



TRANSITION

Fall/Winter 2023

TRANSITION **Is Back**

Editorial By
Mareike Johnson

WRITING THE LIFE

Non-Fiction
Drama
Poetry

WRITING FOR YOUR LIFE

Regina Branch
Weyburn Branch

COVER ART
Sabrina Jovic

TRANSITION

Fall/Winter 2023

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(Saskatchewan Division) Inc.

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- 1) Canadian writers and artists are invited to send original and unpublished articles, fiction, non-fiction, poetry, and visual art that represent current mental health issues and reflect on their impact on individuals.
Please query the Editor at: mareike.johnson1@gmail.com if you wish to submit something outside this scope (e.g., short dramas, cartoons, comics, short graphic novels or book reviews).
- 2) All submissions must be accompanied by a short 50-word bio and complete contact information (mailing address and email address).
- 3) Maximum manuscript lengths:
Prose – 3500 words
Poetry – up to 5 poems
- 4) Unsolicited international contributions, reprints and simultaneous submissions (to several magazines) are not considered.
- 5) Turnaround time is generally within one issue or up to 6 months. Do not send a second submission before the first has been reviewed.
- 6) Payment is \$50.00 per printed page (\$25/half page), \$40.00 per published visual artwork, and \$200 for cover art.
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- 7) Only electronic submissions, including complete contact information and a brief bio, are accepted.
- 8) Submit manuscripts in MS Word format, standard font (i.e., Times New Roman), double-spaced, normal margins. Email the attachment to contactus@cmhask.com or directly to the editor at mareike.johnson1@gmail.com. E-mail submissions must have “FOR *TRANSITION*” in the subject line.

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This issue of *TRANSITION* is dedicated to Byrna Barclay.

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TRANSITION Is back

Editorial By
Mareike Johnson



TRANSITION is back! Slightly revamped but ultimately staying true to its mandate to “celebrate lives in transit—lives of change, growth, and transformation”



(<https://sk.cmha.ca/documents/transition-magazine/>).

When Ted Dyck retired as editor of *TRANSITION* in July 2022, CMHA SK initiated a consultation process with relevant stakeholders to determine the future of the magazine. The result of this process is now in front of you: a magazine that is exclusively dedicated to *writing for mental health* and is available both digitally (free of charge) and in print (annual subscription fee of \$15).

Notes from the Editor

How did we get here? *TRANSITION* was originally designed as a newsletter for CMHA SK. In the 1990s, it morphed into a magazine with the late Byrna Barclay as its first editor. Since 2007, when Ted Dyck became editor, the magazine went through several transitions. At the end of Ted's term, it consisted of three parts: a CMHA SK newsletter, a middle section "by, for, and about persons with lived experience of mental illness," and a newsletter about CMHA SK's Writing For Your Life (WFYL) groups (Ted Dyck, "Editorial: Magazine Returns to Roots," *TRANSITION* Winter 2016/2017: 2).

The newsletter covering CMHA SK division and branch news is now circulated by email.



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Thus, going forward, *TRANSITION*'s focus will be on writing about and for mental health. The WRITING THE LIFE pages will continue to feature poetry, fiction, and non-fiction by Canadian contributors. The WRITING FOR YOUR LIFE pages will include the works of current WFYL group members.

You will note that there is a bit of an imbalance between the two parts in this

issue. We hope to grow the WFYL pages over time. I am particularly excited about this section of the magazine. Why? Because it underlines *TRANSITION*'s biggest contribution, to quote Ted Dyck: "to encourage *better writing* by its contributors while they are *writing to get better*" ("Letter of Resignation"). With this idea in mind, the bi-annual WFYL contest has been replaced with a bi-annual *writing challenge*. This writing challenge will allow group members to workshop their best work with their facilitator and peers and to share this work with the public. For what could be more healing than to have your voice heard?

I am honoured to continue the work of my predecessors, Ted Dyck and Byrna Barclay. This magazine has been instrumental in my own mental health journey. Serving as its editor is my way of giving back to the community. Since starting my role this May, many contributors and WFYL facilitators have expressed to me their joy about *TRANSITION* being continued. There is a strong need among Canadians to share their mental health journeys with others, and *TRANSITION* allows for this need to be filled. For this reason, we would like to dedicate this issue to the memory of the magazine's founder, Byrna Barclay, who passed away on May 7, 2023. Your work, Bryna, continues to have a positive mental health impact on Canadians today.

Trailer 13

By Laura Frost



Trailer 13

I am not the person I used to be.

I am someone who bears scars from an internal hell, scars no one can see, just as no one could see the battle that raged within me.

And I am thankful.

I was a university kid, full of verve and ready to take on the world. A summer job recording bird populations in the middle of wine and fruit country was exactly the adventure I was searching for, so I packed my bag and headed west, excitement bubbling over.

Overstuffed pack hoisted on my shoulders, I ambled up the walk of a cute bungalow in the centre of a friendly town. Susan, my roommate and the graduate student I was working for, welcomed me with open arms. The kitchen smelled of fresh buns, my bedroom had a fluffy duvet, and in the yard, nestled amongst a dozen rose bushes, stood a magnificent cherry tree. A cherry tree! Having always ravaged saskatoon berries along prairie roadsides for my fresh fruit fix, plucking cherries from my own tree was like the Holy Grail. Sweet juices tingled my tongue, and it did not take long for my fingers to bear a permanent red stain from my daily forage.

Each morning, I awoke in the dark and spooned cereal into my mouth while the rest of the world slept. After breakfast, Susan and I would drive down deserted highways and through waking pastures, arriving at our site just as the birds stretched their wings and prepared their cacophony of calls for the day ahead.

