time ever
it was dark enough you can remember.

The telescope was so huge.

All you ever wanted was this to hold onto.

Something concrete and so silent,
you could hear the cones popping open.

Making Lemonade

-

Rhonda Struth

Lemons.

How do you like yours?

Sagging wearily on couch,
rains sheets slamming roof,
clouds jockeying for position,
I'm surprisingly giddy.

Puppy whisker-tickles on my earlobe,
momentarily sweetening
the sour overnight of disabling back pain.

Lemons.

Blueberry muffins infused with lemon.

Lemon baked salmon.

Strawberry lemonade.

Lemonheads: sweet and sour.

And, when I bite the fruit itself, lip puckering,
tongue twisting, eye blurring sour.

When life gives you lemons, make lemonade.

A commandment from the don't-worry-be-happy-feel-good-positivity movement.

And, the Blessings-come-in-many-forms interpretation.

Life.

Gray water, floating bits, back up in sink.

I feverishly plunge, clearing the line.

Fear rises in my throat, acrid bits.

Heart-mind line, clogged, insecurity verging on
insanity.

Overnight immobility, the new norm.

Bits of pain, insomnia, medication blocking flow.

Life is soured.

And I realize,

I like my lemons with loads of honey.

Cut and Paste
-
Sherry Smith Bell

Cut and Paste.

Do Creative work.

Every day

Remember

it's a form of play.

Pattern maker, heart breaker.

Allude to a life.

Cut to the bone

Become your intentions.

Never forget the pattern.

Images, words, thoughts.

pathways to follow.

Cut and Paste

Sherry Smith Bell
2018

Learning to Flourish

-

Cynthia Pappas

It is early June in the Willamette Valley. We've finished haying the pasture grass. On an early evening, two adult coyotes venture out of their den. On a mission, they cross the pasture, about 800 feet from our farmhouse. They separate to cover more ground. Their successful pouncing attacks quickly dispatch seven voles. The female is gorgeous - bright red ears and a coat that is slate blue in the light. They look like they've just come out of the locker room wearing their new uniforms for the season.

Every morning at twilight we can find them hunting. As I watch through the binoculars, I'm delighted to see five pups lying close together in the cut hay field near the tall grass, squinting at the sunshine, watching mom and dad. With so many mouths to feed, the adults are out there for two hours, occasionally dropping live voles in front of the pups so they can learn to chase and kill the prey. When the pups move into the tall grass they immediately disappear. When they are in the cut hay, their colors meld perfectly with the straw. Mother Nature's camouflage.

On my daily bike ride, I finally get to see the Canada geese goslings. Walking down our access road that runs along the creek, Dad is in the lead and seven goslings are gagged together immediately behind him. Mom brings up the rear. I get off my bike so as not to startle them, figuring the family would retreat into the riparian habitat for safety. Not to be. It's as if they are in a parade and I am the sole spectator. The geese, in family formation, just keep moving along as I inch closer. The family is flourishing. Finally, I get back on my bike and Mom flies into the creek honking loudly. Dad picks up his pace and exits the road into the brush, the goslings tumble after him down the creek bank.

The following day, when my husband, George, rides down the road, he is startled by a lone gosling jetting directly across his path. He swerves to avoid it, almost loses his balance, and runs over a gopher snake. He feels bad and reports this to me when he returns home.

Later that same afternoon, cruising down our access road on my bike, I make the turn and almost run into a turkey vulture who is feasting on the dead snake. Our farm often reminds me of Sunday nights as a little girl, watching Mutual of Omaha's Wild Kingdom.

All these nursery sightings help me differentiate the days because at this point in our second COVID-19 quarantine, it all blurs together in one continuous loop. We're isolating ourselves so we are healthy when our son, daughter-in-law and granddaughters arrive for their summer visit. There is nothing markedly distinct about Monday vs Friday. Every day I eat breakfast, complete the crossword puzzles in two papers, do my exercises, go for a walk, pick whatever's ripe in the vegetable garden, store the produce, water the raised garden beds and all the hanging plants, and then wonder how I will spend the remainder of the day. It shimmers before me, ill-defined, like pasture grass seen through heat waves. I am languishing; my brain is in a state of torpor.

