

The Fieldstone Review

Issue 15

REVERSALS



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About The Fieldstone Review

The Fieldstone Review is an annual literary journal published digitally by graduate students in the English department at the University of Saskatchewan.

Established in 2006, the FSR has published poetry, fiction, creative nonfiction, and literary reviews by authors from Canada and abroad.

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Letter from the Editors-in-Chief

The end of summer demands to be noticed. From morning to evening, all September we feel it: a restlessness in the wind and the trees and the earth itself. It is a shift that comes yearly, and still sometimes we can scarcely bear it. But what about those moments in life when change comes without precedent or warning—a volta startling our consciousness? How do we react? How do we find meaning in the fallout?

The 2023 issue of *The Fieldstone Review* is preoccupied with twists, turns, and **reversals**. It features the thoughtful, empathetic reflections of a jail librarian in the essay “Hey Book Lady” by Kasey Butcher Santana, as well as the bold and vibrant reflections of a Ukrainian American in the poem “Ode to a Man Who Will Not Date Me Because I Do Not Look Like an American Supermodel” by Nicole Yurcaba—winner of this year’s best submission! We are very excited about all of the pieces collected here from talented writers all over the country and abroad, and it is our hope that among them you may stumble upon a character, an image, or a single line that strikes you as both true and surprising.

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Fiction
EICFION

Perfect Pears

Susanne Rubenstein

Nina contemplates suicide only when she is happy. She realizes this is not normal, but it is, she is sure, rational. Nina trusts in impermanence. Melancholy, she knows, must lift. Such is the nature of the human condition that you can only plummet so far before you have to rise. So too, Nina believes, is the case with happiness—but in reverse. No matter how blissful you are at any moment, something is bound to send you spiraling. That is why Nina considers ending it all whenever joy threatens to overwhelm her. Fortunately, Nina is rarely happy.

His name is Eric. He is thin and blonde and knows all the verses to *America the Beautiful*. He is gay. Nina learns this fact, one she has tried not to suspect, in a smoky bar on Thanksgiving night three months after they begin dating. As Eric orders his third scotch from a hefty bartender with warm brown eyes, he turns to Nina.

"Nina," he says, "I have not been honest with you. I am, to be frank, more attracted to him—" he gestures to the beefy bartender, arm raised pouring thin streams of scotch, "than I am to you. I'm sorry." He runs his hand through the blonde hair at the nape of this neck. "Do you still love me?"

Nina does.

So Nina's life is temporarily out of danger. She agrees, however, over coffee in Stomping Grounds with her best friend Melanie that this situation sorely tests her beliefs.

"It's not likely," she says, tracing a crack in the cup, "that Eric will change."

"Obviously," Melanie says, rolling her eyes. "But that's not the point. The point is, *you* can change. You can find someone else."

"I could," says Nina.

"You must," says Melanie.

But Nina also believes in compromise.

"Eric," she says on a Saturday night in December, watching him cook shrimp in a new copper pan, "I'm glad we're still seeing each other. No one cooks scampi like you."

He flips a shrimp gracefully, and it skitters in the pan with a little burst of hot oil. "Ahh, so that's the attraction?"

"Of course," she says. "What else could it be?"

In February, Nina is quite sure Eric has a lover. He has new recipes, new playlists, and a new striped sweater.

"Are you seeing someone?" she asks.

"Other than you?" Eric is always charming.

"Other than me."

"Well, Nina." He tugs thoughtfully at the hair which has grown to form a short ponytail above his collar. "Shall I be honest?"

Nina considers this for a moment. Oddly, it does not seem to matter.

"No, I'm not." He sighs deeply. "But I'm looking." He smiles, sadly she thinks. "Does that bother you?"

In April they plan a trip to Italy. Melanie, who has been disapproving of this relationship since that afternoon over coffee, looks for once quite pleased.

"Wonderful," she says. "Italian men are gorgeous."

"I know," says Nina dispiritedly. "I know."

And they are. The men Nina and Eric see as they stroll along the Ponte Vecchio are stunning, and, Nina notes with smug satisfaction, they gaze back at her, not him. In line at the Uffizi, one presses close against her in a movement hot with insinuation, and though her instinct is to sidestep quickly, she does not. Instead, she whispers to Eric about the incident as they stand before the Birth of Venus. His face takes on a look she has not seen and cannot quite decipher.

"Let's go back," he says, turning away from the painting. He gestures vaguely in the direction of the pleasant pensione where they are staying. "I need a nap."

It's stuffy in their room. Eric strips to his boxers and stretches out in a wide spread-eagle on the starched white sheets that smell lightly of lemon. There is no room in the bed for her—the irony is not lost on her—and so she reaches for the straw hat she has tossed on the bureau and announces, "I don't feel like napping after all. I think I'll roam around a bit."

He sits up. She pauses, leaning against the door.

"Well, suit yourself," he says. "But it's going to be hot out there."

"I know," she says smiling. "I love it."

In fact, she is nervous once she's out on the streets of Florence alone. She is Nina, after all, and though for these five days in Italy she has found herself behaving with a boldness and aplomb she does not recognize, she understands that it's all in response to Eric, that without him there, rankling with the attention Nina is attracting, she is simply herself, a person comfortable with despondence. Eric has, she realizes, become her straight man—and her mouth twitches as she imagines what Melanie would do with that. With this insight and all it implies, it occurs to her that she may be teetering dangerously on the edge of happiness. The thought makes her

slightly dizzy, and so she finds a seat in the closest cafe and orders an aqua minerale. The waiter, perhaps purposely misunderstanding, brings instead a tiny glass of anisette, and Nina, realizing that it is exactly what she wants, thanks him profusely. He leans in, presses her bare arm lightly with his cool olive fingers, and says, "Signorina, be careful please. The sun is so strong."

She looks at the white prints his fingers have made on her sun-reddened skin and knows he is right. She is burning.

She returns to the pensione with a paper sack and sore feet. Eric is sitting up writing postcards. She allows herself a second to wonder to whom they are addressed.

"How was your walk?" He smiles amiably.

"Good," she says, "but my feet hurt." She sits on the edge of the bed and eases her shoes off, grimacing slightly.

"It's the heat," he says. "It makes your feet swell. You need to elevate them during the day." He flexes his slender toes and surveys them admiringly.

"Mmm, I guess. But look what I bought. It's worth tired feet." She reaches for the bag and from a froth of tissue paper pulls a pitcher of deep sea green. It is delicately made with a slender sculptured handle from which all its color seems to whirl and blend.

