

# LAMP

2016





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# Editorial Statement

Elizabeth Lamont

Do you ever have that moment where you see an image or hear a fragment of a conversation and it reminds you of something completely unrelated, but you feel — somewhere in your stomach — that it can't be just coincidence or *déjà vu*? It must be a flashing glimpse of a deeper reality in which everything is significant, and the significance of everything is intertwined. My brother calls this moment "the event horizon of omniscience." I call it "the universe collides." Don't ask me why.

The late Umberto Eco was a master at creating this moment. His novels are kaleidoscopes of allusions to history, myth, pop culture, literature. Reading Eco is like reading one article that hyperlinks to every story that ever caught your imagination, but half give you a 404 error, three are in French, one is a short story by Borges, and the rest are un-credible sources. And even though for Eco these allusions — while fun — neither point towards an abundance of meaning nor provide a glimpse at ultimate truth, they nevertheless reveal the truth that all of God's creation exists as a unified whole, connected and consistent within the person of the Creator.

All art has the possibility of revealing the world's connectedness and significance. A man is like a tree not because David said so. But David's poetry did reveal that part of the fabric of our universe is that men are like trees. And since the psalm, the image of man as tree is planted forever in the imagination, ready to spring to mind when it is needed to interpret our experiences. The same is true of balloons and failing lungs, home-made lanyards and filial gratitude, child's play and high tragedy.

Umberto Eco died earlier this year, February 19<sup>th</sup> 2016, at the age of 84. In his obituary on ABC.com, the journalist quoted Eco's excuse for writing the kind of incredibly complex novels that he is known for: "It's only publishers and some journalists who believe that people want simple things," Eco said. "People are tired of simple things. They want to be challenged." Our hope is that this little journal challenges you to understand more of life, to glimpse the universal collision, and to create art that will inspire others to do the same.



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# Conversations

Krystal Baines

Captivated by  
the red balloon outside and wondering  
how it can float so high on helium breath and  
why it doesn't pop and explode into thousands  
of tiny pieces littering the concrete parking lot with  
fragments of flimsy rubber in shapes of seeping lungs all over  
where we're standing alone beside your car crying to me  
about your mother and how she's so ill and  
I'm stuck on where stray balloons come from  
and who would be so distracted  
to let them slip away.



# Ponder

Dominique Lopiccolo

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# Saigon

Joey Storey

Vendors crouch barefoot on their cutting boards  
serving their food in chipped bowls.

The spiced duck is lightly seared.  
The spices coming from just through the jungle —  
the duck coming from the river outside town.

A family of five can fit on a moped,  
the baby on the handle bars,  
the cat on the father's shoulder.

Leaning against a white curbside counter,  
my face in a bowl of *pho*, I was approached by a man  
who was mostly scar tissue. His head was swollen,  
no eyelids, no lips, no nose.  
I could not understand what he asked of me.  
I could not make out his facial expressions.  
Yet I knew then that I was through eating  
and that I needed to go back to my humid  
hotel room and possibly buy a plane ticket to go home.



# The Gap

Greg Farnes

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# Bedtime Story

Christian Schick

-- I --

Months have creaked out of planks  
into weathered knots worn slack 'round the mast  
out of water skins poured empty  
into fish nets dried and stuffed.

The wind that claws my matted white hair  
does naught to untangle the many suns  
satisfied to rustle at my haggard tunic.  
The sails lull and cave backwards. I tie them up  
but the lonely ocean is drawing me  
as strong as river's current revealing  
between the downhill sloping waves  
where legends say is a monster  
pinning the world's westernmost corner  
swallowing down the seas

heaving with inhalation;  
his wild boar body black as sin,  
roaming eyes red as the devil below.  
I'm streaming towards his reptile mouth.  
His webbed claws shovel the flood,  
in eternal thirst, past his mountainous jaws.  
My gaze follows a hawk leaving her nest  
perched in a crag of a tooth.

Steam wafts from his nostrils into clouds  
to darken the earth and hide Man from God.  
My long white beard blows up into my face  
with the sudden surge of his hot breath.

His snout eclipses the sun.

I stare up at it in darkness.

I'm lurched forward over the breaking froth  
that thins to green over his gums.

The rushing water swirls in his throat  
and the sunlight is swallowed behind me.

His velvet cathedral roof above  
goes on for uncountable leagues.