Our farmyard and pasture have morphed into a summer nursery. Nesting is over and there are babies everywhere I look. Under the apple tree every morning the turkey family, two adults and four chicks, feed on fallen green apples, scattered birdseed under the feeders, and berries along the creek. After dinner, I find it hard to divide my attention between the turkey family and the coyotes and their pups. They forage on different sides of the house, so I find myself scurrying back and forth, first from the south-facing windows and then to the north deck to catch all the action. By early evening, the turkeys circle into the west pasture. In a slow-motion pirouette, the lead turkey checks the surroundings and brings the others to a place free of obstacles. At some given moment, each one lifts off and makes a short flight across the creek into the cottonwoods, to roost for the evening. It's great entertainment watching this happen. Sometimes there is a false start, and the turkey has to regather him/herself and take three steps back to have enough runway and gumption to successfully launch. Ponderous, defying gravity, the matriarch finally rockets into the safety of the trees. This unfolding evening drama helps me find my bliss.

These birds and mammals all have a sense of purpose. Provide food for their babies, keep them safe from predators, help them learn to hunt on their own and become, literally, empty nesters. They run on instinct, not questioning the state of the future. I am envious of their industriousness. My sense of purpose is lost amidst the inability to go anywhere and see anyone. I am stagnating on the farm. Zoom meetings and zoom book groups don't fill this gnawing hunger to be with others. I want to flourish like these wild families. I want to return to a time when I participated in collective effervescence - that sense of energy and harmony people feel when they come together in a group around a shared purpose. These animals are saving me - they are keeping me from wandering in a dark cloud. I watch them religiously to alleviate my loneliness. I am

self-quarantining prior to my hip surgery as I don't want to expose myself to COVID and have to cancel my surgery date.

In the darkening night, great horned owlets begin to hunt, mewling their high-pitched cry. I think they wish they were still with mom and dad, having food brought to them. Yet the owlet siblings persist, calling out to each other and gliding across the pasture, looking for voles and bunnies. Flourishing, despite their circumstances. Maybe this is too much of a stretch and I am putting words in their mouths. I honor their resilience away from the comfort of the known.

I know I should feel like a loving mother with all these babies filling our nursery yard. Instead, I'm suffering from claustrophobia, wandering in our house with curtains pulled against the unrelenting mid-August heat and glare. The COVID delta variant is running rampant through our community and the hospitals are full. I decline to attend my annual book club BBQ because it follows on the heels of the county fair which was later identified as a super spreader event. I am languishing with no sense of time differentiation. One day bleeds into the next, except for the progress I witness in our yard. The goslings and turkey poults grow bigger each day. The juvenile western bluebird loses his eye ring and gains more blue color. The owlets lose their downy baby feathers. The fawn's white spots are fading.

Physical, mental and emotional fitness is what psychologists in a New York Times article refer to as flourishing. How can I flourish? I can find purpose in everyday routines, do good deeds, and celebrate small things. I decide to make a bouquet of zinnias and sunflowers. I enter my beloved garden with a sense of purpose. The pop of turmeric, chartreuse and hot pink lightens my mood immediately.

We joyously watch Mr. and Mrs. western bluebird pop in and out of their nesting box in late June. When activity ceases, we fear that the dangerously hot 112-degree day has stressed their eggs and rendered them infertile. We decide to intervene, and George opens the side door of the box, reaches in and pulls out four eggs to make room for a new clutch.

These species, who are all moving forward, are teaching me to flourish, not languish, in this pandemic time. They are thriving - having three clutches of eggs, raising their offspring, and teaching them how to hunt. They remind me that a sense of purpose and living in the moment is an important counteraction against the backdrop of COVID.