The morning sun would peek over the trees and paint the hills in swaths of orange and yellow as our truck lumbered up a steep gravel road. Sharp switchbacks that forced us into a dangerous tilt were common, and Susan always kicked me out of the truck so she could ease through the turn, not willing to risk plummeting us both down the hillside.

We'd make sure to leave the overworked truck in the shade of an aspen grove, and I would traipse into the rolling landscape stretched before me while Susan vanished over a hill behind. Birdsong and the crunch of lonely boots on parched grass and sage filled the air as I scrawled down sightings of sparrows, hawks, quail, and curlew—pages of data I would transcribe in the evenings. By nine-thirty each morning, my stomach would rumble for lunch, and I would picnic on a hillside overlooking snaking rivers or sandy bluffs while wildflowers danced in the breeze.

Weather patterns were predictable. Like clockwork, the temperature climbed to nearly forty degrees daily and the sun beat down, scorching everything that could not take cover. My floppy hat and long-sleeved shirt strained to keep the sun at bay, while my pants and gaiters cinched around my legs in vain as they failed to hold back the onslaught of cactus needles and ticks.

I tracked woodpeckers and grouse on mountain summits where cloud formations transformed from gentle cotton balls to menacing anvils that darkened the landscape and brought the scent of rain; I did not always make it back to the truck before lightening sliced the sky.

Trailer 13

On those rare days when we finished our counts near a pond, we stripped away sweaty, dusty layers and donned swimsuits behind the sparse cover of sun-bleached sage. Mountains hugged us and the lush pine and cedar forest released a sharp, sweet scent, transporting our senses from a dusty mountain meadow to the most luxurious of high-end spas. We played hopscotch over cow patties, pebbles gouging our feet, until we reached the edge of the pond where cool water lapped our toes. After a short wade and a few strokes past the floating remains of yesterday's cow buffet, we reached clear water and floated in the still landscape. Gentle moos lulled us as ripples whisked away sunscreen and soothed our sore muscles.

After-work downtime was peppered with potluck meals and guitar strumming sessions with our new friends, the bat researchers, before they headed out into the dark and we headed to bed. We fell asleep to the laughter of kids playing in the streets and I dreamed of the birds I would meet the next day.

As June faded into July, the clean, spacious bungalow with my cherry tree was sold, so we moved out of town and into the hills where a derelict geology camp waited for us in the middle of nowhere.

With regrets of leaving my comfortable bedroom still lingering in my mind, I stepped from the truck and dumped my oversized pack onto the forest floor. The woods were dotted with tin cans discarded on their sides, masquerading as camp trailers, each with a red number painted on its door. I breathed in the piney air and smiled at the prospect of spending the rest of my summer camping-style.

The chatter of the bat researchers cut through the forest air. Excited to catch up with my campmates, I followed the voices toward a long building poking out from the trees, but as I crossed the threshold, I stopped cold. The stench of death was an unseen barrier that sent me stumbling backwards. Only through sheer force of will was I able to push myself into the room. The bat crew visited around a table and was seemingly unaware that the mess hall was haunted by a stomach-turning nightmare. Stuffing down rolling nausea, I turned from the foulness and headed for my assigned trailer.

A red 13, bright but faded as though it had long before been painted with blood, marked my new home. I rattled the door open. Fresh forest air entered the stifling metal box while stagnant air that had not moved in months rushed out to the freedom of the woods.

I cracked the windows and, unzipping my pack, fished out the dozens of postcards and letters that my boyfriend, Ryan, had been mailing me every day, and I brought the bare walls to life. I found a fractured outlet for my stereo system, stacked my CDs, tucked my sheets around a mattress the consistency of lumpy Jell-O, and turned on my portable fan. My tin can dumpster was transformed into a home.

The sickening scent of the mess hall worsened with each passing day until entry was futile. Hiding behind the false security of a bandana and rubber gloves thick as cow hide, bat-crew Paul entered olfactory hell. The rest of us paced the pine-needled forest floor, convinced the stench had ensnared Paul into an untimely tomb. Eventually he emerged,

Trailer 13

green but victorious, and brandished a hunk of raw meat, gray and maggoty, that had fallen behind a freezer weeks before.

If only the rotten meat was the worst part of my home, but a deeper threat was lurking, ready to cast its dark magic and torment my mind.

Deer mice inhabited the forest and had started to spread into the camp buildings like a plague-infused army. To say we had a mouse infestation was being polite, and keeping the kitchen clean was a battle not even a four-star general could hope to win. Tiny black pellets were a constant. They were smudged on countertops, peppered on dishes in the cupboards, baked on the element in the oven, and nestled amongst my precious cherries inside the fridge. The mice had left their mark—their resolve to flush me out of their annexed territory.

While the walls of my tin can celebrated my relationship with Ryan, the rest of the camp was decorated in “Mouse is Gonna Getcha” posters. Warnings were plastered on the walls of the mess, taped on the doors of bathroom stalls, and tacked below my blood-red 13. Everywhere I turned, posters told a story of the real threat that lay inside the droppings.

Hantavirus.

Illness.

Death.

The tiny black pellets, ammunition of an unbeatable army, were going to kill me.

To reduce our chances of contracting the virus, we scoured our dishes and stacked them in a giant stock pot on the stove, yet it served only as a reminder of what lingered, invisible, in the air. I stopped using dishes as my mind convinced me that disease had stained every plate, bowl, and cup. I could no longer stomach the thought of ingesting something that a mouse had chewed on, then crapped on, then chewed again, and so the fridge and all that it contained, including the last of my cherries, were lost to me. I cut all dairy, fruits, vegetables, and meat from my diet. The unplugged deep freeze that forever reeked of death sequestered our dry food. I crammed my portion of the freezer with boxes of crackers that were to become my only sustenance in the weeks ahead.

