

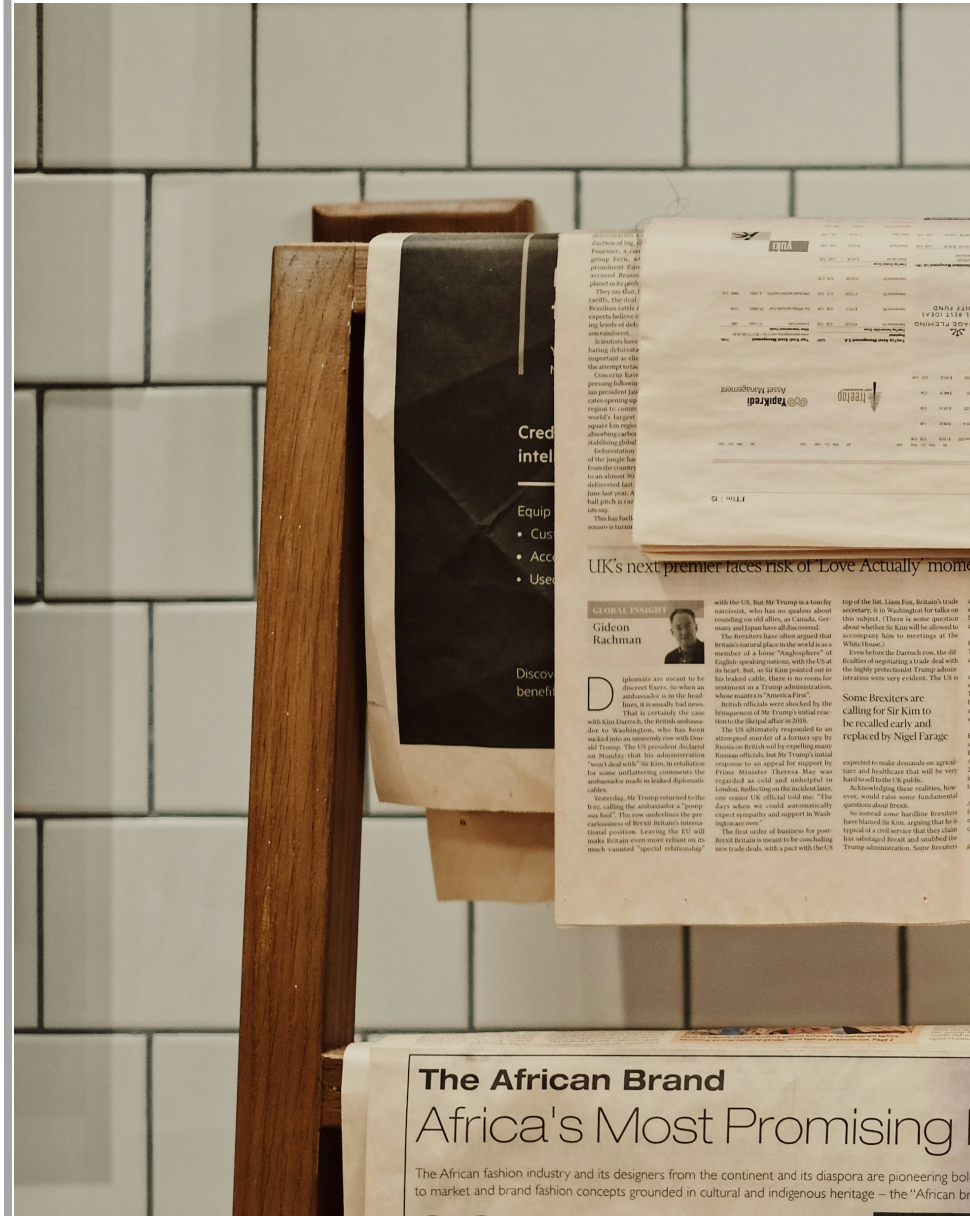
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Jennifer Browne	Tova Kranz
Peter Cashorali	Peggy Landsman
Sarah CR Clark	Susanna Lang
Chris Cottom	Daniel Lassell
Susan Coultrap-McQuin	Nissa Lee
Jo Angela Edwins	Kindra McDonald
Arvilla Fee	Matt McGee
Dagne Forrest	Jeannie Prinsen
Aimee Green	Robin Turner
Jan Hassmann	Pat Valdata
Lana Hechtman Ayers	
Hilary King	