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-- II --

I drift through arches upon arches, narrowing.  
Spots of consumption eat gothic ribs.  
Gashes seep out trickles of blood.  
But, strange to see, there is sunlight  
beyond the tunnel of his gullet.  
I think back to when I saw a fish  
on the beach with its gills flapping  
while the tail was skeleton.  
This whale-monster suffers likewise;  
from the tail the body shrivels away  
until holes leave rotted flesh flapping open to the sky.  
Black birds infest the hollowed gaps  
chewed wide by feasting flocks of silhouettes.  
The disease gnaws to white bones,  
then white bones licked dry by Wind and Ocean.  
As my boat floats on,  
he who swallows the sea is now  
only a broken ivory canopy above  
interrupting the sunlight.  
The eternal decay will devour his body  
for millennia, engulfing the head.  
The beast will die; the world will end.  
Ribs crack into splinters to the spine's end.  
I tie a frayed rope to a shattered vertebra;  
beyond, unsteady water suspends  
crystallized upwards.  
The sun dips over me close enough  
to see its surface, covered by  
a bright swarm of intertwined snakes  
hissing out unbearable venom over the earth  
to scorch the Sons of Men.  
It gives the sea's dimples a yellow kiss  
and drowns into the water's darkness.

-- III --

I outstretch to feel the strange waters  
washing into the waves of the firmament,  
chilling through my dirty palms.  
It is darkened water that falls upwards  
like rain from the seas of Earth,

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droplets breaking to an icicle mist.  
Sky was air and ocean was water  
but now the ocean is air and  
the whole sky can be sailed upon.  
I cut loose into the drawing tide  
and row through the inside curve  
of the crescent moon close enough  
to break off a moldy chunk.  
Its cheese is sweet like I have eaten  
times and times before on stale bread  
in the village of my boyhood days.  
Only specks of white embers  
in the misty blackened oceans;  
one small spill of color  
pours from a distant cloud off starboard.  
I row my oars. Sideways  
against the current  
my heaving chest  
the air thins  
swearing,  
“When I get older...”



# Lost and Found

Greg Farnes

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# on the mend

Jonathan Hart

you pierced your own ear with a sewing needle.

this much i knew.

what you told me as we sat against a wall

in the cafeteria the day before Thanksgiving Break

was that you had also pierced your tongue,

and made a point not to sterilize the needle.

infections be damned, you laughed.

this concerned me, but i said nothing,

figuring the quickest way to lose a girl

(especially one as cool as you)

would be to open up my mouth.

what my father wouldn't tell me

until some months later,

eating burgers in the Kroger's parking lot,

was that some things need losing.

what he said, between thoughtful pauses

and around cheap beef and sour mayonnaise,

was that some infections had to run their course.

and i thought of your tongue, and Thanksgiving Break,

and unsterilized needles, and gangrenous lovers,

and wondered how much therapy would cost.

but then i heard God laugh

at what i thought to be my tragedy

through local yokels pumping gas

mothers passing by with cabbages and kids on their hip

and the crystal salt of fries catching terribly in my throat.

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# Raising Pigeons

Christie Osterhus

A year after I moved to Florida, my father was in the newspaper. Not on the front page, of course. He'd never do anything that big. I was flipping through my daily copy of the New York Post, munching on sunflower seeds, when I caught a glimpse of his name. There was this photograph of him standing in Central Park with a campy smile on his face and bird poop on his jacket. Through black and white from 1,284 miles away, somehow his grey-blue eyes pierced straight through me.

The article said there was construction on 81<sup>st</sup> Street right outside the museum of Natural History and three pigeons were injured, or maimed, or something. I forget. My father found the birds on the sidewalk during his morning walk. I don't know whether he was tired of living alone or had a sudden spurt of newfound compassion, but evidently he scooped them into a box and brought them home.

My dad works for pest control, so he has endless supplies to kill things, but nothing to keep things alive. I never had a green houseplant for more than a week. Whatever way he managed to keep from killing the wounded birds, the pigeons got better. The journalist described the daily toil of an altruistic old man, fighting to acclimate a few birds into the wild and saving Mother Nature one step at a time. She literally used those words: "saving Mother Nature." I thought about phoning her and explaining that my father had to walk every day to save his poor, pathetic back, and if he wasn't already planning on walking there anyway, he wouldn't give a shit about those three worthless birds. But hey, why ruin a good story.

He took the birds to Central Park every day, and after letting them waddle and fly around, he collected them in his arms, and snaked around the construction back to his dingy apartment. Finally the day came to let the birds go. As the birds flew south, my dad weaved his way home with empty arms. The sappy columnist described his steps as "heavy" and "morose," but the reality is he never enjoyed being responsible for other living beings. The best part was the end, though. I laughed 'til I cried when I read it. The next morning, my dad stepped out the door for his



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morning walk, and behold: three pigeons perched on his iron rail. They were cooing and flapping and jerking their heads in that particularly annoying way that birds do. My dad told the reporter, "At that moment I realized that they had become mine. And in a way, I became theirs." The journalist closed the feature by saying how Dad continues to walk the pigeons every day, and, though the construction has been finished for months, the birds still fly around it in the same pattern they learned.