He gazes at it, and she can feel his need to hold it. Eric is a lover of pottery, and this is a prize. She knows he's waiting for her to put it in his hands. He watches as she runs her fingers down its curved sides. Then something dark crosses his face and he draws back. Although she is fighting the urge to hand it to him, to make it a gift to him, she instead lovingly wraps the tissue around the piece and gently places it back in the bag. "It's a present," she says. "For me." And,

she tells herself, she would regret this stab of cruelty but for her solid certainty that he doesn't have a clue as to what she means.

They eat that evening in a small family restaurant on the via del Proconsolo. The elderly waiter, stiff and serious in his white jacket, is almost grim until, in stumbling Italian snatched from the phrase book in her lap, Nina praises the calamari. Then he beams at her, and for the rest of the meal he is attentive only to the signorina's needs. With their espresso, he brings her a plate of perfect green pears and a large slice of bel paese. "With compliments," he says adding a small flourish, and he retreats to the kitchen.

Eric reaches for a pear. "He likes you, " he says, sounding slightly bewildered, and Nina, pleased by the waiter's attention and a bit drunk on wine, laughs.

"Most people do," she says.

He stops slicing the pear and looks at her. She wonders which of them is more surprised by her statement.

Eric puts down the knife. He seems to have lost interest in the pear. "Anyway, " he says, "are you having a good time?"

A good time? Is this wild blur of sensation—both physical and emotional—indicative of a good time? Is the heat she feels both inside her skin and out the product of pleasure? Is she dizzy with delight or with the demands of being someone different? She fingers her wine glass and considers. It seems important to tell the truth. "Well—" she begins.

"Waiter, the check, per favore." Eric reaches out as if to grab the man by his white sleeve. The waiter looks at Nina. She knows Eric has caught the look. She nods almost imperceptibly, and he hurries off to write the bill. Eric's lips look pinched but he manages to smile. "Let's walk a bit," he says. "I'm not at all tired."

Their walk takes them down a narrow street of antique shops, the windows crammed with candlesticks and china, old photographs, leather bound books, and an array of bracelets and baubles.

"Funny," Nina says musingly as she peers through the glass. "All this stuff. It could be junk—or maybe treasure. I guess you make it what you want." Instinctively she starts to climb the steps into the store. Eric is behind her, but she hears him mutter, "Junk."

She leaves him staring moodily out the window while she wanders through the shop. It smells of dust and dampness and loss, but there is something in its sadness that is comforting to Nina. She spins once on a wobbly piano stool. She plops a huge feathery hat onto her head and admires her reflection in a tall chevalier mirror. She is beginning to rummage through a basket holding odd pieces of tarnished silver when she hears Eric's laugh. It occurs to Nina that she hasn't heard that sound for days. She moves toward it.

Eric is smiling at a muscular young man with thick dark hair that flops in his eyes. The man is stumbling over English words, but Nina catches something about the square and midnight. She reaches Eric and touches his elbow lightly.

"Nina," he says brightly. "Look." He points to a pair of fragile green wine glasses that sit alone high on a tilting shelf above him. "I want those." The young man hurries to pull a step ladder over to them, and then, like a cat, he gracefully leaps up. Three steps up he stops, his firm ass right at eye level with Eric. "These, signor?" he says pointing, though clearly there is nothing else there to choose from.

Eric nods, but his eyes are fixed on the man's butt. Nimble then the young man descends the ladder, the two glasses in his hands. He blows gently on them, his lips pointed in Eric's

direction, and a small cloud of dust floats about Eric's eyes. He bats at it playfully and chuckles in a way that Nina has never heard. He takes the glasses from the man's hands.

"Exactly what I want," he says. He turns to Nina. "Is there anything here for you?"

She shakes her head dumbly, and the young man disappears into a back room to wrap the glasses. Eric's eyes follow him.

Nina leans against the counter. "Well," she says, hoping her voice will not tremble, "I never knew you were quite so taken by things."

He starts, as if surprised that she's still there. He flicks at a cobweb in the space between them. "Ah, Nina," he says, "there's a lot you don't know about me." He laughs. "Seriously though, don't you think that when you find exactly what you want, you take it? And until then you just make do?"

The young man reappears with a package wrapped in stiff brown paper held by string. There is an exchange of money and the murmur of voices. Eric takes the package and holds out his hand. The young man takes his hand and shakes it, and Nina sees a look pass between them.

Eric is already out of the shop when she begins to move. The young man smiles at her. "Buona notte, signorina," he says, holding the door open for her. She nods and starts to slip past him. Suddenly she feels a swift firm pinch. She whirls around. He is laughing. "Scusi," he says, "but you are so beautiful. Please, you come again." He leans in. "Or tonight a drink?"

She stares at him for a moment and then pushes herself from the shop. She hears the door close behind her. On the top step she stops, watching Eric who stands on the sidewalk below her, the package held tightly in his arms. He looks extraordinarily happy, and Nina feels her eyes fill with tears.

War Wounds

Mary Holscher

When he pressed the inside of her thigh with his strong fingers, she winced. “Ow, that’s sore.”

Annie gave her husband an apologetic smile. “It’s so tight.” She wiggled her head into the couch pillow, seeking a more comfortable position, and willed herself to relax.

“You’re not kidding,” Jack said. He grabbed one of her hands and pushed her fingers into her taut thigh muscle. “Feel that—it’s got no give at all.”

Annie looked out the open window near her head. Late June and she could still hear the rain drip from the downspout. The grass in the front yard was gangly as spider legs. The rigid cords appalled her, even though her thighs looked soft. “My osteopath says it’s because I collapse my ankles. You know, so the thighs do all the work, instead of the knees doing what they’re supposed to.” As she spoke, her hand shaded her eyes from the lamp. “But I think of it as an old war wound,” she added, with a short laugh.

Sometimes it seemed like that, even after the eighteen years she and Jack had been married. She hated the way she jerked and tightened when he touched her, as if he were a stranger or, worse yet, an enemy.

A car door slammed on their narrow street and it made her think of Mickey. He had been on her mind off and on for hours since she’d seen the note in her son’s big scrawl when she got home from work. “Mom—a guy named Mickey called. He’ll call back.” How strange to think that neither of her sons had ever met him.