Now Painted Pebble Lit Mag
Find us online at paintedpebblelit.com



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submission guidelines

Our submissions are open the full months of October,

- January, April and July of each year.
- We welcome work on any subject, including and beyond works celebrating reading, libraries, and books.
- New and established writers are welcome. 18 years or older, please.
- Please find our full submission guidelines on our website.

PaintedPebbleLit.com

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about us

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LFLM is a journal founded with the aim of publishing quality short form writing. Like “little” pockets of kindness which exist solely to help one another, we think small works can have a big impact. Our mission is to celebrate our wonderfully diverse world of writers and readers by reaching them wherever they are.

Each issue is published both online and as a PDF, each available for free. We hope readers like you will help bring our lit mag to any place someone might enjoy finding a bite sized read.

Share it with friends! Keep a copy for yourself! Pass it into the hands of a kindred spirit who might like it! Please visit our website if you'd like to download the free pdf to this issue to keep, print, or share.



Made to Share

contents

At the Year's First Outdoor	Sarah CR Clark	3
Farmers Market		
Derivation	Nissa Lee	4
Always in My Pockets	Hilary King	5
Commuter	Pat Valdata	6
Reprieve	Arvilla Fee	7
Tidal Spring Redux	Tova Kranz	8
Common Reed	Kindra McDonald	9
Rescue	Susanna Lang	10
The Ordinary Ones	Susan Coultrap-McQuin	12
Proverbially	Hilary King	13
The Poems You Have Yet to Write	Jo Angela Edwins	14
Gaze	Lana Hechtman Ayers	15
A Gift You Can't Refuse	Matt McGee	16
Not Carl Sandburg's Fog	Peggy Landsman	18
Domestic Gravity	Dagne Forrest	19
Pseudacris crucifer	Jennifer Browne	20
Spider Plants	Aimee Green	21
Mirror	Robin Turner	22
Naked	Dorian Kotsiopolous	23
Eventual Light	Daniel Lassell	24
buddies	Jan Hassmann	25
This world is a single green leaf,	Peter Cashorali	26
Smile	Jeannie Prinsen	27
Flight	Kristen Baum DeBeasi	28
We Put the Chickens Away Last	Jo Angela Edwins	29
Night and Couldn't Find Grace		

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Sarah CR Clark

At the Year's First Outdoor Farmers Market

Spring is exploding with asparagus
In the North, winter's menu has finally expired
Now old men dive into buckets of red rhubarb
Sun-starved and ravenous for fresh pea pods

We trade winter's northern menu for
Baskets of living mizuna, arugula, spinach
Overflowing pea pods flirt with thawing senses
I am seduced by radishes

Dizzied by deep baskets of leafy green
Piles of wild ramps tamed across table tops near
Yet more radishes
And the spring wind's whispered promises

Emerald and crimson garlicky ramps in my hand and
Women too now bury themselves in rhubarb
The rushing warm winds of
Spring and its exploding asparagus

Nissa Lee

Derivation

Less than one percent of Earth's water is potable. Drinkable. The fact leaves me thirsty, and searching the internet for water filtration systems. *Potable* comes from Old French comes from the Latin *potare*. Related to *potion* and *poison*. Ninety-nine percent of Earth's water is poison to me. Salty or swimming with bacteria. My kid has been coughing all winter. I've brewed teas and poured thick syrups onto spoons. Transformed water into eucalyptus mist. Suctioned snot and sprayed salt. *Parent* is derived from *potion maker*. I incant, *here, drink this*, as the ocean creeps closer to our door.

Jo Angela Edwins

We Put the Chickens Away Last Night and Couldn't Find Grace

--first sentence of a social media post

and we led the cows to the barn and lost all hope, and while latching the horse stalls we looked for love, but it was nowhere to be found, even in the pen where the pigs grunted sleepily no matter the absence of peace, and the geese in their usual corners settled down to rest, certain none of us would find contentment, and the donkey, who hoarded humility, suggested we were fools to search for joy, until at last we left the farmyard, humans weary and trudging slowly until we stumbled on mercy, which leapt gladly into our hands.