The lack of nutrition ravaged my body and mind. The world became a giant funhouse with tilted floors, moving walls, and undulant lighting. The scientist inside me lectured about the need for vitamins and protein. With her whispering in my ear, I wrapped my fingers around the fridge handle, held my breath, and pulled the door open. Hantavirus wafted over me, coating my skin and clothes, yet I forced myself to take a boiled egg. After swallowing the poison, I wandered to my metal tomb and waited for the symptoms of death to creep in and take me.

Waking up each morning became a surprise.

Clipboard clenched in my hand, I hiked mountains in forty-degree heat under the Okanagan sun.

Antivenom at the ready in my pack, my eyes darted between grass and shrub as I kept watch for rattlesnakes and black widow spiders. I picked off ticks and prayed that Lyme disease would not kill me before Hantavirus.

Trailer 13

My mind began to fog, but one thought remained clear: I was dying. If Hantavirus was not killing my body, it was winning the battle against my mind. I spent my days clambering up and down those hills as I obsessed about ways to escape. If I could find my way to a town, could I get on a plane?

But I had to work. And I wasn't a quitter. So I stayed.

My heart rate settled on a new hummingbird beat. My lungs lived in constant constriction as though a giant rubber band was squeezing my ribs while I strained to pull in oxygen to feed my starving body.

While marking the distinctive sound of a California quail on my survey log one particularly warm morning, my fingers began to tingle as though my blood was carbonated. I felt the wave of panic coming for me like a tsunami on the horizon that I could not outrun, and I braced myself for the assault that marked the onset of my final battle. My muscles seized, the landscape blurred, and a cold sweat swept over my skin. Terror gripped me, suffocating me, as the tidal wave consumed my body and mind.

Each attack shattered me, leaving only a lifeless rag.

At the camp, I became a recluse. I ate lonely dinners of crackers while the birders and batters, whispering and stealing glances, huddled together on the other side of the mess. Paul occasionally came over to check on me.

My sweltering tin can was a prison but also my haven as it was the one defence that the mice had not yet breached. Until the bat crew trailers became infected.

Bernadette awoke to a mouse inside her pillow.

Nicki emerged from trailer 8 swearing at the forest, incensed that she had found black pellets scattered on her covers. A mouse army brandishing death was knocking on my door.

Fingers weak and trembling, I picked up the camp phone and reached out to my parents, half a continent away. I needed their voices to calm the evil influences in my head. My dad heard the rattle of death in my lungs and, before I got a full sentence out, he told me to come home. My escape was set.

I told Susan I was leaving that night. She stormed off, sputtering words about finishing her graduate research. We never said goodbye.

I packed up my trailer. Postcards and letters came off the walls. I shut off my fan and packed my CDs while my dad and Ryan coordinated my rescue. Ryan started the twelve-hour drive while my great uncle who lived an hour away planned to meet me at the nearest town's ice cream joint.

I stood in the middle of the geology camp, backpack clinging to my war-ravaged frame, while birders and batters watched and whispered. As I stared down the long gravel road that led out of this hellhole, I calculated the time it would take to walk to town. I would not make nightfall.

Paul wandered over. "Do you need a ride?"

Thank goodness for Paul. He left me on the curb outside "The Extra Scoop" where I waited for my great uncle to collect what was left of me. With sun-bronzed skin draped over sinewy muscles and

Trailer 13

slight bones, my body had lost fifteen pounds from a figure that already had no extra to spare. I waited for the great exodus of anxiety from my body, but it sat inside and burrowed deep, infecting me like Hantavirus. I had escaped from hell, but the war the mice had started was not over.

Days later, I wandered through my parents' house in a daze. My mind had been altered by mouse feces and posters warning of my death; my mind did not understand that the threat was gone. I was a ghost that watched the world happen around me.

Panic attacks continued to thrash me, so my doctor pumped me full of antidepressants and ushered me out the door. Drugs took the edge off and pulled me from my daze, but the world had shifted and would not straighten.

Although my doctor had abandoned me to a life of medication, I refused to believe this was my new normal. I weaned myself off the meds, but the world remained shifted. Anxiety sat inside like a bear in deep hibernation, stirring to an unpredictable schedule of springs. For ten years, I whispered lullabies to that sleeping bear in hopes that I could keep her asleep. She would roll over occasionally, but I would stifle her with a pillow every time.

A sleeping bear can only lie for so long before she awakens with an insatiable hunger. I saw a new doctor and, unable to hold on any longer, broke down in his office and begged for meds. Deeply concerned, he sent me to a therapist. I had been drowning for over a decade and felt lost but, slowly and delicately, my therapist pulled me from the slurry.

I could finally breathe again.

Reawakened, I look back on my experiences with a new understanding of my own psyche, and I am now able to empathize with those suffering from anxiety or depression in a way I never could before. I will always have my sleeping bear with me, but I have learned how to live with her. I have visited—have been a front row guest to—the terror of my own mind.

And I am thankful for the experience.

Fuck you, mice. I win.

Bipolar II

By Audrey Kilbreath

There exist two poles on this earth: complete darkness and stark, bright light. Most people are near the middle of the globe, you see, where day and night are experienced in a proper, reliable fashion. Day, then night, then day, then night, then day, then night—it is a precise movement and can be calculated down to the second.