Decades ago, a couple of months after he got out of the army, she and Mickey had parked behind St. Mark’s to look at Seattle’s lights shimmering on Lake Union. A firecracker had blasted nearby, and Mickey lunged out of the car. Right in the middle of kissing her. He lit out

across the parking lot, howling obscenities. When he got back in, he trembled, even his voice, and he grabbed tufts of his hair and pulled it in a way that looked like it hurt. He didn't want to kiss her any longer. She identified that moment as when she realized he was never going to be the old Mickey. Now she wondered if he ever got over being so edgy. Not if he's anything like me, she thought.

“Just keep massaging—it feels so good. Maybe I'll relax in a minute,” she murmured. She hated to discourage Jack when his voice was already husky and tender. She'd noticed before she lay down to read that he had set the coconut oil in a pan of water, ready to warm it. She reached out and rubbed his closely-shaven cheek with the back of her hand. He grinned, his blue eyes crinkling, and kissed her hand.

She looked again out the window. The rain kept coming in endless, uneven sheets. She could barely see the hose through the tall grass. The roses on her Abraham Darby sagged, puffy and rain-spotted. The damp breeze carried their scent, faint and beautiful, into the living room. Maybe if he took his time and moved slowly enough, she could eventually get into it.

“I love you,” she said, stroking the back of his hand with one finger. Jack flashed a shy smile. She closed her eyes and vowed that this time she would be in the present moment, here with her beloved husband, thighs open and relaxed. She drifted out the window. Apricot rose petals littered the grass in the south corner of their yard. Pigeons on the roof next door roo-cooed, paused, settled. She craned her head to catch a glimpse of fuchsias dangling from the basket under the willow. Across the street, the golden retriever barked.

“God, I'm so sleepy. If we don't go to bed pretty soon, I won't have the energy to climb the stairs.” She yawned and smiled.

He pushed her legs off his lap and stood up, his knees creaking. He stooped down and kissed her on the lips, careful not to intrude inside her mouth with his tongue. "I'll go check on Max and Leo and make sure they've shut their lights out," he said. She sighed, pulled herself off the couch, and walked slowly to the bathroom to brush her teeth.

She studied her young face in the mirror. Had Mickey been able to tell by looking at her that she was a virgin? What if she walked back into the bedroom to find he'd taken off his clothes? She wanted to be on the other side, already old and experienced. She moved closer to the mirror and explored the pimple on the side of her nose with her finger. She grabbed her brush out of her purse and brushed her hair with fierce strokes. He must be waiting for her to come out. She pulled down her jeans and sat on the toilet, hoping the sound of her pee was inaudible through the door. A spider moseyed across the blue-tiled floor, raising each leg delicately. A fly buzzed and skittered along the window screen.

The name Mickey didn't suit him. His name should be John or Tom, a one-syllable name. He was built plain, like a fireplug, with big square teeth and reddish hair cut short like a schoolboy's. Earlier, at the barbecue, she overheard him joke he kept it short so when he enlisted they'd have one less thing to do to him.

She zipped up her pants, opened the door, and walked down the narrow hallway to the bedroom. Mickey was still mostly dressed, thank God, although he had taken off his shirt, and the way his jeans bunched up tight it looked like he might already have an erection. Had he been touching himself while she was in the bathroom? Maybe a penis gets hard all by itself? She

wished she knew him well enough to ask. Outside the window, a chipmunk caught her attention. It skittered across the bedroom deck, onto the picnic table, and stared into the window.

She walked across the small room and sat on the edge of the bed, smoothing the quilt, not sure whether she should lie down next to him. She noticed his freckled arms and his sturdy hands, as he patted his stomach like a tom-tom.

“C’mon, Annie, I’m not gonna bite,” he teased. “I’m a nice guy. No one’s gonna bother us here.” A distant dog yipped, staccato and frantic.

Annie laughed and lay down, her knees propped up and hugged together. Another dog trumpeted. The two barks wove a fractured duet.

“My aunt’s gone with my mom to visit my grandma this weekend.” He reached out to stroke her hair off her forehead. “She doesn’t mind if I come here to hang out.”

Annie felt reassured that he had a mother, a grandmother, an aunt. He did seem nice, but she had never been alone before with someone she’d just met. She didn’t know what made her so brave this time. At the barbecue, after they’d danced for an hour, after he’d shown her how to dance slow the way he liked, the front of his thigh pressing close, he whispered in her ear, “You want to drive out to my aunt’s cabin and maybe go for a swim in Lake Sammamish?” And she had said, her voice so casual it sounded like a stranger’s, “Sure. Let me tell my friend I don’t need a ride back to the dorm.”

Abruptly now, as if reading her thoughts, Mickey jumped up off the bed and shouted, “Let’s go swimming!”

The dogs had finally quieted down. Didn’t he want to kiss her? She didn’t want him to know she was disappointed. “Sounds great!”

He leaned to kiss her, his tongue exploring her teeth and tongue. “Don’t worry, Annie, I’ll keep you plenty warm out there.” She giggled and felt herself blush. God, why did she still blush? Should she ask if they were going skinny-dipping or just follow his lead? In the movies, no one ever stumbled around like an idiot.

She followed him outside and across the empty road to the lake. The chipmunk stood guard on a large rock. When Mickey got out on the dock he unzipped his jeans and stepped out of them. He had tiny jockeys. Suddenly she didn’t want to be careful and good anymore. She wanted to run up to him and put her hand on him, let all hell break loose.

Instead, she drew her t-shirt over her head, unhooked her bra, slid out of her jeans, and dove into the black lake. The chilly water pearly over her skin and she felt a thrill of release. Something set the dogs off again and their clamour spilled out over the lake. She heard a splash, and he swam toward her, then dove until he caught her feet and tugged her to him. She held her breath and went under, her long brown hair swirling. When she came up, sputtering, laughing, he kissed her again and pulled her close. His tongue explored the edge of her ear and his hand tugged at her underwear, dragging them down and off. She helped by lifting each of her feet, her hands fluttering on his back like wings. *Let’s fly*, she thought, *let’s fly*.

She barely looked in the mirror anymore, her eyes now used to an unfocused flick across it. It took her son, Max, who was fourteen, ten minutes to brush his teeth. He kept pausing to gaze at himself in the mirror. It caught Annie by surprise to find out boys primed so much. It would have been a good thing to know, a comfort, when she was a teenager. She could barely

remember what it felt like to lose herself in the mirror, her voice nearly crowing, *Lookin' good. Lookin' good.*

She heard the uneven hum of the little heater starting up. Jack always hauled it down from the attic and plugged it in when they made love. Their bedroom was the coldest room in the house, since they kept the heat vent closed most of the time. They both liked to sleep with the window open and mounds of blankets.