I put down the newspaper and stared at the space between my cup of coffee and pile of sunflower seeds. Suddenly I picked up the phone, my fingers dialing a number that I had forgotten. Dad answered the phone, but I hung up. It's been two years now, but the image of an empty sky and those stupid pigeons on his iron fence is burned into my memory.

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# Fatherly Advice

Isabella Ashley J. Kochenour

That single piece of advice you once gave,  
Lingers timelessly in my ears.  
It haunts me like a woeful melody  
Resounding in my head.  
I cannot picture your face,  
Without studying a photograph.  
I can't feel your strong, comforting arms  
That so rarely embraced me.  
Nothing left of you  
But the vague concept of fathers.  
Yet those words you once spoke  
Now linger in the dark corners of my mind.  
For just a moment you are present in my memory.  
I can almost see your face,  
Almost hear your voice,  
Almost feel your grip  
on my fragile shoulder,  
Your head bowed, greasy hair  
Covering your face. Your voice  
Quivered, and I could feel the ache  
In your arms, your hands, your fingertips  
That tighten on my aching arm  
As you speak, refusing  
to look me in the eye.  
Your voice quivered when you said,  
"Never be like me."  
And I thought I heard you whisper,  
"I love you."



# Sails Up!

Dominique Lopiccolo

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# The Birth of Tragedy

Doug Stephens IV

The Greeks, he said once, knew man to be  
Brostoi, the dying ones. Knowledge then  
Gave birth, anagnorisis naming them  
The Janusary conjunct, grim Apollo and  
Fierce Dionysius.

I recall the clearing my brothers and I made  
Beyond our ditch's 2x4 bridge. We cut brush,  
Heaved logs, exhumed a mysterious railroad tie  
From its earthy grave, and piled them;  
Breastworks that only the deer could leap.  
There was a half-tunnel hollowed out for entry.  
We were strange Senecan engineers, knowing  
Without telling that defense erat virtus. Even for  
That quiet postage stamp of ground  
That looked out on our neighbor's fields.

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# Theoretical

Raymond Jorge Fuentes

I called her “my dal doll”  
when we first met.

“Listen, Delhi,” I said later.  
“You’re my *dal doll*.  
I’m your white rice.”

She smiled:

“Rice is thought to cool the body,  
So your theory would seem correct.”



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# Great Grandfather's Painting

Mary Prather

The old tire swing dangles,  
forlorn on its balding branch –  
on frayed rope, it turns,  
spins, searching for someone  
who delights in the thrill  
of sticky hot summers  
when the cows beat their tails  
against the army of mosquitos.

The still pond below rests,  
devoid of laughter and splashes –  
gold-brown messengers land,  
rippling the glass surface  
and heralding the stiff arrival  
of temperatures that call  
ice skates from the closet  
to dance upon the surface.

The grey cornfield trembles,  
confronted by harsh breeze –  
the fruit of labor collected;  
what summer toil has wrought  
lies in the cellar barrels  
to nourish winter bellies,  
while stalks, tassels, and kernels  
strew the weary fields.

The narrow road bends,  
lined with grasses left to seed –  
with school books and lunch bags,  
the children leave  
the tire swing over the pond  
and their lives in the cornfield  
to walk two miles to school  
upon autumn's arrival.



## **Focus**

**Dominique Lopiccolo**

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# The Church to London: 1348

Benjamin Franks

"Comfort, Take Comfort my people."  
The Bells relay Her maternal call.  
"Let your tears roll down my bosom;  
Unburden your souls within my halls."

"Can these walls provide us shelter?  
Will cold stone extend our lives?  
Your incense cannot block  
Death from burning in our eyes.  
Our sores stink and fester  
While the fires consume our dead.  
Your stained glass casts  
Taunting colors down upon our dread.  
We turned to you, and yet we die  
With wives and sisters left alone  
To starve without our dreary labor.  
Is all you offer silent stones?"

"No!" The bells sob out Her words.  
"I offer more than rotting wheat and rye.  
My Bread will last forever,  
Bread descending from the skies.  
These are not the halls I promise,  
Stone cannot encompass those.  
Your pain is pure and true  
And full as any blood red Rose.  
My hymns stay sweet, my bells chime pure  
Though both may now ring hollow.  
In these stone-walls lie everlasting halls  
My Children, can you follow?"