Darkness may drive into light occasionally and idle for awhile when you are going through a tough period, because someone you love died, you lost your job, or health issues arise. The sadness is as reliable as the coming of night, and there is always an end in sight. Night is neatly separated from day, sadness from the inevitable fade back into normality. Happiness can be anything from contentment

to a ray of sunshine in your life, a peaceful drive in the countryside, a funny moment, or falling in love. There are rules as to why we feel happy. They can be easily picked out, like flowers from a blossoming garden.

My psychiatrist asks me what I'm feeling right now, and I don't know. Everything is strobing light and dark over and over. The poles are meeting. I am happy and sad all at the same time. I cry and laugh simultaneously. It is so tragically funny. My doctor calls this a mixed state. Most of the time, I am torn between the tips of the world, desperately grasping at a pole of light or dark.

The speed of light is so fast. Life is so fast. Thoughts zoom in and out of my mind like a race car. I can

Bipolar II

barely hold onto an idea when the next one comes flashing in, ousting the old one. Where it goes, I do not know. I am in a rush to get everything out of my head into a flurry of conversation before it hurries away from me. I write, I type, but my hand and fingers are way too slow to keep up. In a sense, I feel special because I'm enjoying life so much more intensely, and others don't understand why. It's like laughing inside at my own joke, with nothing or no one to get me down.

When I think of something, I have the energy to just do it. JDI. I want to drive two and a half hours to the next city, speeding away, listening to dizzyingly fast music with the beat crashing over other beats in a hurry to catch up, headlights piercing into my eyes along the way, all at three in the morning. No time to take a breath. And happy, so screamingly happy! Hollering out the window, singing along to the music as loud as I can. In the city, the streetlamps and neon signs form a surreal blur. I made it. But. There is nothing to do except sit around in a sleepy all-night coffee shop.

The only thing ahead of me is the dark drive home. The sunshine slowly fades away as I step back into my car and drive away. As I leave behind the city lights, I think about home. Everything in and around me is slowing down. I'm deliberately driving under the speed limit, delaying the inevitable. At home is the empty. The place where tears fall unnoticed, sobs are swallowed up by the ever-looming silence. The curtains are pulled tight, I don't want anyone to see me. Don't want the light to fall in through the unclothed window. Just want to wallow in a void of darkness.

Mind stops working right. Thoughts in fragments.

Brain attacking me. Like a tire, my mind runs on a loop. *So stupid ... useless person ... would be better off dead ... such a disappointment ...* Each rotation punctures a hole inside of me, until I am running on nothing but flappy rubber and hard metal rims. Worn down to nothing and no way to repair. Time to cut away the remaining rubber from the rims, I think, as I slice trails of blood up and down my arm with a kitchen knife. It doesn't even hurt. I am challenging myself to drive the looping thoughts away, replacing them with *real* pain. The fake pain doesn't go away, though. The fake pain is what's killing me, not the slick metal shifting through tunnels of blood. Fake or real, my pain is getting darker and darker.

Time goes so slow. I lie on the floor, no energy to move forward. I fall into a deep sleep. The night lasts forever with no end in sight. Days, weeks, months go by with me parked in my bed. Only black surrounds me. I would rather sleep than be awake with my poisonous mind. Even then, the engine of my thoughts idles in misery. Terrors plague my dreams—death, destruction, betrayal, war, fearsome beasts, revolting experiments. I wake up crying. The tears never stop throughout the day. I try to cover my puffy face with foundation and powder, but the tears leave behind tire tracks of skin-like mud down my cheeks.

Eventually, the road begins to straighten out ahead of me. I open my curtains and watch the sun rise. It is a long road ahead of me, to the pole of blinding light. I'm back at the start and already behind. Time to speed up.

Not Afraid Anymore... Well, Maybe Sometimes, and That's Okay

By Paige Manns

Fear is eternal. You cannot defeat it, only learn to live with it.

I am a young, able-bodied, middle-class white girl in a first-world country. In other words, I have very little to be afraid of. However, that never stopped me from being an extremely anxious child and a very depressed preteen. I was worried about what people thought of me, my body, and my grades, and that a meteor would hit my house. I loved books, but I would read of the rainforests being depleted and animals going extinct, and I would be sad. I was worried all the time. This anxiety has been a main component of my life, and I've learned to live with it. In a roundabout way, my anxiety has made me a happier and more emotionally intelligent person.

My anxious behaviour manifested in many ways. Some were positive, like asking for no birthday presents so I could donate money to a charity instead. However, I didn't like the reason I was doing it. I was worried for other people but also worried about my image. If I donated to charities as an eight-year-old, people would like me more, right? And then, when there were things I wanted for my birthday, I worried asking for them was selfish and that people would think I was taking the money for myself.

My anxious behaviour also came out in bad ways, like having a breakdown at ten years old because I had heard about ISIS in class and couldn't stop researching the atrocities being committed across the globe. My anxiety showed when I got so stressed

out over getting one question wrong on my spelling test that I went home crying and didn't want to show the result to my parents, even though they never put that kind of pressure on me. My anxiety also presented as me being lippy to my mother or as snapping at my little sister when she didn't do her chores right.

When I was in sixth grade, my parents sat me down at the table and told me they thought I might be depressed. They explained that my dad was and that there was no shame in it. I remembered the times when dad was upset all the time, or angry for no reason, or started closing himself off, and I remembered how he tried so hard to fix himself by cutting out drinking and having conversations with family and eventually trying medication. My parents explained all of this and when they were finished, I could barely croak out that they were right, although I didn't want it to be true. I never told them that for the past year I had been googling if depression was hereditary, or if I could catch it, and how I could fix it on my own.

So I started seeing a counsellor.