She knew she was stalling. The rain had turned to drizzle, so soft she could barely hear it. The pigeons rustled and quieted. A car engine revved and the retriever barked again.

Mickey's scrawny black mutt had barked like crazy the night before Mickey left for Vietnam. Spike barked as if he knew something terrible was about to happen. Annie had to get away from the goodbye party and that bark. She sat in the corner of the crowded studio apartment and wrapped a faded Indian bedspread around her like a shawl. She kept her eyes on Mickey, who was chugging one beer after another. Spike stood in the middle of the room and yapped. Annie wanted to cover her ears and her eyes, anything to make this whole scene go away. How could Mickey have been so stupid and enlisted, for God's sake, just because he was sick of community college?

Right after basic training, he had his orders for Vietnam. "What about me?" she had wanted to scream at him. "You can't leave your girlfriend and get yourself killed!" But she wanted to be supportive, to trust him. That's how he said it when he told her: *Trust me. I know what I'm doing.*

Annie stood up and squeezed past a couple of stoned guys she barely knew. She wished pot didn't make her so sleepy or she would get high too. Shit, she'd consider shooting heroin if it would make her forget that Mickey, who she'd been with nearly every day for two years, was getting on a plane in the morning and flying to hell. She opened the door to go down the hall to the bathroom and grabbed a cooler stuffed with beers on the way. She wanted to drink fast and alone and come back into the party and not be miserable.

She closed the door to the bathroom and sat down on the toilet seat, lifted the cover off the cooler and pulled out an Oly. She could hear the damn dog all the way in here. She drank as fast as she could. She shut her eyes and found herself praying, *dear God, keep him safe—he's only a boy!* She felt dizzy, opened her eyes, and hauled out another beer. She sat until someone knocked on the door, then gulped the dregs of her beer, and returned to the crowded little room, to friends singing and shouting and teasing. She shoved past frantic Spike and snuggled herself next to Mickey. Pretended this was *bon voyage*, not a wake.

The telephone rang and startled Annie. *Oh no, it must be him.* As she washed her hands, she heard Jack pick it up in the dining room. A minute later, he knocked on the door. "Honey, it's for you." His voice sounded grumpy, but maybe she was reading into it.

"Okay, thanks. I'll be right out." She took several deep breaths and opened the bathroom door, took the phone from Jack. "Hi, this is Annie," she said, disliking the way her voice rose at the end like she was asking a question.

"Hey, girl, how's your perfect life in suburbia?" He paused. "It's me, Mickey. I got your number from Deb. I'm back in town for a while."

Her breath caught, her cheeks felt hot. Jack was looking at her and she turned and walked away. “Mickey.” She couldn’t think of what else to say. The neighbour’s dog yowled.

“It’s been a long time, Annie. Damn, at least ten years!”

She knew exactly when she’d last seen him: 1986. Max was three and a half and Leo had just turned two. They made a plan to meet at a cafe called Surrogate Hostess. “What kind of fuckin’ name is that?” he had said. After an awkward hug, they sat down and she realized the place was too fancy. Mickey was in his raggedy Levi’s and black t-shirt—reddish fuzz still softened his strong chin, as if he hadn’t changed in eleven years.

“Do you ever smoke a little pot for old time’s sake, Annie,” he had asked. She shook her head. She couldn’t remember when she had last smoked a joint or even been in a room where someone else was smoking a joint. She hated how he kept looking at her as if he were trying to figure out how she got so *straight*. Even having a beer now and then seemed adventurous for her these days, after the long hiatus nursing her two babies.

“No, that feels like another life,” she had said, and watched something behind his eyes shutter.

She squeezed the phone handle, forced herself back to the present. “Don’t you remember? I only had a babysitter for a couple of hours. You were just...” She let the sentence trail off. It felt rude to mention he was just out of prison, especially when she didn’t have any idea what he’d been up to all these years since. She felt dizzy thinking of the way the decades leap-frogged over each other, and now she was old, and he was too. Both close to fifty. The silence between them stretched out.

“Oh yeah,” he finally said, “you were Little Miss Mommy and had to run off before we even had a chance to catch up. You hugged me like you were afraid. Like maybe I forgot how to shower in the joint.”

“Oh, Mickey,” she laughed, “you always did know how to make me feel like shit.” The last word slipped out and felt good. She had stopped swearing when the kids were little and never got back into the habit. “So, what’s up?” she said cautiously.

She remembered too well what it was like after he got back. She was always asking him questions, always trying to figure him out. He would start yelling it was his fucking business what he did and who he was with and leave him the hell alone. He had only hurt her a couple of times, but that was all she needed to be afraid of him.

“I’d like to see you...coffee maybe? We can meet at your favourite yuppie hangout again. I promise I’ll put on something spiffier this time.”

So he did remember.

“I need to go, Mickey.” She could feel her husband breathing in the living room. He hadn’t gone into the bedroom but was still sitting by the fireplace with his eyes closed. Waiting. She felt a jolt of anger toward Jack and she knew he didn’t deserve it.

“Okay,” Mickey said. “I’ll try again sometime.”

She hung up, her chest hurting. She walked out to the darkening living room.

“Hey, Jack, are you ready for bed?”

He nodded, hauled himself up, and looked out the window. “Thank God it finally stopped raining. I’m not sure if the sump pump is working.” He headed toward the bedroom and then veered toward the kitchen. “I almost forgot the coconut oil. I’ll be right in.”

As Jack rubbed her back, the damn dog started again, a short repetitive bark. The racket made her think of Mickey, how he was when he first came home from Vietnam and they were living together. They tried to get things back to normal. In the early months, he was mostly cheerful. He got a job at Pike Place Market; he loved selling vegetables surrounded by all that bustle and every kind of person you could imagine. He had introduced her to his friends there: the old guy who sat on a rickety stool on the corner and played his guitar for hours, his voice as smooth as Otis Redding's and the small Filipina in the stall next door. When he came home to their apartment, he wanted to loaf, have a few beers, smoke some weed, hang out with his buddies from before the Army. He smiled when she nestled into him and asked for a sip of his beer, a toke off his joint. When she insisted anything more would make her fall asleep, he snorted, called her a lightweight, and kissed her on the nose.