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# As Living Stones

Mary McAllister

Ms. Dana Custer sat at the Moore's kitchen table cutting out Bible characters from thick sheets of felt. After tracing the outline of Solomon with a marker, she followed it with a pair of sewing scissors, passing the scraps over to Honor, who was sitting in the booster seat next to her. Honor grasped a pair of green safety scissors, cutting the scraps into smaller and smaller pieces. Her orange hair, the same shade as her mother's, kept falling into her face, and she brushed it aside with as much exasperation as she could muster. Her feet dangled over the edge of the booster seat, clad in a pair of slippers shaped like ducklings that Ms. Custer had given to her for her third birthday several months before.

Ms. Custer had been babysitting Honor Moore since she was born, but the child hadn't said a word all evening. Tonight she had agreed at the last minute to watch her while Carolyn, their mother, was attending yet another meeting at Covenant Reformed Presbyterian Church regarding potential disciplinary actions towards her husband, who had left her, their child, and the church three weeks ago. William Moore had not attended any of these meetings, though many messages had been left at the desk of the Econolodge where the pastor suspected he was staying.

Ms. Custer placed felt-Solomon inside the temple on the board, kneeling in prayerful supplication to felt-God. She had taught the kindergarten Sunday school class for fifteen years, although she did not have any children of her own. She had always imagined herself becoming the matriarch of a large and far-flung extended family, but now, at sixty-five, she had begun to realize that this was no longer a possibility.

Carolyn pushed open the door, bringing with her the smell of cold pine. Her eyelids were grey from smeared makeup and tears, but she did not so much as glance in the mirror above the coat rack on her way over to the kitchen table.

"Thank you so much Dana; you've been such a blessing," she said, extending a crinkled twenty-dollar bill.

"Please, I'm happy to help."

"No, take it, at least for the gas it took you to get all the way over here." Carolyn's voice broke on the last syllable, and Ms. Custer

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quickly took the money.

"If you need anything don't hesitate to call," Ms. Custer said, gathering her felt and heading towards the door. "Goodnight, Honor!" Honor looked up, but otherwise showed no sign that she was spoken to.

Ms. Custer did not immediately turn her car on after climbing inside. The Moores lived thirty minutes outside of town, in Barnardsville. Their two-bedroom house sat on top of a mountain, and the orange glow from the kitchen window was the only light to be seen for miles. When she finally turned the key she felt shame for shattering the fragile peace of the dark. Her headlights shone on the glinting eyes of a fox, gone before her eyes could focus.

The Moores' driveway was long and steep, and Ms. Custer's car lurched and slid down the gravel. Two years ago, when they had first moved in, Carolyn told Ms. Custer that when it snowed their car couldn't make it up the driveway. Once, after getting groceries, she had to leave the car at the bottom and tote her daughter and the food up in a red toy wagon, Honor holding the eggs in her lap.

Ms. Custer's own home was small, but heavily furnished. The cold wood floors had been draped with thick Persian rugs that she found at the summer flea market. She had beaten out the dust and smells of previous owners with a broom in her front yard before strategically tossing the rugs around her home, leaving no board uncovered. Her walls were equally crowded with flea market finds, particularly intricate drawings of the anatomy of plants. The large eiderdown couch took up most of the living room, but she had managed to squeeze in a love seat and a coffee table so that the women could sit comfortably when it was her turn to host the Tuesday night Bible study.

She went into her bedroom, filled to the brim with quilts, bookshelves, a vanity set, and an armoire that touched the ceiling. As she changed into her nightgown she looked at her seemingly ever-widening torso, wondering at the soft, undeniable evidence of time's passing.

Climbing in bed, drifting to sleep, visions of ducklings swam before her eyes—flying up and down in the time of a child's steps.

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The next morning Ms. Custer felt restless. She sat on her love seat with the *Citizen-Times* opened in front of her, but after skimming



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the headlines — two murders, a kidnapping, political scandal — she shut it. Her mind kept drifting back to the lonely orange glow of the Moore's kitchen window, to Carolyn's grey smeared eyes.

Leaving her coffee and paper at the chair, she made for the coat closet. She pulled on her peacoat and gloves as she stepped out the front door, frozen grass crunching beneath her boots. Feeding a family is always an effort, she thought, and Carolyn could use some help.

She pulled into Ingle's, her brakes whining with effort. As she entered the store she made a list of necessary ingredients on the back of a Christmas card she found in her glove compartment: noodles, cheese, butter, eggs. She started down the coffee aisle, deliberating over whether or not she should purchase the more expensive organic ingredients that she knew Carolyn preferred, but quickly stopped in her tracks. She considered making a quick escape, but William Moore had already seen her. He had been comparing roast dates on two bags of coffee, but now his hands fell to his side, still firmly gripping the bags. "Oh, Dana. Good morning."