I didn't know how to talk to her, and I *definitely* didn't know how to tell people that I was seeing her. She told me she wanted to get to know me and gave me a stack of papers to fill out, roughly the size of my 12-year-old frame. The papers included everything from graphs about feelings and probing my family life to questions that felt too graphic for a girl who had never even kissed someone. I wrote on every one of those papers because I thought that would make my counsellor like



me. I pretended I liked filling out papers, and so she would give me sheets to take home that I would ultimately forget to do because I have what mom calls “procrastination problems.” I was supposed to do my homework, which is what I wanted to do because the alternative of not doing it was unimaginable. And yet, it happened all the time that I didn’t complete the papers. So I would lie. Or leave them somewhere else. Or move my appointment.

It took a while but eventually my counsellor started to catch on to the fact that I wasn’t responding well to homework. Shocker, a social worker caught my social cues, I know. So we started to just talk, and after a few sessions we settled on my assumed diagnosis: anxiety with a side of depression. Once I knew what I had, it was a lot easier to identify problems and solutions. I put in a tremendous amount of work, and it started to help. With time, I started to see changes: I could talk myself out of panic, I knew what coping mechanisms worked for me, and my panic attacks were getting fewer and further in between. But I still wasn’t happy.

Depression and anxiety blend together into this awful soup of dialogue: “Everyone is watching you. Yes, and they hate you.” Despite my coping and all the effort I was putting in, I still wasn’t okay. I went to my parents with an offer that shook me to my core: I told them I wanted to start medication. Saying I needed help is truly my Everest, and every time I need to ask for help, I break down. I had seen how much dad had struggled with his

meds, and my only other experience with meds was seeing medicated crazy people on TV. When I told my parents I wanted to try medication, I was truly saying that I had tried and could not do it, and saying that was nearly the end of my world.

Of course, my parents said yes, so we talked to my counsellor and my doctor. They told me it might be a long road to finding the drug that fit me, but they started me on one right away, escitalopram. *My world lit up.* My whole life, I didn’t realize that someone could be happy just because they felt happy. My baseline mood had always been negative, but suddenly it was like I was floating. The birds weren’t annoying, they were beautiful. The sun felt comforting, not sweltering. For the first time in my life, I was just happy.

There were still times when things got bad, but I continued to work hard on myself with my counsellor and have never missed a pill. After years of work, which I know to my core will never end, I have made myself a happier person. On Thursday, May 26, 2022, I had my last counselling session. There were tears, and I’m still nervous to branch out on my own, but I know that I have the tools and I’m going to be okay. I am the happiest I have ever been and a much better person than when I started my journey.

I no longer fear my mental illness: it is a part of me, it has shaped me, and I am **proud**.

THE SUPER SHOE SALE

By Keith Foster



The Super Shoe Sale

A customer enters the shoe section in a 1960s department store and starts handling the merchandise. A large sign above a long table of shoes reads: "SUPER SHOE SALE. ALL SHOES ONLY \$4.99."

CLERK. May I help you, sir?

LARRY. I'm just looking, thanks.

CLERK. If you have any questions, I'd be glad to help.

LARRY, *holds up a pair of shoes*. How much are these?

CLERK. That's an excellent choice, sir. They're genuine leather.

LARRY. But how much are they?

CLERK. They're on sale, sir. Only \$4.99.

LARRY. That's a good price.

CLERK. They'd be a bargain at triple that price.

LARRY. I see. *Picks up another pair*. How much are these?

CLERK. Another excellent choice, sir. Our finest quality leather.

LARRY. But how much are they?

CLERK. They're on sale, sir. Only \$4.99.

LARRY. Hmmm. Not bad.

CLERK. You won't find a better price anywhere, sir.

LARRY, *picks out another pair*. What about these?

CLERK. You have superb taste, sir. You couldn't do any better than these fine shoes.

LARRY. But how much?

CLERK. They're also on sale, sir. Only \$4.99.

LARRY. What about these?

CLERK. You're outdoing yourself, sir.

LARRY. But how . . .

CLERK. Actually, sir, all the shoes on this table are on sale for only \$4.99.

LARRY. Really?

CLERK. Yes, sir. The sign doesn't lie. *Points to the large sign*.

LARRY, *squints at the sign*. So every shoe on this table is on sale?

CLERK. That's right, sir. They're all \$4.99.

LARRY. Each and every one?

CLERK. Yes, sir. Each and every one.

LARRY. So, this pair is only \$4.99?

CLERK. Correct, sir.

LARRY. And this pair?

The Super Shoe Sale

CLERK. Only \$4.99.

CLERK. No, sir. No mistake.

LARRY. And these?

LARRY. You're sure?

CLERK. Only \$4.99.

CLERK. I'd stake my life on it, sir.

LARRY. Amazing. So, I could buy this pair for only \$4.99?

LARRY. You must be pretty sure if you'd stake your life on it.

CLERK. Yes, sir. That pair and every pair.

CLERK. I am that sure, sir.

LARRY. Including these?

LARRY. This is a truly amazing sale.

CLERK. Yes, sir. Including those.

CLERK. It is, indeed, sir.

LARRY. So, I could buy any pair on this table for only \$4.99?

LARRY. I can't believe that I can buy any pair of shoes on this table for only \$4.99.

CLERK. That's correct, sir.

CLERK. Believe it, sir. You can trust the sign.

LARRY. It doesn't matter if I buy this pair or that pair or those over there? *Pointing to the far end of the table.*

LARRY. Seriously?

CLERK. That's correct, sir.

CLERK. Yes, sir. Seriously. The sign doesn't lie.

LARRY. For only \$4.99.

LARRY. Only \$4.99 a pair?