But when they went to bed, no matter how late, he got restless. He almost always wanted to make love but came to it with such a fierce absorption that she felt invisible. He sometimes hammered into her so hard it was painful, but when she asked him to be gentler, he didn't seem to hear her. Later, he sat up and smoked cigarettes, one after the other. The hair he was growing out fell like red rags over his face. When he finally lay down, the shifting and turning of his sturdy body would keep her awake. He cried, threw off his covers, thrashed and sobbed, still asleep.

Over time, the nightmares lessened in frequency, but by then he was often in a foul mood, every sentence filled with *fuck* and complaint. He stayed out all hours, got secretive. Yelled, "You don't own me, you fuckin' nosy bitch." Nothing she did pleased him. He drank way too much. One time she worried out loud about how much he'd drunk that night and he threw a full glass of whiskey at the wall. "Quit bossing me around! Look what you made me

do!” She worried that he was using something stronger than marijuana but knew by then not to say anything.

In the dark bedroom, Annie rolled over. She could only see the outline of Jack’s face.

“I’m sorry—”

“Don’t,” he murmured, his hand on her shoulder. “Just relax and don’t think about a thing.”

Nonfiction
MONOFUNCTION

Hey, Book Lady

Kasey Butcher Santana, PhD

My first request in county jail was for a book about dinosaurs. Due to my earnest nature, I started looking for one of the popular DK Eyewitness books without a second thought. “Cuz I’m gonna rip out all the pages,” the young inmate said. I froze mid-search. The team lead laughed and instructed him to go away. My first inmate interaction was during library services in a Colorado county jail; I was fair game until proven otherwise. The inmate worker assigned to the library stepped closer to the other inmate. Both were dressed in vibrant outfits: yellow for workers and the rest in orange. “Man, leave her alone,” he said. Afterward, he told me one of the weirdest and kindest things I have encountered: “We’re going to help you be the best librarian you can be.”

When I started working in the jail library in 2016, the incarcerated made a game out of messing with me—especially the men. I tried to respond by asserting myself as someone fair but firm. My training emphasized there are three demeanors a person working in corrections can adopt: hard, soft, or mellow. Acting hard, taking an aggressive stance, never joking, and vigilantly enforcing even the smallest rules, can come across as compensating for weakness. Instead of respecting you, people might want to give you a hard time. Bending the rules, playing favorites, and not enforcing boundaries characterize soft people—prime targets for potentially dangerous manipulation. A mellow person sets boundaries, but can joke, and enforces rules, but reasonably and fairly. A mellow person exudes confidence, projecting that they can hold the line *and* get along. I tried to be mellow, but I was new and testing me could provide entertainment.

Before the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 changed everything in my final year, once a week we rolled four long metal carts of books down to each housing unit (called a pod), and set up a library on wheels, organized by subject or genre. With the carts between the inmates and us, a

librarian or an inmate worker stood at each cart, assisting with checkouts or helping people find books. Each pod consisted of six dayrooms split into two tiers of cells. Each cell held up to four people, so every dayroom housed thirty to sixty individuals. We rotated through each dayroom, running a quick book cart service of about fifteen minutes per tier. On our team of six, each person served as lead librarian for one pod, in charge of running book cart services, handing out requested books, and chasing down overdue ones, while also keeping an eye on the team working with her. A deputy or two stood with us for security. In the United States, jails hold people who are in pre-trial detention or serving shorter sentences. The specifics can vary by jurisdiction, but in general, jail sentences are a year or less. Unlike prisons, which have a standard level of security for the whole facility, jails contain both maximum- and minimum-security sections, and inmates generally have fewer privileges and freedoms, which make library services an especially valued source of information and entertainment.

The first time I led library services, I took one step with my cart into a maximum-security dayroom before a chorus of wolf whistles howled from behind locked cell doors. “We’re done,” I said before wheeling right back out.

I surprised myself because I am a people-pleaser at heart. I felt a surge of second-hand disappointment from depriving those forty men of book cart service for a whole week, but I knew if I did not react swiftly and clearly, harassing me would become a game in that dayroom. I set the boundary and held it.

On the outside, getting catcalled had always made me feel vulnerable, like no matter how I responded, whether I ignored the caller or told them off, I risked bodily harm. In jail, I was always watched by central command or escorted by deputies. If I responded appropriately, I was

safe. Ignoring the problem felt much riskier. For the first time, I felt empowered to shut that garbage down.

When I led the carts into that dayroom the next week, a single whistle came from one of the locked cells. I hesitated before shaking my head like a stage whisper and leaving. This time, however, we went back, saving that group for last, letting them think we skipped them for another week. For the rest of the time I worked in that pod, I never had a problem with that group, aside from when one of them tried to steal *Hamilton*.

The following year, I took over as librarian for a maximum-security pod the deputies called: The Thunderdome. Not long after, I knew I preferred maximum-security sections. In my experience, the minimum-security dayrooms, serving their shorter sentences in county lockup, were higher maintenance and worse about following rules. The maximum-security inmates, awaiting trial or sentencing before going to prison or back for a court date, already knew how to serve time. Thunderdome's inmates may not have always followed the rules, but they were usually respectful to staff and understood how things worked in jail. Providing library services in The Thunderdome felt like barely controlled chaos, but talking about books with such big personalities felt rewarding.

After three years, I developed an easy rapport with many of the people who came to my book cart. Between how slowly cases move through the court system and inmate's realities leading to recidivism, their faces grew familiar—I knew what they liked to read. I enjoyed surprising them with new releases when I could, and they delivered their reviews each week. I treated them with respect, and it was returned. In corrections settings, the norm is to address each other by titles and last names. I respected the inmates by using Mister or Miss, and they

addressed me in kind. Occasionally, however, an inmate who did not know my name might get my attention from across a noisy pod, "Hey, Book Lady!" As much as one can in jail, I felt safe, but I was always aware of my surroundings, scanning for signs that a situation was about to sour. Of course, fights broke out. At times, seemingly out of nowhere, inmates snapped. If you knew what to look for, you could see problems coming—sometimes.

Often, inmates would ask for something we did not have on hand during their library time, and we asked them to "send a kite" (a request to our department on the electronic kiosk system). Technically, all requests between inmates and civilian staff were supposed to go through the kiosk (which added a layer of security), putting an implied barrier between us and inappropriate requests. Like in Foucault's Panopticon, someone up the chain of command could be reading the kites, albeit unlikely.