Rumors had been circling the pews that William had left town and found a temporary job in Hendersonville. But here he was, in the Ingle's on Patton Avenue. He had a few days' growth on his cheek, but he still looked like one of the children in Ms. Custer's Sunday school class who had just been caught making a paper airplane out of the morning's assignment.

"Will. I, hello, I was just getting some ingredients to make dinner for your family — macaroni and cheese." She immediately wished she could retract her statement. It was the wrong thing to say.

"I didn't realize people were doing that. That seems — Thank you, that's kind." He responded, looking intently at Ms. Custer's empty grocery cart.

"Oh, it's no problem at all. Happy to help." Ms. Custer said, glancing briefly at William's strained face before inspecting the contents of the shelf directly behind him. After several moments of silence, William spoke, a bit too loudly, startling Ms. Custer, "Yeah, that'll be good. Honor loves mac and cheese — sort of. She always scrapes the top off and just eats that." His lips tightened into a smile that vanished almost as soon as it appeared.

Ms. Custer let out a bark that was meant to be a laugh. The sound hung in the air, echoing louder and more abrasively in her

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memory, until William once again broke the silence. "Yes, well. I was just leaving. I'm sorry." She didn't know why he apologized to her, and he didn't seem to either, but he left the aisle with both bags of coffee.

Ms. Custer got the items she needed without reading the labels. Peeking out of the bulk grains aisle, she didn't see William at any of the cash registers. At the checkout she gave the cashier the wrong amount of coins, and a bag boy had to run her down in the parking lot to give her the block of cheese that she had left on the counter.

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Back at home, Ms. Custer set the ingredients on the kitchen table and began making use of her nervous energy. While not a particularly accomplished chef, her macaroni and cheese had a bit of a reputation at church picnics.

The thirty minutes that the dish took to bake she spent vacuuming, dusting, and washing dishes. When the timer went off, she silenced it with relief. Deciding that the dish would be best served warm, she pulled her coat back on and headed out the door so that she could get to the Moores' before Carolyn started dinner.

The country roads that led to the Moores' home were devoid of cars, but she stopped twice to allow a family of deer and a stray dog to cross in front of her. As she drove up the mountain to their house, it occurred to her that she should have called beforehand—there were three extra cars in the driveway.

The Moores' driveway was small, and the three vehicles—two trucks and an SUV—left deep tracks in the front yard. Several drops of rain splashed against the plastic wrap covering her macaroni and cheese before she made it onto the porch. Before she could knock, Carolyn opened the door, her face stoic and pale. She looked at the food in Ms. Custer's hands, her expression softening.

"Oh, thank you. Come in. I'm so sorry, I'm a little overwhelmed. Pastor Blake and some of the other elders are here. They are trying to take care of some things." Carolyn turned back to the kitchen, where the phone lay next to its hook. "If you'll excuse me, I have to make a call. The men are in there." She gestured towards the living room with the phone, before redialing a number that was written on a post-it note on the counter next to her.

On her way to the living room Ms. Custer stopped at the Moore's small kitchen table, putting her dish next to five other

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casseroles already there. Some had notes on them, ensuring Carolyn that she was in the thoughts and prayers of the women who had made the dishes. Ms. Custer wondered if she should have added a note.

In the living room, five of the church's leading men stood in a pack around the coffee table. Pastor Blake prowled around the room, glancing periodically out the window to check for cars coming up the driveway. His hair was predominantly grey, but with black and white streaks on the top, where it was thickest. Ms. Custer cleared her throat, and the men turned their joint attention on her.

"Well, hello," said one of the elders. "What brings you here?"

"I brought Carolyn some food, I thought she could use some help. Why are you all here?"

Pastor Blake stepped forward. It was a Tuesday, but he was wearing what Ms. Custer thought of as his Sunday vesture — grey sport jacket and slacks with a blood-red tie. "It's actually a rather personal matter, Dana. But since you're already here..." He exchanged a knowing look with the other four. "We were supposed to meet with William today; he agreed to come to my office. However, he did not show up. Quite frankly, I'm a little tired of dancing around this. We've asked Carolyn to have him meet us here so we can get this straightened out."

"And he agreed to come here?" said Dana.

"Well, that remains to be seen. Carolyn hasn't gotten ahold of him yet but we think she'd be able to —" Pastor Blake stopped as Carolyn appeared in the doorway, exhausted.

"I was able to reach him," Carolyn said, "he's coming."

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Twenty minutes later Ms. Custer pulled her macaroni and cheese out of the oven and began scooping it out. She brought the bowls into the living room two at a time until each man had a paper bowl in one hand and a plastic fork in the other. They all mumbled their thanks except Pastor Blake, who ate his serving standing at the window. It was raining steadily now.