We take desperate measures against the unrelenting heat. We move the sprinkler into the garden and aim its high arc toward the back of the bluebird nesting box to cool it down. Several weeks later we once again rejoice in the furious activity of Mr. and Mrs. zooming in and out of the nest, feeding their second clutch worms and bugs. When it seemed like this had gone on forever and I would have been exhausted if I were Mr. or Mrs., we witnessed a wide-eyed fledgling hopping around on the lawn near the nest. I quickly pulled up a picture of a baby western bluebird on my BirdPro app to make sure we were identifying an actual youngster and not making it up. Indeed, fledglings have bright white eye rings, brown spotted chests and backs, and the beginnings of blue on their wings. The next day we saw a second fledgling flying in crazy staccato bursts not more than fifty feet from the nest. Success. Two babies!

Research shows that acknowledging small moments is important for well-being. Psychologists call it savoring. Savoring is about appreciating an event or activity in the moment and noticing tiny good things around you. Even a quick chat with a stranger or a momentary bond with someone (or something new) can foster a sense of fulfillment.

Working on a third clutch, Mr. and Mrs. continue to bring worms and bugs to the nest. For fourteen more days, we watch from our deck as the exhausted parents, feathers worn, continue to feed additional hungry mouths.

Between worm forays, Mr. likes to perch at the top of the 20-foot-high copper pole that flies our prayer flags. He has a direct view of his nesting box from there. The fledglings gravitate toward landing on the wire trellis we've erected in the garden to support the heavy tomato plants. Mom, dad and the kids all stay within eyesight of each other. For the parents' sake, I hope the chicks in the third clutch will fledge soon. And then they do!

In late July we have friends over to sit in the creek that runs along the southern boundary of our farm. Finally, some social time! It's an antidote to these apocalyptic days of smoky slate skies from all the fires burning in Oregon. George, Jim and Becky are sitting in the creek. I'm on the bank as the rocks are too slippery to navigate with my new hip. I face upstream and the three of them face downstream, toward me. I tell them to freeze as I see a family of mallards approaching. The parents and ducklings move toward the chairs positioned in the creek, eating the grass that cascades over the bank. They don't even register a human presence. They feed for about five minutes and then float on down the creek, passing within a foot of our friends whose chairs almost block their path. Everyone lets out their breath and marvels at the up-close view of nature,

nurture, and nursery, all combined into five fleeting moments.

When we sit on the deck in the evening, the background music is a repetitive, sweet wee-oo wee-oo of American goldfinches. The bird feeders are filled with juvenile black-headed grosbeaks. Their short, jerky flying habits are a dead giveaway.

These mid-August temperatures are record highs for an Oregon summer. All the birds appear to pant from the heat as they perch, opening their beaks to let in more oxygen. I silently send them my prayers.

Learning to flourish from my animal mentors, I try and follow their lead.

Pulling Off the River

-

Karen Jones

When waters glide smooth and deep,
it's hard to tell you're traveling at all,
but look to each side. Trees drift slowly
into your past. Wildflowers beckon,
agates shine their secrets.

Row slant to the shore. Scramble out
of the boat, get your feet wet. Investigate,
reflect. Lounge on a rock like an otter,
get lost in your thoughts as you dry your fur
in the sun. You can even swim an eddy, drift
upstream, take a closer look at where you've
been.

When waters race shallow over gravel,
you can't stop - don't dare grab at branches -
you'll dislocate your shoulder - just guide
your bow downstream - stay alert to the current,
its changing channels, surprise snags around
every bend - no time to relax -
no time to daydream -

but safe below the rapid, pull over, catch
your breath. Look back - what did you miss?
Hear the soft sounds lost in the roar -
trickles and whispers and ripples near shore.
You love the flow but stop time for a while.
A crescent of sand sparkles in the sun, invites
your bare toes. Take a break, sing your song.