Kristen Baum DeBeasi

Flight

An enthusiasm
of pigeons takes to air,
wings beating a *bravi, bravi*
a *grazie* for the crumbs
cast by passing hand
of human with the eyes
to see the exultant
chorus, to witness the joy
of gathering, congregating,
murmuring, the simple
pleasure of soaring

Hilary King

Always In My Pockets

Envy slept in this morning, and I let her.
I walk through our apartment, drinking
peppermint tea, the bright scent
filling the high ceilings of our small rooms.
Later, over wine and take-out, I'll tell
Envy everything. Wait—
 Maybe I'll cook. Crepes,
because when I'm not jealous, I'm French.
Or British and brainy or still American,
but younger, taller, blonder, not
bogged down, in my pockets a stone
for everything I want but lack.

Pat Valdata

Computer

Tardy sun gilds the silver
queen while Tina sings
soft and rough. I didn't
catch enough z's, so Rise Up
Coffee comes to my rescue.

My spirits should rise up
with each sip, but I am not
morning's minion. I slip
on oversize sunglasses
against the morning's glare.

Sixteen ounces later, I still
want to doze. But the light
catches up to the coming
workday like a snooze alarm,
irritating me to wake the heck

up already. Annual cicadas
strum zee-zee-zee while
Waze's British lady voice
directs me to the E-Zed
pass lane, missing the pun.

No fun.

Jeannie Prinsen

Simile

Darting from bush to tree, the cardinal
looks like a scarlet fish swimming
through blue water, its wings a blur
of fins. Wind rustling in treetops
sometimes sounds like new rain.
For a few moments at least, dawn
can be mistaken for twilight.
Things resemble other things,
that's no surprise. But in the end,
we need to know what it is,
not what it's like – if morning's coming sooner
or later, if our lungs are filling with air
or water. We can only tell ourselves
we're laughing, not crying, for so long.

Peter Cashorali

This world is a single green leaf,

As vast as fragile,
As present as unlikely,
Growing by the side
Of one of its own roads,
Its root hid under
Our amazement,
That someone we knew
Once told us about,
That we took on faith or not
Until we saw it
First time ourselves.

Arvilla Fee

Reprieve

I sink into the sofa,
letting my arms fall
limply to each side.
Head back,
eyes closed
I breathe in the stillness,
allowing it to fill my lungs.
Upon release,
I feel the tension leave
my body,
the pressing weight
of children,
today's dinner menu,
dishes—laundry.
In that one moment,
I let it all go—
ease my shoulders
down,
tell myself
it's OK to be still,
to simply exist
in this tiny pocket
of time.

Tidal Spring Redux

The sun is high already: the sky
cloudless blue with the crisscross contrails,
the sun glints off passenger planes and C-130s.
Garden, mound of woodchips, and palm trees glow.
The moon is faint and shimmers over
a live oak branch; over the pluff mud
the moon is a shrinking wedge drawing water
back over the tidal river banks. Leaves and ripening
seed pods of argula fling themselves from
trellises. The mud and the mist and the morning all say
the same thing: you are here, now
act like it.

buddies

the average lifespan of a taste bud is ten days
yet bitterness stays
and stays
and stays

Daniel Lassell

Eventual Light

Though the dawn anticipates
blessing the shed's glossed shovel,
the packets of waiting seeds seethe,
dropped into empty pots
along the shed's exterior.

Another day and they are again
to witness the morning's warmth,
victims of procrastination.
Where is the gardener?
Drinking coffee on the porch again?
The seeds, eager for burial,
desire the crisp soil to coax them
into their realized selves.

The sunlight's boisterous arrival,
the seeds think, seems arrogant
to emblazon the morning
with cheery outlook,
droplets on the nearby grass
evaporating without sound or taste.
Droplets, they could be drinking.