"Shouldn't he be here by now? I guess not. Who *knows* where he's been staying," Pastor Blake punctuated his statement with a bite of macaroni and Carolyn visibly flinched. His mouth still full, he said, "Oh, wait, who's that? Coming up the driveway — William? Doesn't he have a car? My goodness, he's soaked." Ms.

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Custer followed his eyes and saw a dark haired figure in a drenched maroon sweater struggling up the last few yards of the driveway. The room watched him as he took in the vast array of cars in his driveway, then forced himself to continue to the house. Nobody moved, and William must have hesitated at the door. Ms. Custer wondered what the protocol was for someone in his situation. Would he knock on what was still his own door?

The front door opened but everyone stayed seated. William's shoes were squeaking as they listened to him open drawers and cabinets, presumably looking for something to dry off with. When he entered the living room he had a dishtowel with a picture of an asparagus on it drawn across his shoulders. He scanned the room before allowing his gaze to rest, with a certain amount of relief, on Ms. Custer. When Pastor Blake asked William to sit down, he did so without looking away from her.

"The driveway is a wreck, I got halfway up but I couldn't..." William stopped, and looked down at the wood floor that he had installed just a year prior. "Well, I'm here now."

The men of the church were sitting on the couch, and Carolyn and Ms. Custer shared a loveseat. William was in the rocking chair closest to the kitchen.

"Now, William. I'm disappointed that it's taken this long for us to talk," Pastor Blake said. "You've been involved with the church for years. We made you a deacon because we trusted you. You made a vow, not only to your wife, but to CRPC. And now I see you're walking away from all that. Care to explain why that is?" Pastor Blake and the elders had been leaning rhetorically forward throughout the duration of his speech, and they now sat back simultaneously.

"I don't think you actually want to know that," William said. "This is more of an ambush. And since none of you really want to know my side of the story, I'm not going to give it to you. In fact, I'm fairly certain you've already made your decision, but I guess I'll help solidify that. Carolyn and I have irreconcilable differences, so I don't—"

"She doesn't seem to think so," one of the elders interrupted. "We've been talking to her for the past two hours and she doesn't seem to agree with you. As a matter of fact, she seems utterly confused as to why you're leaving at all."

Ms. Custer looked at Carolyn for a reaction, but she only

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continued to sit with her hands folded tightly in her lap.

"She doesn't want to understand," William said quietly, not looking at his wife.

"Well then let me ask you something else," Pastor Blake said. "Is it true that you're currently having an affair with Denise Long?"

"Yes."

"And how long has this been going on?"

"Two months."

"Are you currently living together?"

William paused. "Yes."

The men murmured amongst themselves, and Ms. Custer reached for Carolyn's hands. Carolyn remained totally still, as if a sudden movement would cause her fragile stoicism to shatter.

"I know," William continued. "But that makes your job easier, doesn't it? I mean, now you don't have to keep deliberating over what to do. Because I'm being honest with you. You've caught me in my adultery and now you don't have wonder if you're doing the right thing."

Pastor Blake was about to answer, but he was cut off by small footsteps coming down the hall. Everyone turned to see Honor, grasping a doll with a cloth body and a plastic head, standing in the door frame. It had been several weeks since she last heard her father's voice, and she now walked tentatively towards him, bringing the doll up to her face as if to hide behind it. William started to get up, but when Carolyn rose from her seat he quickly sat back down.

Carolyn picked Honor up and carried her out of the room, leaving the men and Ms. Custer in a tenuous silence. When they heard Honor's bedroom door shut upstairs, Pastor Blake spoke up. "Do you see what you're doing? God gave you a family, and you're responsible to that family. That little girl needs her father."

William's face was flushed and he kept his eyes on the child size stool to the left of Ms. Custer. "I'm doing what is best for my family. Besides, it's far too late now."

"Well then, William, I hope you're prepared for the consequences. You've wandered from the fold and we've tried to bring you back, but your defiance and refusal to repent for your sin against our church family and your wife and child cannot be overlooked."

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"Wandered from the fold?" William said with a smirk that didn't quite reach his eyes which were slightly bloodshot and ringed with dark circles.

Pastor Blake ignored him and continued his well-rehearsed speech. "We're revoking your deaconship, effective immediately. You have one week to break off your affair, make a public apology to the congregation, and return to your family. If you do not comply, we will be forced to take more drastic measures. Do you understand?" The elders nodded at Pastor Blake then focused their joint gaze back on William.

"I do," William replied, more composed than he had been since his arrival. "I'll go."