CLERK. That's correct, sir.

CLERK. Yes, sir. Only \$4.99.

LARRY. Unbelievable.

LARRY. Per pair?

CLERK. Yes, sir. It's our biggest shoe sale of the year.

CLERK. Yes, sir.

LARRY. You're telling me that every pair of shoes on this table is on sale for only \$4.99?

LARRY. Not per shoe?

CLERK. That's right, sir. Just like the sign says.

CLERK. No, sir. Per pair.

LARRY. There's no mistake?

LARRY. Because I wouldn't want to buy them and find out I was paying \$4.99 per shoe.

The Super Shoe Sale

CLERK. No, sir. It's \$4.99 per pair.

LARRY. The shoes would match identically?

LARRY. That's two shoes?

CLERK. Of course, sir. Both shoes would have the identical style.

CLERK. Yes, sir.

LARRY. The same identical style?

LARRY. Two shoes in a pair?

CLERK. Yes, sir.

CLERK. Yes, sir. Two shoes make a pair.

LARRY. But they wouldn't be completely identical?

LARRY. Matching shoes?

CLERK. I don't understand, sir.

CLERK. Beg pardon, sir.

LARRY. If they were completely identical, I'd have either two left shoes or two right shoes.

LARRY. These would be matching shoes?

CLERK. Certainly, sir.

CLERK. No, sir. Each pair of shoes comes with one left shoe and one right shoe.

LARRY. The shoes would match each other?

LARRY. But both the left and the right shoes would have the same identical style?

CLERK. Certainly, sir.

CLERK. Yes, sir.

LARRY. They'd be the same style?

LARRY. And the same colour?

CLERK. Of course.

CLERK. Colour?

LARRY. So, the style would match?

LARRY. I assume the shoes with the matching style would also have matching colours?

CLERK. Yes, sir.

CLERK. Oh, absolutely.

LARRY. So, both shoes would match each other?

LARRY. I assumed as much.

CLERK. Absolutely, sir.

CLERK. You assumed correctly, sir.

LARRY. They'd be identical?

LARRY. And what about the size?

CLERK. Beg pardon, sir?

The Super Shoe Sale

CLERK. What about the size, sir?

LARRY. But what if one of them wasn't intact?

LARRY. Would both shoes be the same size?

CLERK. What do you mean if one leg wasn't intact?

CLERK. Absolutely, sir.

LARRY. I mean what if one of my legs was missing?

LARRY. So, the left shoe would be the same size as the right shoe?

CLERK. You'd have my deepest sympathies, sir.

CLERK. Yes, sir.

LARRY. But would I get a discount?

LARRY. And the right shoe would be the same size as the left shoe?

CLERK. A discount, sir?

CLERK. Definitely, sir. That's the way we sell our shoes.

LARRY. If I was missing a leg and only wanted to buy one shoe instead of a pair of shoes, would I get a discount?

LARRY. Because I wouldn't want one shoe that's bigger or smaller than the other.

CLERK. No, sir. You'd have my deepest sympathies, but no discount.

CLERK. Of course not, sir.

LARRY. But I'd only be buying one shoe.

LARRY. But what if my left foot was bigger than my right foot?

CLERK. Sir, the sale price for our shoes is \$4.99 regardless of whether you want one shoe or both.

CLERK. Sir, I can't guarantee that your feet are the same size. I can only guarantee that our shoes are the same size.

LARRY. That doesn't seem fair.

LARRY. And they'd both be the same matching style?

CLERK. Sir, our shoe sale is so spectacular that if you bought a pair of our shoes, you could easily afford to throw away one shoe and you'd still have a bargain.

CLERK. Absolutely, sir. I guarantee it.

LARRY. Do I look like an idiot? Why would I want to throw away a perfectly good shoe?

LARRY. Now, what if I only wanted one shoe?

CLERK. Well, sir, if you only had one leg . . .

CLERK. Why would you only want one shoe?

LARRY. Are you blind? Do I look like I only have one leg?

LARRY. Say I only had one leg. *Clerk looks down at the man's legs.*

CLERK. You talked about if you were missing a leg.

LARRY. You appear to have both legs intact, sir.

LARRY. Well, I'm not missing a leg, as you can plainly see.

The Super Shoe Sale

CLERK. I'm sorry, sir. I apologize.

shoe horn? Blow into it and my shoes will come running?

LARRY. You'd better, or I'll have a talk with your manager.

CLERK. No, no, sir. It's to help you slip into your shoes.

CLERK. No need for that, sir. Here, let me offer you a complimentary gift.

LARRY. But it's crooked. Look.

LARRY. Complimentary?

CLERK. It's not crooked, sir. It's gently curved to help your foot ease into the shoe.

CLERK. Yes, sir. It means free.

LARRY, *notices a hole in the shoe horn*. What's this little hole for? Is this what I blow into?

LARRY. I know what it means! What do you have in mind?

CLERK. No, sir. That's so you can hang it on the wall.

CLERK. I'd like to offer you this complimentary shoe horn.

LARRY. My shoes? On the wall?

LARRY. A shoe horn. What am I supposed to do with a



The Super Shoe Sale

CLERK. No, sir. You hang the shoe horn on the wall.
Your shoes go on your feet.

LARRY. So, I get a free shoe horn just for shopping here?

CLERK. Yes, sir. We value your business.

LARRY. You can't value my business very much if all
you're giving me is a bent shoe horn.

CLERK. It's not bent, sir. It's gently sloping as per
the manufacturer's specifications.

LARRY. Manufacturer's specifications, eh.

CLERK. Yes, sir. Very precise.

LARRY. Well, okay. If it's free, I'll take it.