Kindra McDonald

Common Reed

For a season, I spend every day
on phragmites control, carrying
a 3-gallon pack of herbicide on my back.
Sloshing through swamps in brutal
heat, this physical, thankless work
with no instant gratification, a lesson.
This is the most important labor—
what crowds out beauty never truly
goes away, all you can do is mitigate damage.
Rhizomes produce roots and offspring even if broken
from the parent plant. If left unchecked, a wall so dense
will decimate a wetland and endanger the wildlife habitat.
I build on decades of effort, the steady undoing
of damage to come, slow and necessary, I peel back
the light, see the water flow, the hard change takes more
time.

Rescue

A storm blew in as we arrived at our neighbors' door—
welcoming us, they forgot that they'd left their baby
rabbit, caged, in the garden. They'd found her burrowed
into their blanket during an outdoor concert. Now, a
small handful of wet fur clinging to me, her head was
silky between the small ears as the fur dried.

The sky was blue, then it wasn't. Trees whirled to distant
thunder. If our neighbors let this young one go tomorrow,
would she remember how to be wild? Is wildness
something her mother would have taught her, or was it
born in her?

Women in straw hats
cast lines from the river's edge
as a rabbit hops
out of my path. Old enough
to distrust my overtures.

The neighbors don't want to let the tiny creature go,
afraid the coyotes would get her. On this street, every
garden has its rabbits, eating their way through lettuce
and eggplants, even peppers. Dahlias. The occasional
weed. Coyotes don't catch them all.

Naked

After my mother-in-law lost her grip
in the bathtub, after the surgery to patch
her fractured hip, after we moved her
to the Copley nursing facility, suddenly,
she loved me. She forgot
that I was not of her village or religion,
that I breastfed her grandchildren. She'd kick
her husband out of her tiny shared room,
and announce, "Girls only!" I loved
the communal dressing room feel,
as her layers fell away
like yesterday's clothes, as she showed herself
in peeks and flashes. How her eyes would grow
when I walked in. She'd grab my hand.
She wouldn't let go.

Robin Turner

Mirror

a golden shovel after Stevie Nicks

Oh
the sound any mirror
makes. Mother's face in
my own now, the
same clouds crowd my sky
mind soft with blue grey. And what
of all my impossible hungers. My mouth is
moon-round, open, still speaking what I know of love.

Note: Line from "Landslide"

Autumn clematis
fragrant with last evening's rain.
Three stone rabbits play
among late-blooming asters,
not afraid of coyote.

Maybe the little one will grow up to feast on what we
plant. Maybe not.

Susan Coultrap-McQuin

The Ordinary Ones

Praise the Ditch Lilies' existence
the optimistic orange ones
always reaching for sun, always
adding vibrance to their place.
Praise their calm endurance
despite sneers by master gardeners
being moved by haughty towns
in search of a fancier look.
Praise their ordinary persistence
growing wherever they can
not bothered by anonymity
happy to mix with leaves and grass.
Yes, praise all ordinary resilience
of those overlooked, though in sight—
friends with bouquets for the grieving
neighbors who bloom in your life.

12

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Aimee Green

Spider Plants

In the upstairs bathroom, on the sill,
is the mother. Graceful, a spill
of green; leaves and stems
and growth. Her children,
collected by her side, pushing outwards:
limbs floundering and searching
for space to root and be.
Clinging to her sleeves, protected —
or protecting? She blooms, creates them all
for herself — an abundance — some so small
they peek
from between the strands of her, waiting;
for the day they may become her, as she did
before them.

21

LFLM

Jennifer Browne

Pseudacris crucifer

Spring Peeper

A storm starts, flashing lightning, thunder, heavy rain,
and somehow, still, I hear the chorus of peepers, think of
clouds moving over the land between us. My
grandmother said lightning was good for plants, would
carry pots out to the porch to charge their particles. I wait
for one of us to say something, flash-imagine a lightning-
strike, my grandmother in her housedress, lashed by
wind, trying-tending-loving into growth. I worry for the
tender shoots of what you're feeling, what will bloom.
Peepers time their breeding to coincide with rain or
cloudy weather, fix their eggs like seed pearls to a blade of
pond grass. Here, having heard their voices, I imagine
their eyes lit, glowing for a fraction of a second after each
white bolt-flash. In this swirl of love and fear, nurturing
and growth, even the species map is darker in the places
where *we* are, these little frogs with crosses on their
backs call out for someone. Let me move across this
distance, I hope is only ever geographic, light the
darkness with some brilliant shape.