for she is human

-

Lauren MacDonald

for the way she walks is human
for the way she screams
cries
sings
is human

for the way she fucks
births
loves
is human

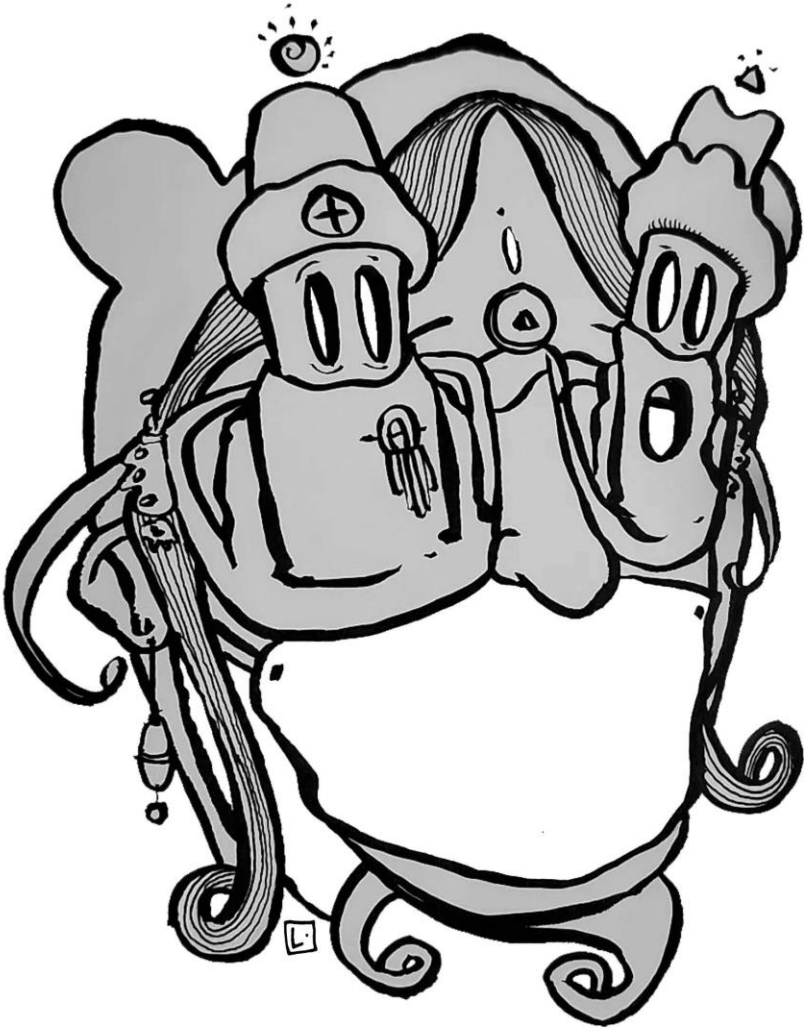
for the way she eats
spits
bleeds
is human

for she
all, whole, full
is human

Untitled

-

L B



Handmade

-

Marika Straw

You gave me soap you made for my birthday, on our first date -
and now when I wash my hands it's a caress,
an intimate and unforgettable reminder of you,
your thumbs and mine hooking into butterflies,
mine making flowers on your back.

You made a joke, when I said all the queers I know
are craftspeople,
about how we are good with our hands.
What I didn't say was how holding your hands is a
shock of beauty,
a revelation of touch's connection.
What I didn't tell you is what it was like
holding your body in mine as you fell asleep in the
morning tent light,
little shudders and shivers coming in and out,
wondering if and what you were dreaming.

What more I wonder is how else we will mold our love,
what beyond this will be handmade, by us, together.

Blackberry

-

Brigitte Goetze

Why are you so prickly?
All this attention given
to succulent sweetness
tells me you want
to be savored.

A Summer Education

-

M.M. Lau

When I was 14 working at The Enchanted Forest Theme Park, there was no prize sweeter than a stolen Sprite soda in the ice cream stand. Mixed with the special ice used for making snow cones, it was a summertime delicacy.

Sprite was the choice because, while carbonated, it most closely resembled water, and the meddling Powers That Be would not, in fact, notice. That was the world we occupied then, one of sloppy Chuck Taylors unlaced and dragging in the dust of Western Town, where one's greatest concern was How to Get to Work With a Shitty Beater Car and Would the Supervisor Realize I Stole This Soda.

Every day in the break room an exhausted copy of Billy Madison played on repeat, wearily depicting the scene where Adam Sandler's character hallucinates penguins. We scattered around busted plastic tables in that fluorescent chamber and savored the sensation of sitting.

It never got old.

I watched, laughing, memorizing line for line while eating my half peanut butter and jelly sandwich that I packed to get me through an 8-hour shift because at 14 I was worried about being too fat.