CLERK. You're welcome, sir.

LARRY. So, all these shoes for just \$4.99?

CLERK. Not \$4.99 for all of them. \$4.99 for each of them.

LARRY. Each! Each shoe?

CLERK. No, sir. Each pair.

LARRY. That's what I thought. You had me worried
there for a moment. *He ruffles through a few
more shoes, mumbling.* Just \$4.99!

CLERK. So, have you made a selection, sir?

LARRY. Oh, I was just looking. Thanks. *Walks
out of the store. With a disgusted look, the clerk
straightens out the shoes, snarling under his
breath. A new customer walks through the door,
notices the large sale sign, saunters to the shoe
table, and starts rifling through the merchandise.*

CLERK. May I help you, sir?

JAMES. I noticed your sign.

CLERK. Ah, yes. You have good eyesight, sir.

JAMES, *examines several shoes, then holds up one
pair.* How much are these?

CLERK. As the sign says, they're on sale for only \$4.99.

JAMES. Really? That's a good price.

CLERK. It is, indeed, sir. And that's per pair, not per shoe.

JAMES. I should hope it would be per pair. Who
sells one shoe at a time?

CLERK. You never know when someone might want
to buy just one shoe.

JAMES. What on earth for?

CLERK. Maybe if someone was missing a leg.

JAMES. I suppose. But what would they do with the
extra shoe?

CLERK. At this price they could throw one shoe
away and they'd still have a bargain.

JAMES. But it would be such a waste.

CLERK. Maybe they could place a want ad for
someone missing the other leg, and they could
exchange the surplus shoes.

JAMES. There's an idea. But they'd have to make
sure they both wore the same size.

The Super Shoe Sale

CLERK. Indeed. And they'd probably prefer to be matched with the same colour.

JAMES. And the same style.

CLERK. Yes, indeed.

JAMES. Life can be complicated. I'm glad I've got two legs to stand on.

CLERK. Same here, sir.

JAMES. So how much are these shoes?

CLERK. They're on sale. Only \$4.99.

JAMES. You're kidding.

CLERK. I kid you not, sir.

JAMES. And these? How much?

CLERK. Only \$4.99. It's our biggest sale of the season.

JAMES. Incredible.

CLERK. Incredible indeed, sir.

JAMES. These ones look good.

CLERK. Excellent quality, sir.

JAMES. And how much might they be?

CLERK. Only \$4.99. As the sign says, all the shoes on this table are on sale for only \$4.99. Per pair.

JAMES. So, everything on this table is on sale? For only \$4.99?

CLERK. That is correct, sir.

JAMES. What about these?

CLERK. They're on sale, too.

JAMES. Really? For \$4.99?

CLERK. Yes, sir. Only \$4.99.

JAMES. These look good.

CLERK. You know quality, sir.

JAMES. And they're only \$4.99?

CLERK. Yes, sir.

JAMES. And what about these?

CLERK. \$4.99. *As James picks up another pair, the clerk grabs them from him. These are \$4.99, too. Clerk continues picking shoes from the table, raising his voice with each selection. And these are \$4.99. And these ones. And these. All \$4.99. Clerk starts tossing shoes at James. Can't you read the sign? It says they're ALL \$4.99. That means ALL of them. James backs away as the clerk hurls shoes more viciously.*

CLERK. THEY'RE ALL \$4.99! *James exits the store amid a shower of shoes.*

CLERK, shouting after James. PLUS TAX!



Two Poems By Philip Arima

PATTERNS

Every morning at four forty-five
a bird starts to call, shrill and high,

a repeating refrain that does not change,
a solo never answered.

After fifteen minutes, it is always finished,
and I reach for my meds and water.

PAST PRESENT

The mind constantly scans the worn imprint
of fossilized words, shape without context,
feeling of what was and won't disappear.

The mind contracts.



On Fights and Estrangement

By Gord Braun

there is a toll for getting back,
a lurking cost of leaving

in giving then withdrawing love,
the price is loss, is grieving

you close a door on somebody,
it's just you and the door

your rightness where they used to be,
where silence dusts the floor

a silence that will smoke them out
(though it is strangling two)

for surely, they will give in
and make meek amends to you

Masks

By Beth Gobeil

She learned the usefulness of masks
having worn them since the age of four,

good girl that she wasn't
always wanting what she couldn't

name, like love
a foreign language no one spoke

in the landscape of her childhood,
where she danced dutifully

around the landmines
of mother and father,

shielding her small face
from explosions

with a carefully
constructed smile.

These years later
having landed

in a home
of her own creating,

she's still tugging
at the corners

of her mouth,
her mother's voice,

a memory.

*Keep making that face,
and it'll freeze like that.*



Trifocals

By Leif Gregersen

I see three of him, he said
Hit the one in the middle, came the reply

Damn antidepressants
Damn mood stabilizers

Keep me in a haze
Yet it all seems so much clearer
I still see three
But it all seems so much clearer, the world

So much clearer that I waited
Ten years
To get the glasses I needed

I rarely use them
Yet they open a new world to me

Not the book world, I never lost that
Books will always be my friends
My lovers
Confidants

They let me see far away details
That once seemed insignificant
Until I had to drive through and underneath them all

If only the glasses granted me
The freedom
To drive all day to faraway places
Despite the price of gas in Northern Alberta

Yes, that would be the dream
Explore Alaska during her 20-hour sunlit days
See the lower 48
While paying just \$2.50 plus no GST or PST or wee-wee ST
For a pack of cigarettes at the border

But that was another time,
Me now.
A world apart from
That now
I don't even smoke anymore
And my wanderlust was beaten out of me
Long ago

I now prefer to sit and write
Free verse
Not feeling very free at all
Clickety-click-clack typing in a cold, cold room
Proud of my ability to sit through
Six months of snow every year
And I try not to think
Of my days in the hospital
Or all the things and places I will never see

I Get Up Every Day

By Addison Ouellette

I get up every day.
It's half past two.
I better go say hello to my family.
Why do I have to be sad today?