Hilary King

Proverbially

The apple doesn't fall far from a thousand words.
A bird in the hand is thicker than water.
Beggars can't keep the doctor away.
Necessity begins with a single step.
When in Rome, before they hatch
birds of a feather spoil.
Time is mightier.

Jo Angela Edwins

The Poems You Have Yet to Write

sleep comfortably in tall
evergreens beyond your line of sight.
God-like, they are there, you know it,
but you cannot touch them, do not
always trust them, often believe
they are figments of your imagination,
which, of course, they are. Most days,
like death, they never cross your mind,
but when they do, like love, they bring you
hope—ripe, honeyed pears bathed
in sunlight on a golden plate.
On better days, you wait for them,
knowing in the vessel of your heart
that they will awaken, one by one, yes,
they will stretch and descend to you, they will
fall like unexpected kisses upon
the palms of your grateful hands.

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14

Dagne Forrest

Domestic Gravity

For such a big creature, my dog loves to go small,
loading himself gingerly into the tightest of spaces,
a sleek, furred missile. Underfoot, he'll shimmy and haul
himself over the dusty carpet. The cats' blank faces
ignored as he locks into place, slips a sigh or sigh
at the living room's stale entropy. Slowly, a hum,
barely there, encircles his barrel form. Soon enough,
he's asleep, and I push aside the cold coffee, thumb
through the dense pile of work just waiting to be read
as the room's potential energy builds right where I sit.
He flexes a black paw, shifts, unaware of how wed
my own escape missions are with his. In my schemes, it
is always the same: find a flaw in gravity's plan,
grab his collar, and we blow this popsize stand.

LFLM

19

Peggy Landsman

Not Carl Sandburg's Fog

The fog is heavy inside me today.
Imagine an elephant the size of the moon!

That's how heavy the fog.

And when it lifts and lets its feet fall
two at a time, two at a time,

the footprints that follow eclipse my mind's eyes.

Blindly, I finger the holes in the heavens
that let my thinking worlds through.

Oh for a peanut! Oh for a tent!
An elephant driver next door!

Lana Hechtman Ayers

Gaze

a haibun

When the moon rises above the horizon, casts its
pearlescent glow, no one complains that its light is
second-hand.

every face
you meet
your own

A Gift You Can't Refuse

The fog always settles over the street this time of night, just after 2:30 am. The neighborhood is asleep. Most won't notice the little red Ford putter down the street, whining in a voice only a manual transmission can speak. The car is almost polite in its movement, gliding along damp pavement, its headlights cutting the fog, seeking the little mounted box on a pole.

Most drivers for hire go straight home after the bars have closed and the last drunken reveler has weaved to their front door, keyed a lock, and put another night behind them. Their last sight is the little red car that delivered them, departing with finality.

Most passers-by don't see the box on the pole. The driver rolls up to the sanctuary, obscured by thriving, scented vegetation. He shuts off the engine and gets out. Sage. That's what that is. Pungent almost year-round, he now associates the smell with the thrill of discovery and the joy of reading.

His luck is good tonight. There's a hardbound copy of a 1998 Robert Parker novel. He hasn't read this one. The joy of the find. He sets his slightly used copy of Catch-22 into the new gap and returns to the car.

Through the pandemic, this little box kept him alive. His business suffered, of course, as fewer and fewer parties ventured out. Oh, the lifers found a way, and they still called. But ever since that period, the after-parties and raging til sunrise has mostly stopped.

There's a favorite gas station across town, a Chevron that keeps its bays well-lit, staffed by employees who don't mind his parking at a far pump to borrow the light. If someone calls, he might go, but they better have a good story – better than Parker's anyway, because it's now after three in the morning, the fog has settled like a blanket over the town, and that perfect quiet is a gift he can't refuse.