When break was done, closely monitored for an unpaid 30 minutes, we marched back to work donning Western Wear or Olde English Garb to mingle with the public and peddle wares. Sift dusty sand in the panning-for-treasure booth. Hawk ancient ice cream sandwiches (800 calories each?!) to people who didn't care about fat or whatever.

If it was a bad day, you'd be assigned a spot in the Haunted House, famous for groping. When I want to get really nostalgic, I remember a much less politically

correct time in the early 2000's when teenagers could grope each other freely in the darkened hallways of the Haunted House and not feel remotely bad about it. The Forest was a kind of respite for us all.

We came from schools stretching a hundred-mile radius of the park, and to be selected as an Enchanted Forest employee was a badge of honor. Did you get a royal blue zip-up sweatshirt? Could you wear your polo to school and recognize compatriots? Did you sport an EF sticker somewhere on your car?

The boys from South Salem were always the hottest with somehow new-ish cars, and they enjoyed an edge over everyone else from Lesser Schools. That edge didn't stop them from betting each other to drink the sludge that oozed from beneath the trash compactor, but they were teenage gods all the same.

At 14 I remember the sense of awe welling inside me when my lame fellow 14-year-old coworker's impossibly cool older brother (blue zip up sweatshirt, white 2001 Jetta) murmured to a peer "let's go listen to John Mayer in my car" and everyone swooned. How to be THAT guy?!

Most of us were musical, and to meet up to jam together gave a whole new excuse to that line from the Decemberists' song, "...feeling 'round for fingers to get in between."

Who would you kiss that weekend, vaguely duet-ing some Modest Mouse song that was particularly moving in 2002. Put the guitars down and embrace passionately under a tapestry from Hot Topic. Furtively stare each other down back at work passing by The Log Ride and then completely abandon the burgeoning love affair the following week.

Working at the Forest probably prevented my adolescence from being an angsty one by giving me so many outlets for self-realization. I made my own money. I worked in every corner of that park and savored the camaraderie and feelings of mixed unity and defiance towards The Powers That Be. We were a tribe, not a team, and we rallied against The Supervisors like only middle-class children can.

It helped that one half of The Powers That Be composed insane medieval synth music to accompany the water light show in the Old English Village and was generally found smiling.

Her music wafted through a room that was always damp no matter the time of year and smelled like a swimming pool filled with popcorn (it basically was). The magic transcendence of the water light show coupled with its compelling (uplifting?) melodies was perennially mesmerizing and it was my favorite attraction to work in.

Even though we had to shove thousands of tiny pizzas through a ridiculously inefficient toaster oven to placate the parents and their overtired children, the water light show never lost its charm.