He looked up at the bannister, beyond which lay his daughter's bedroom, but when Carolyn emerged he looked away and made for the door. Carolyn descended the stairs, no longer trying to disguise her recent tears.

"He's gone?" The slamming front door provided an answer.

Pastor Blake bared his teeth in a grimace, but it could have been a smile. He turned towards Carolyn, as if to offer some consolation, but before he could say anything Ms. Custer spoke, "Pastor, I think you all should leave. I will take it from here."

"Very well, Dana. But I just want to say —"

"No, no. I don't think you should." She stood and herded the men out, taking their empty paper bowls as they walked out the door and to their cars, Pastor Blake leading the pack.



# **Good Morning Glenorchy**

Dominique Lopiccolo

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# Afraid of the Dark

Anna Sweeney

Her nightlight shone,  
a lighthouse amidst a black sea of night.  
Her twin-sized bed a rickety schooner,  
a speck bobbing in the frigid waves.

Odysseus himself could not defeat the Cyclops  
that had certainly taken residence underneath her bed.  
The hinges of her closet were no match  
for the hellions that awaited her  
amongst her bulky fall sweaters.  
Surely her curtains could not shield her much longer  
from the long, witches' fingers (that are definitely not trees)  
that scrape across her window.

She could take it no longer.  
Her clear voice, a knife through the night,  
an official call for reinforcements.  
Mother, clothed in that invisible suit of armor  
all grown-ups have,  
rushed in unafraid.

Are you afraid of your shadow? Mother asked.  
That consistent friend who clings to your heels?  
Who dances with you even if you look silly?  
Who accompanies you on golden midday walks?  
Who is with you all the times I wish I could be with you too?

Of course not, mother, she replied,  
beginning to think it was ignorance, not courage  
that allowed her mother to stand so close to her closet.  
But my shadow is not here. I am alone.

Like all good girls, Mother replied,  
shadows must also go to sleep.  
What more is night than a sea of shadows  
returning home?



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# Dust Anthem

Sarah Grace Collins

The earth beneath my feet pulses with man.  
Dust to dust, and to dust we return.  
The world is witness to life —  
To the war and waiting and time and tension of eternity.  
My breath is born from a thousand others' last words;  
I drink water that soothed a wanderer,  
That flooded a parched field.  
This beat below me surges, swimming with countless lives,  
And even more stories of lives past.  
Sink in to this dirt. Soak in the earth.  
It is bathed in the blood of your fathers.

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# Yuppie-Boy

Sam Borgia

He makes sure his tie and collar are straight,  
Then gives his reflection a final glance  
And quickly grabs his keys before he's late  
To the luncheon with colleagues — his best chance  
To network, make a name with the top dogs.  
His jokes are a hit and handshakes are firm.  
He asks CEOs about their wives; nods,  
Agrees: "Congress is full of crooks and worms!"



## Julybug

Sam Borgia

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# Dandelions

Joylanda Jamison

The blessed heat of the sun glides across the earth  
as her pores open up, receiving the warmth.  
Winds sift through the trees  
And cause them to shhhhhh each other  
ashamed of the secrets they cannot tell –  
their branches droop low from the weight,  
and yet their burden they endure,  
with roots strongly planted in the ground.

Not like their cousins  
who promise vain wishes,  
puffs of white that bend and dance enticingly –  
cursed weights that carry the Pained and the Carefree.

Pursed lips inhale hope  
exhale pain,  
and send the soft wings of heaven  
out into an indifferent land.

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# Waiting Room

McKenzie Lee Snavely

My mother's heart is broken and I'm in the waiting room. Everything on this floor is supposed to be modern. Crisp and clean. But that was in the 90s, so now it just seems like everything is teetering on the brink between dated and someone-probably-still-decorates-in-these-shades-of-coral-and-taupe. It is undeniably hospital. Wooden chairs with a plasticky vinyl squish, and thin carpet worn thinner with worry. Comfortable for the 30 minutes of waiting when you're here for your mother's routine stress test. Rigid and unyielding for the indeterminable amount of time between finding out her heart is broken and wondering if yours is going to break too. The arms of every chair here bear the bruises of years of waiting. Wood finish rubbed off from open-heart surgery that faced unexpected complications. Grooves notched from nervous habits of a biopsy result that swings the balance of cancer and finally exhaling. The carpet does its very best to cover the tracks worn in from the husband who holds his newborn but cannot hold his wife yet with its predictable patterns. The kind of marks that only a hospital could wear.

You get a pager. It tells you when a nurse needs you; it tells you when a doctor needs you. But, it doesn't inform you when your mother needs you. It doesn't tell you she is scared and wants you beside her right now because she can't do this without the bones of your fingers interlocking hers to reassure. It only tells you that like everyone else, you're waiting for a number to be called.