Kites were rarely boring, like when I opened one to: "How many ears have been in human existence?" Other times, random information requests came through, trying to get the librarian to settle a bet: "Was Brooke Shields the Gerber baby?" Then, I opened one that said: "Fuck you, Satan." Previously, that man—let's call him Mr. Surly—requested a visit from the cute librarian with glasses (me). I explained that the library does not make special visits. My response earned me a volley of hate mail. He was housed in Administrative Segregation (AdSeg), a lonely dayroom of single-occupancy cells for people who could not be assigned elsewhere because they allegedly posed a danger to themselves or others—it was a bad place. Thoroughly creeped out, I moved on, keeping the kites as a paper trail, just in case things got worse. Later, the man in the cell next to Mr. Surly needed to ask questions about legal materials and copying documents. I was not supposed to enter AdSeg, but, unsettled as I felt about Mr. Surly's kites, the deputies had not thought they were an issue. I did not want to make a fuss.

With two deputies escorting me, I crossed the eerily quiet dayroom with my little red cart of legal books. As I talked to the neighbor, Mr. Surly pressed his whole body against his cell window, staring at me. Prickles crawled up the back of my neck. One of the deputies leaned on the door, crossing his arms casually, blocking the window with his shoulders. A couple of weeks later, Mr. Surly was released from jail.

With its transient cast of characters and emotionally charged atmosphere, the jail always provided new twists on old problems. Catcalls and angry kites waved obvious red flags, but potential problems were not always as clear-cut. In my last winter in the jail, a young man—for privacy reasons, I’ll call him Mr. Boyd—moved into my pod. Barely 18 years old with cheeks still full of baby fat, Mr. Boyd did not know how to act. He could not or would not send requests on the kiosk. The first time Mr. Boyd failed to send a kite, he got lucky because I remembered that he needed a GED prep book. After library services ended, I took it to the pod for him. Occasionally, I made a quick delivery if I forgot something important during book cart. Usually, the recipient understood I was bending a rule as a one-off favor. Usually, Mr. Boyd seemed to take it to mean he never had to put requests in writing.

In the following weeks, Mr. Boyd came directly to me when his group emerged for library services. Each week he had new requests: business books, legal materials, and self-help texts. “Send me a kite,” I told him. “If you send a request, I can put them on hold for you.” Sometimes, not sending written requests concealed illiteracy, but I doubted that was the case with Mr. Boyd. He always borrowed thick young adult novels. While he browsed, I often caught him staring at me.

Once, I observed my coworker plainly ask an inmate who tested her boundaries, "Why are you being weird?" Put off balance by her directness, he had just stopped misbehaving. I never felt confident enough to be so blunt, however I sensed it might have encouraged Mr. Boyd.

Not long after, Mr. Boyd started shouting my name from across the dayroom while his tier was locked down. As the other tier browsed, just under the chorus of their voices bouncing off the cinder block walls, I could hear my name, over and over. "Who keeps shouting?" I asked the deputy standing next to me.

"You're losing it today," he said dismissively. I knew who was shouting; my chest clenched. I did not want to deal with Mr. Boyd, but I sensed that if I ignored him, he would escalate further.

A couple of minutes later, my coworker asked, "Who keeps yelling your name?"

"See!" I said. The deputy shrugged.

When Mr. Boyd's tier came out, I made eye contact. "Cut it out," I said.

I was just trying to get through handing out requested books in one of my biggest, rowdiest day rooms. As I helped another person find a book on the lower shelf of the fiction cart, Mr. Boyd crouched next to me and smiled. "Thank you so much for these books. I love them," he said.

Tone of voice matters. Context matters. If he stood in front of the cart and said that, I would have smiled and said thank you. The forced intimacy of the crouching, the slightly-too-big smile, and shouting my name, taken together, triggered alarms in my gut. I stood up and thanked him while handing a book to the other man I was helping. I returned directly to my position between my coworker and the deputy.

A few days later, a stricter deputy who worked in the pod—nicknamed Deputy Swole—dropped by the library. I explained to Deputy Swole my interactions with Mr. Boyd. “Surely, he’s not just weird to me?” I asked. Mr. Boyd was just a kid, but his behavior crossed some line that was hard to identify.

Deputy Swole nodded, recognizing what I meant. “He likes to see what he can get away with. I’ll be professional, but I will bring it up to him.”

Before library services that week, Swole told me that Mr. Boyd wanted to apologize. “Oh, good,” I snarked. “I’m sure that won’t be awkward at all.”

“It’s fine,” he said. “I told him, ‘I don’t know anything about her personal life, but she has a family and she comes in here to provide services, and you can’t be making her feel weird.’”

I need apologies as much as the next person, but I quickly feel uncomfortable and sympathetic when another person feels bad, even if they should feel bad. As annoyed as I was back then, I’m not so sure anymore that Mr. Boyd should have felt bad. However, I was sure he needed to follow basic rules and boundaries to get by, not just in the system, but in life.

When Mr. Boyd approached, he could barely look me in the face. His bowed head and drooping shoulders clearly stated, “I am embarrassed.” He handed me an apology note written on a Thank You postcard included with packages people could send through the commissary. I hoped that meant that someone on the outside was caring for him. “I wasn’t trying to flirt with you or make you feel weird. I just really appreciate you and so I get excited when I see you and that is why I shouted your name when I saw you.”

My gut flipped. “Thank you so much for your apology,” I said while forcing a smile. “We’re good, and I’m so glad you liked those books. I’ll try to find you some more by that author for next week.”

He smiled, but still looked embarrassed. I felt confused. I trusted my instinct that Mr. Boyd had been purposely testing boundaries, but the sincerity of his apology subverted my expectations for how holding the boundary would go.

Even when I had a working relationship with inmates who came to library services, we never knew each other. What we saw were lives in snapshots—moments in time. Some of my favorite library patrons had committed unspeakable crimes. As one of my favorite inmate workers—who had horns tattooed on his head—announced, proud of his bad joke, “You really can’t judge a book by its cover.” When someone gave me a hard time, it was usually because they were having one, but in these quick impressions, it was easy to misread a person or situation. They made judgments of me too, and sometimes it took me years to earn their trust after I made a simple mistake.

Was Mr. Boyd trying to get under my skin? Or was he, like he said, excited and unsure how to act? I still waffle between the two. Apologizing and hearing you are forgiven is valuable. In jail, such concepts are as important as setting and holding boundaries. I also tried not to forget how at the end of my shift, I got to go home. The jail's boundaries held me, but the walls did not. If I thought I had a bad day—and there were plenty—I still got to walk out the door to my freedom. Such clarity for me counted more than any perceived transgression ever did.