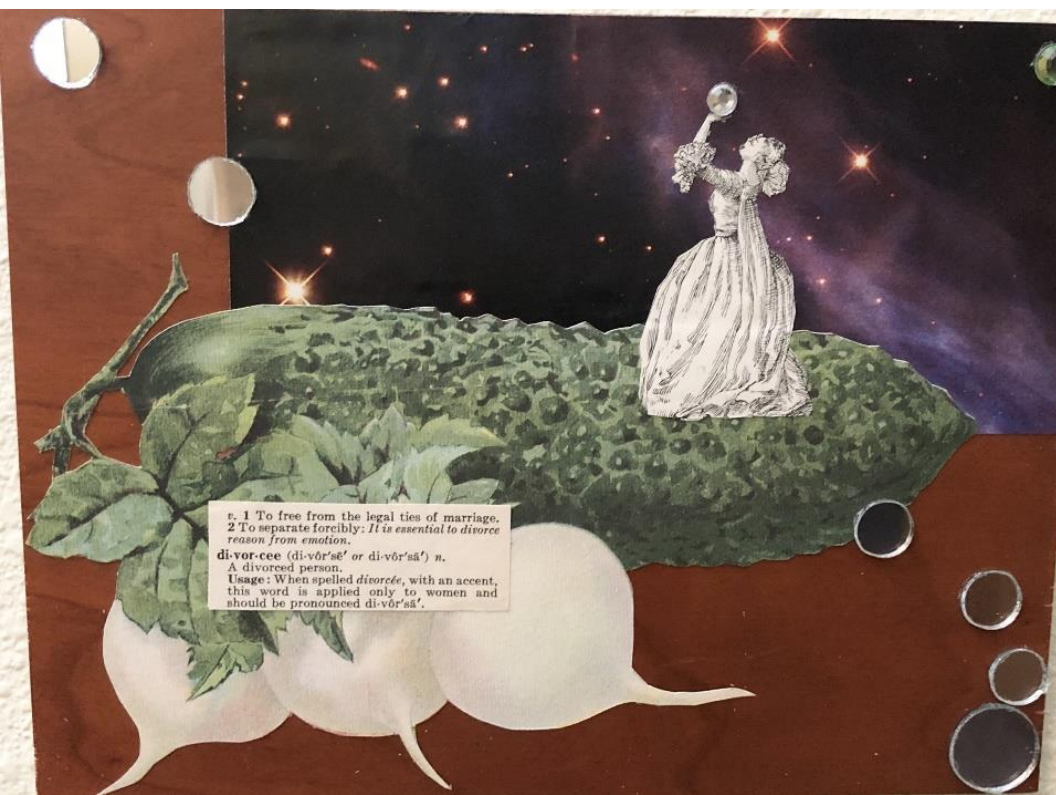
It was one of the few restaurant spaces you could wrangle a stolen soda, too, and Supervisors rarely showed up because it was dank and dark and depressing in the middle of summer. I loved it.

I worked at Enchanted Forest every summer until I was 18 and went away to college in Southern California. In LA every job felt graduated and bougie: Gallery Assistant, Mediterranean Cafe Barista, hostess at an up-and-coming French Bistro. Working alongside gold-toothed immigrants from Guatemala who taught me kitchen Spanish was a new Education but I was still so naive. It was far from the hallowed halls of the mildewed haunted house.

No one was really checking up. Did anyone care if I stole ice? Merchandise? Money? There would never again be the wholesome immersion of an entire amusement park (what does that expression even mean?) of equally desperate teens languishing under an oppressive August sun and longing only for the tiniest contraband cup of Sprite.

I guess it was my youth, or something.

Divorcée
—
Kristy Athens



v. 1 To free from the legal ties of marriage.
2 To separate forcibly: *It is essential to divorce
reason from emotion.*

di-vor-cee (di-vôr'sē' or di-vôr'sā') *n.*
A divorced person.

Usage: When spelled *divorcée*, with an accent,
this word is applied only to women and
should be pronounced di-vôr'sā'.

Sawtooth
-
Dustin Lyons

For my sister

I know that picture:

wisps of chestnut hair

stuck to a trail-flushed face

a finger on your pulse

an ear to the song of yourself

eyes on the vastness that outlasts us..

It's you

that little girl with the tear-wet eyes

that woman whose lightning-laugh sets the dead of
night to dancing

back on her horse

a hundred thousand hands high-

There are so many things in this life

that project the illusion of the impossible:

Holding that bullhead that darts in the crick

Catching the attention of a certain handsome boy

Passing that exam

Having that son

Walking away from that job

Keeping that smile-

There are fears that tail us from time out of mind

to the highest peaks

and doggedly back to our beds-

Sometimes we howl the moon down

We rise up- for all time

and immediately fall fetal

And it all happens at a blink

Dreams sown Dreams reaped

Some savored Others forgotten.

Old loves a fresh day older and new ones too...

Another smile line

Another anxious gray

Alas.

Hooray!

Another day-

We are death made aware of itself by the big bang of birth. Travelers here, each of us from a world we spend a lifetime trying to relate. Sometimes we can't find the words. And that's ok. Words offer imperfect capture, anyway. So we laugh and we cry and we scream and we dig to exhaustion. We either turn our eyes to the sun or we find hell.