I'm the youngest person here by far. Unless you count the babies. But they don't know why they're here, so I don't count them. The babies are content to discover their toes and ingest book after book, literally. They don't find the strategically placed paintings any more visually stimulating than I do, but that doesn't matter because they are too busy counting down the seconds until their next meal to care. So for all intents and purposes, I am the youngest person here. This fact is only significant because everyone else here seems to know what to do. The people here have a look to them. Each with their own signature of waiting. The woman across from me hasn't moved for ten minutes. Rodin could have sculpted her. A bronze casting of an aging woman with a husband whose diagnosis tests the

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vow she made years ago, when “til death do us part” felt foreign and flippant. The man beside me only twitches sometimes to twist his wedding band in the dent of his finger and breathe out heavy like his lungs might be the only thing holding him together.

The receptionist is used to these poses. She’s over-compensating for it. Cheerful. Loud. It’s as if she is blissfully unaware of the fact that she is last contact between the best and worst days. Her abrasive, shrill laugh pitches through the sterility in an effort to produce warmth as she makes light of post-op and directs people to their loved ones who may or may not be ok.

So, I’m sitting here. Hoping I’m on the former end of that particular balance. And the only clear thought I can conjure is not about surgery, hearts or even my mother. It’s about the receptionist. I don’t envy her job, because no one wants a sad receptionist at a hospital. But, as I listen to her laugh pierce through the nervous ticks and taps, no one really wants a happy one either.

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# sunday school

Krystal Baines

we kids shriek like primates yawping at the sun  
while our mothers bake beneath spf 75.

endless waves agitate the shores of crowded beaches.

our fathers feed us sodden wonder bread sandwiches,  
salty black grape jam gumming behind molars  
just beginning to break through infant skin.

we gulp down brackish water  
we trumpet our noses beneath the ocean  
we screech and crash our cherubic bodies into castles of sand  
hysterical hymns pulsating from swelling lungs—

parents  
pray  
plead  
implore

my God, my God,  
why can't the children be quiet?

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# theft

Jonathan Hart

when we were young, we couldn't help but mock  
the way our grandma always had to say  
"kiss, kiss!" or how she'd always have to walk  
so slowly every time she came to stay.  
respect is hard to teach a three-year-old.  
it's harder still to tell them why they ought  
to hush when grandma says that now she's cold,  
describing how she felt when cancer shot  
through grandad's body, starting in his neck  
and taking its sweet time to carry him  
away; and how she wished she hadn't let  
the pictures show how grey he was, and slim.  
it's hardest, though, to try and not conceal  
a truth you can't accept: that God can steal.





## Going to Work

Greg Farnes

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# Unfounded Fears

Raymond Jorge Fuentes

Don't talk about him —  
The fragile-fingered man  
At the corner of your street,  
Who sits on the curb  
Staring from behind mudshell lids  
And frayed gray cap.  
His thick, flaky beard  
Hides dried leather  
And dried blood.

Don't talk about him  
Because he'll smile  
With yellow and purple potato teeth.  
Mush between arrowhead fillings,  
Decorated with parsley leaf  
And cold, rare meat.  
You'll see his leftover prey when  
He smiles...  
If he smiles  
When you mention him  
In the dark...  
The fragile-fingered man  
In the corner of your room

With his fingers near your heart.

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# Soul Rooms

## Christian Schick

My partitioned selves drift in the rooms of Apt. 218.  
I rewind a mixtape in my current room,  
While down the hall my childhood souls  
Peek out occasionally to wave hello,  
And up the hall are darkened bulbs and fear.

Sometimes I leave Apt 218 to climb the musty stairs,  
Then knock and enter Apt. 681 and tread down its halls.  
An open doorway frames where the lemon-draped sunshine  
Fills a glass of wilting plucked dandelions.

I sit down at her pale kiddie table  
And ask about school and best friends;  
I cut a pear for her while she sorts out her crayons:  
“Jamison thought I took his banana, but he’s gross.”  
I sketch a man bit by a dead bee  
And pass it to her to color in.  
“Enjoy being young. College stinks.”

Her 20-something soul leans coldly in the doorway;  
The child looks up, then back to scribbling faster.  
I beg pardon of my princess companion and leave.



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LAMP is a literary journal that provides an artistic outlet for observant artists who recognize value in the world because of the creative, sustaining, and redemptive work of Jesus Christ. Because of this mission, we publish poetry and prose that, 1) demonstrates a high level of artistic achievement, and 2) recognizes aspects of the goodness of creation, the truth of our fallenness, and the beauty of redemption.