The next week, I brought Mr. Boyd the books. The week after that, he was gone, taken to prison. I kept his note tucked in with the files on my desk, as a reminder to be firm, fair, but also gentle.

P
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A Prairie After

Deborah H. Doolittle

We took that pioneer spirit
with us into the field. Imagined
the Conestoga wagon ruts
we made, the creak and jiggle of wood
that followed behind us. The thump
of the sure-footed always parted
the plants that grew like trees: red top,
bluestem, gama and switchgrass.

We'd wade in over our heads, lose
sight of the farm with its cluster
of barns and hundred-year-old oaks.
Folks hereabouts still talk about
this green sea as if in the past
tense, wind-blown and driven,
at last it had been fenced in, tamed
a colt that needed to be broke.

We breathed in differently here:
gulped mouthfuls of grass-scented air,
tasted the dust of dirt that puffed
around our feet. What we could not
grasp, we stood and waited for: sunrise,
rainfall, seed pods prickling our skin,
and the urge to turn our heads at
sunset like sunflowers, facing west.

Colours of Memory

Joanne Clarkson

My friend Barbara used to say
you could find anything by unwinding
the Golden Thread: keys, glasses,
rings, documents, raisins you were sure
you bought for just this recipe. The trick
was to close your eyes and imagine
a spool. Slowly you moved from room
to room unraveling spun gold
until whatever was lost appeared.
It always worked for Barbara.
I have tried her method dozens
of times, lowering my lids, opening
my mind's sewing drawer. I see blue
thread and vermillion. Black and tan.
Lavender. Nothing gilded. And when
I take up my spool, my mundane
filaments lead past the keys I expected
to discover to a picture of a friend
who lived next door in a distant city.
To the garden where I grew
my first cantaloupe. To a day
at the shore with my children. How they
danced in all the colours of the rain.

Ode to a Man Who Will Not Date Me Because I Do Not Look Like an American Supermodel

Nicole Yurcaba

I ride horses the way my great-grandmother rode:
legs & skirt spread
kyptar & *vyshyvanka* a newly discovered star
reins in one hand other hand on hip
this sea of mountains the chorus forming
the song of myself

& my ancestors
& the stream runs cool on the horse's hooves
unlike the way your tongue roughs up
my unpronounceable name
clean-cut in my own nearly extinct language.

What's wrong with yours?

This horse's movements are mine
& mine are its & in these mountains
my voice echoes across centuries
you don't realize happened. I light
my great-grandmother's wooden pipe
as I stare into twilight's blurring pink-purple.
I straighten my back & find the brightest star
hung above my disappearing village.



**Editor's Choice
Best Submission**

Nicole has graciously donated the \$100 prize to FSR

Pastoral

Sara Krahn

just before the white sun
flashed into your bedroom
with nagging thoughts of an ending
she told you something true.
it ran down her face like a nosebleed,
like booze after a long night
while you searched her watery eyes,
hating them, holding the notebook
where she wrote curly q's
and her y's with dreamy loops.
her ballpoint pen pressed
thick and precise into those pages,
pronounced the length of distance
between her lips and your ears,
cornered
by their own confession.
just before the night turns
inside out again you find yourself
in the bath dabbing bubbles
onto your chin and listening
to a sad album. it's the eve of her birthday
and you're thinking about legal advice
while she's drunk, probably,
somewhere in the spirit,
slowly passing out on a mattress
that wasn't a gift from your parents.

you imagine how skinny she must be
now
in her solitude.
as another morning unfolds, later,
you imagine her by the window,
a sleepy silhouette against high-risen mirrors
baptized in low cobalt shadows.
they remind her of the ocean,
you can hear her saying, but you wonder
if the colour has always been closer
to wolfsbane, or her eyes,
or the blooming magnificence
of a flax field.

The End

Thom Hawkins

I canceled a trip to Madrid,
broke my leg, and slipped
on a magazine.

I went downstairs, picked up
a basket of laundry and booked
a trip to Madrid.

I broke up with a woman and did not
move a magazine my daughter
left on the steps—a magazine
the woman gave her.

I started dating again—
That's how it began.

The Little Jesus Under My Arm

Allegra Kaplan

We were learning French Canadian folk dance that year
Although I had just gotten braces and would
Often miss the first half of Éducation physique
To get them tightened or to have the elastics replaced
By the dental students at the university
I didn't mind; I dreaded holding
The slippery hands of the boys in our class
When they arranged us boy—girl—boy—girl—boy
Mostly because I'd seen one boy pull
His penis out the front of his track pants
Across the circle when we danced La Bastringue
What happened was this: a tumour
Sprouted up in my father's armpit
And he named it The Little Jesus Under My Arm
And while I was away choosing between green or
Purple elastics, our Grade Four teacher must have
Sat the class down and told them about my father's
Malignant melanoma, much in the same way our
Grade Three teacher had informed us of a classmate's
Grandmother's death after he peed on the floor
And threw a chair at another student
And The Little Jesus Under My Arm must have then been
Wrapped in a gauzy filament and tucked away in
Their minds for later consideration, much like
We'd done the year before with that boy's
Grandmother and my friend's dead lovebird
How else would my classmates have known to ask
Excitedly, every time I returned from the dentist,
Whether my 75-minute absence meant that
My father had finally died?
It was only four little brackets on my four bottom teeth, actually,
That have since shifted back to their original crooked arrangement
And as luck would have it my father died during spring break,
So I didn't have to miss any school at all.

The Old Days

Aliza Prodaniuk

Lonestar on satellite,
Bonanza, Lawman, Maverick.
Flickering lights, white and grey
apparitions, wavering between
this world and the next.
Memories, horses galloping.

I wash my mouth with soap when you speak.
"Like a trucker," you say.
Afraid the apple
doesn't fall far from the tree.
Your words, my fears congealed between lips.
I spit clear saliva into your spittoon,
jiggle the bucket until it mixes with
brown phlegm.

I pocket shiny shells in the alley
between trailers, wonder
how they got there.
You walk me to town.
Old wooden storefronts, new shops,
same Chinese restaurant.

"Been there since the railway."

Suburb planted in the field
where you used to point at the barbwire fence and say,
"I built that the summer I was sixteen."
Told me the hiking trail
was a road used by stagecoaches,
bandits in the hills, from when "men could be men."
Clear-cut conflict-resolutions,
no assault charges.