For fear of frightening those around us we keep ourselves on a tight leash. Sometimes we lose our grip, our minds... we let the blood flow violently through our veins and spray it in every direction, needing desperately to be held. And when we find those arms and they enfold us, we melt like Spring-snow...we run through the meadows... we flower wildly. Love is the eldest child of sunup and nightfall...a waking dream. There is no amount of fancy footwork-try as you might-that can keep you from the occasional goring. Life will break your heart. It's a certainty. And an opportunity. A job opening. Finding security in that is ultimately the only security to be found-

Untitled
-
Caroline Leone



On a Porch, As I Write

-

Katie Marrone

I stop
fighting
back-

give
up,
really

let
these
bugs
tickle
the hairs
of my
runway
skin

my legs,
a new country-
like your legs,
once,
to me

let them
be

this body
of mine

these bodies
of ours

meant
for what

if not

for
roaming

Hummingbird Hill

-

Alia Ayer

At the place where the hummingbirds cross, all you hear is the wind of tiny wings. Their bodies a blur as you lazily pause and contemplate the merits of being that fast, small and special.

To be a creature of the air and shine only for those discerning enough to catch your neck glowing metallic red in a ray of summer sun- a hidden flare you can conceal in the shade or darker seasons.

I wish I could be you so that the only question on my mind every day, when I rise from a leafy slumber, is: *which is the sweetest flower of them all?*



Silver and Gold
-
Galen Miller-Atkins

I fall
upon your hills.
Fog heavy
with eager dew.
Adamant.
Wet fingers
caress the grass
and lift again.
Under the quiver
of your pulse
I roll.
My arms shower
the valleys
to hold your quiet earth
against the break
of a red-gold morning.

Saving the Garden

-

Louise Barden

The vinca died again,
in that single spot near the front.
First one turned gray
in spite of extra watering.
It took days to go.

Then two more shriveled, quickly
(There's nothing you can do)

leaving only three green mounds
to unfold gold blooms along the border.
Everything else thrives -- the rampant coreopsis,
the red and white impatiens spreading
almost perceptibly each night.
Even the salvia, this year, have survived
morning's forays by slugs.

But there is a space, the plan of my English
country garden interrupted.

Every year it is the same:
Nature intruding on my rule of order, stopping
the flow of hybrid colors.

I've learned to buy potted blooms
to fill an unplanned hole. This year
they are yellow, like small daisies,
above leaves so rough
they might have grown along some roadside.
They look sturdy enough
to hold their own.

Pasture of Peace

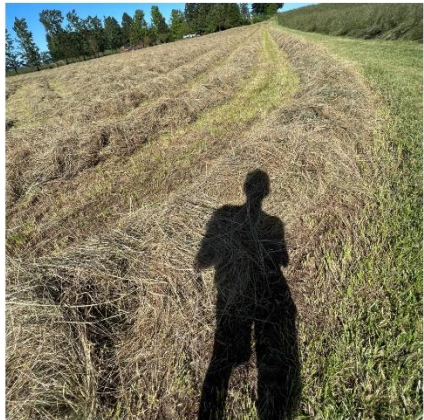
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Donald Witten

Windrows of fescue and Timothy lie straight, east and west.
Common yellowthroat serenades, redwing blackbird scolds.
Wisps of cloud crawl over a blue Coast Range, soon to be
memory faded into the sun. Boot tips glisten with early
dew.

This is the season of ease, of delight, long light into
evening.

Bombs rain, worlds away, and nearer, bullets spray.
But here, on this first summer day, I pray that others may
know the peace of this simple place.



After the Rains, Early Summer

-

Rachel Barton

Most of the poets I know have moved to the garden
heads bobbing like peony blossoms above the errant weeds
and incorrigible grasses woven into the fabric of the soil.

Life at the desk has not prepared the body for garden revisions.
Every stem of grass or weed is a challenge to the back and neck,
wrists and hamstrings, until sweat salts your vision.

The dark mulch is forgiving, a blanket to the roots
and sprouts you missed, which sounds so gentle
but really means you hope they suffocate beneath it.

This kind of editing requires a ruthless persistence.
Not all of us are up to the task. We return to our desks,
gently corral our thoughts to the page— poetry is always in
season.

Untitled
-
Caroline Leone



Untitled
-
Caroline Leone



Upcoming fall zine submissions
with title due by: Sept. 25, 2022
wccircleofseasons@gmail.com