Always the old days.
Old Ford, no seat belt.
Sitting in the cargo bed, feeling afraid
and alive.
Illegal shotgun I threw in the creek
after I found it loaded. Staring down the barrel at live rounds.
Wonder if they were meant for you, or me.

Was the Water Cold?

Donna Faulkner

The old wharf's bones
 creaked beneath bluish skies.
Running the plank
 we leap
 for the Sun
 mid-air,
fervor *stretching*
like worn elastic.
Mountains stand vigil.
We each take turns
 tumbling
the lake's embrace.
 A ripple effect.
 Goosebumps exhilarate,
our laughing heads
bob the lake.

*In winter, we forget
our goosebumps.*

Under the mountains' gaze
an old wharf waits
 for bluish skies.
The lake smoothes its wrinkles.
Its cold embrace
 makes space,
but we aren't there.
We aren't the same.

Contributors

FICTION

Susanne Rubenstein

Susanne Rubenstein is an English teacher and writer, living in Massachusetts. She's authored four books on teaching, including the most recent *Can We Talk? Encouraging Conversation in High School Classrooms* (NCTE 2022), and her fiction, poetry and essays have appeared in such publications as *Literal Latte*, *The MacGuffin*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, and *The Worcester Review* as well as in a number of collections.

Mary Holscher

Mary Holscher, after a happy but uneventful Catholic childhood, has enjoyed what her mother would call a "checkered" life. She has lived in Seattle, Washington for over half a century. Her first short memoir, "Unwed Mother, 1970" was anthologized in *Single Mother's Companion* (Seal Press, 1994). A retired psychologist, she is intrigued by what moments stay vividly in memory and why. This is her first published short story.

NONFICTION

Kasey Butcher Santana, PhD

Kasey Butcher Santana (she/her) is co-owner/operator of Sol Homestead, a backyard alpaca farm where she and her husband also raise chickens, bees, pumpkins, and their daughter. When not beekeeping or gardening, she loves to read mystery novels and hike. Kasey earned a Ph.D. in American literature from Miami University and has worked as an English teacher and a jail librarian. She chronicles life at the homestead on Instagram @solhomestead. You can find her at kaseybutchersantana.wordpress.com.

POETRY

Deborah H. Doolittle

Deborah H. Doolittle has lived in lots of different places, but now calls North Carolina home. A Pushcart Prize nominee, she is the author of *Floribunda* (Main Street Rag) and three chapbooks, *No Crazy Notions* (Birch Brook Press), *That Echo* (Longleaf Press), and *Bogbound* (Orchard Street Press). Some of her poems have recently appeared (or will soon appear) in *Cloudbank*, *Comstock Review*, *Kakalak*, *Iconoclast*, *Ravensperch*, *Slant*, *The Stand*, and in audio format on *The Writer's Almanac*. She shares a home with her husband, four housecats, and a backyard full of birds.

Joanne Clarkson

Joanne Clarkson's sixth poetry collection, "Hospice House," was released by MoonPath Press in January 2023. Her poems have been published in such journals as *Poetry Northwest*, *Nimrod*, *Poet Lore*, *Western Humanities Review* and *Beloit Poetry Journal*. She has received an Artist Trust Grant and an NEH grant to teach poetry in rural libraries. Clarkson has Masters Degrees in English and Library Science, has taught and worked for many years as a professional librarian. After caring for her mother through a long illness, she re-careered as a Registered Nurse working in Home Health and Hospice.

Nicole Yurcaba

Nicole Yurcaba (Ukrainian: Нікола Юрцаба–Nikola Yurtsaba) is a Ukrainian American poet and essayist. Her poems and essays have appeared in *The Atlanta Review*, *The Lindenwood Review*, *Whiskey Island*, *Raven Chronicles*, *West Trade Review*, *Appalachian Heritage*, *North of Oxford*, and many other online and print journals. Nicole holds an MFA in Writing from Lindenwood University. Nicole teaches poetry workshops for Southern New Hampshire University and is a guest book reviewer for *Sage Cigarettes*, *Tupelo Quarterly*, *Colorado Review*, and *The Southern Review of Books*.

Sara Krahn

Sara Krahn is a writer based in Winnipeg, Manitoba. She is also a classically trained pianist and a recent graduate of the MA in Arts Leadership program at Queen's University. Prior to beginning her first year of the MFA in Writing program, Sara worked for two years as the editor of *Rupert's Land News*. Her current research focuses on landscape mythologies of the Western prairies within a migratory moment and folk-art practices among Mennonite women.

Thom Hawkins

Thom Hawkins is a writer and artist based in Maryland. He has written books soliciting anecdotes from people on a particular topic (*In Name Only*, *A First Time for Anything*, *Alphabetical Orders*, *Musical Madeleines*)—as well as children's books (*The Yeti Made Me Do It*, *Baldwin*, *Two Kings*, *Claudine*)—and has co-authored several poetry books (*Thirty Placebos*; *O, DeJoy*; *Slight Refreshments*).

Allegra Kaplan

Allegra Kaplan is a queer, emerging poet based in the unceded lands of the Lekwungen-speaking peoples. She recently completed her Honours English degree at the University of Victoria, where she served as a Poetry Editor for The Warren Undergraduate Review. Her writing has appeared in The Warren Undergraduate Review, The Albatross English Undergraduate Journal, Unstamatic Magazine, KULA Journal, IDEAH Journal, and elsewhere. She is currently a poetry reader for PRISM international magazine. Find her @allegra__kaplan on Twitter.

Aliza Prodaniuk

Aliza Prodaniuk has an honours BA in English and Cultural Studies from McMaster University and a MFA in Writing from the University of Saskatchewan. She is an artist who enjoys music, painting, and writing, among other activities. She was most recently writing and exploring in Bright's Grove, Ontario, but could be elsewhere by the time you read this. Her work dabbles in crime fiction and whatever else tickles her fancy. By the time you read this, she may be a Ph.D. candidate somewhere exciting. If you want to know what Aliza is currently up to, she suggests you try Google.

Donna Faulkner

Donna Faulkner spent her childhood between countries. One foot bare and carefree in New Zealand, the other tiptoeing the coal dust and camaraderie of working class England. She lives in Rangiora, New Zealand but likes to roam.

She's published in Havik, Tarot Poetry, Fieldstone Review, East Midlands Writing, Takahē: Hua/Manu, Etherea Magazine, and others. Work forthcoming in The Typescript. You can connect with Donna on Instagram @lady_lilith_poet/ Twitter @nee_miller.

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