It's half past two.
Why isn't my head screwed on right?
Why do I have to be so sad today?
It's not going to be my type of day.

Why isn't my head screwed on right?
Who cares? I'm still going to have a smile on my face.
It's not going to be my type of day.
At least the sun shines bright, right?

Who cares? I'm still going to have a smile on my face.
Why not try today?
At least the sun shines bright, right?
I get up every day.

Three Poems By Liz Kornelsen

Riptide

I swam in your sea of eloquent words,
rolled in wave after wave of elation,
basked in tender messages
you wrote in the sand.

Your words sucked me in.

I shot through the sheen
of your silver-tongued fervor,
surfaced, gasping.

I left too late—

allowed hot sand to burn my feet,
black current to sweep me away.

Adrift

1

She opened the curtains.

He flung them shut.

She wrote *I love you* in cucumber
peel, on the counter.

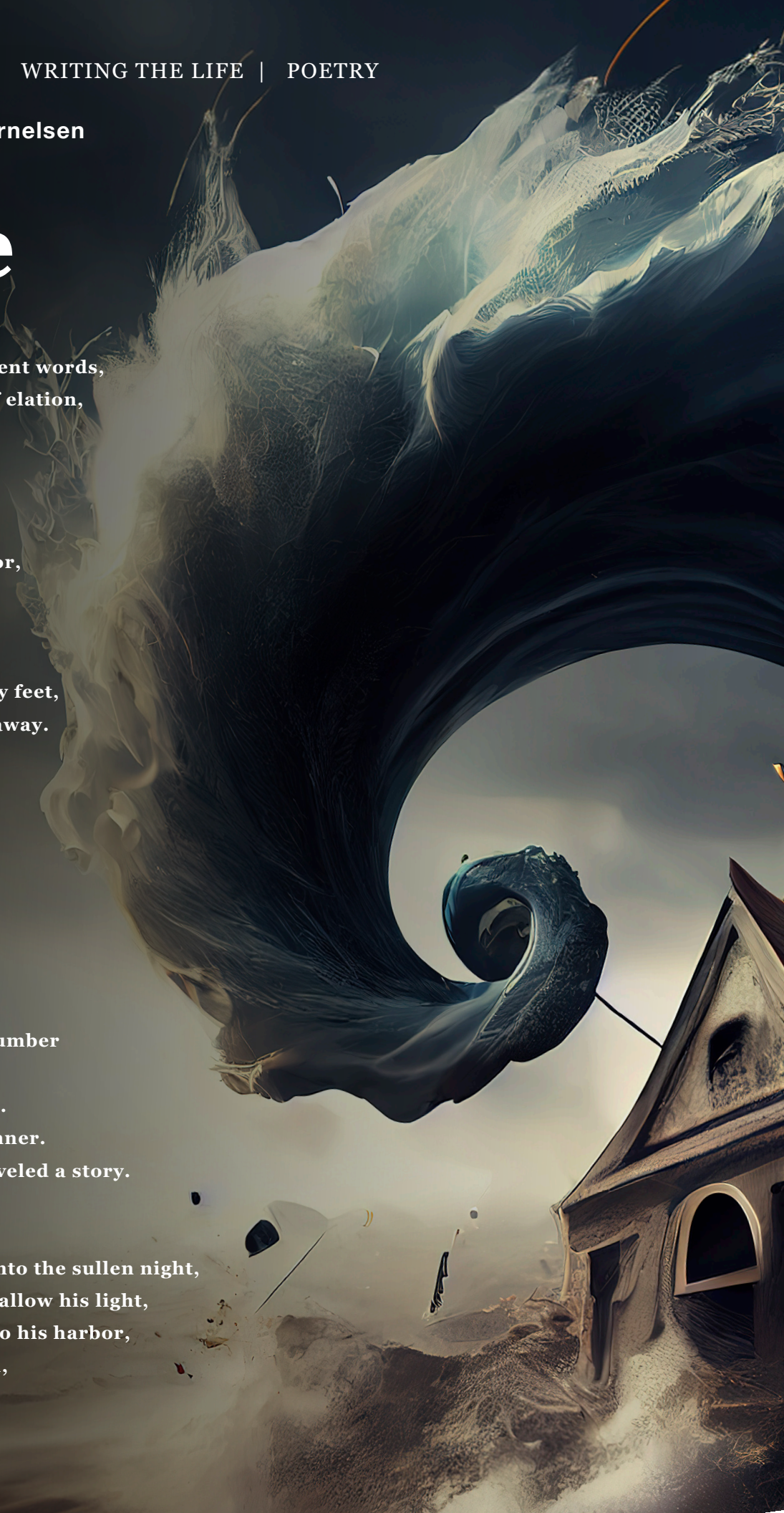
He managed a hint of a grin.

She served a candlelight dinner.

He loosened a button, unraveled a story.

2

She sees him cantilevered into the sullen night,
chasing the demons that swallow his light,
wonders: when he returns to his harbor,
with her daylight half-eaten,
is she anchor enough?



Leaving the Storm

I will not entertain your rain,
 caught in the stormy swirl of your heart,
 my ears ringing for days with the roar of your thunder,
 my body soaking and cold with the sting of your pelting rain,
 my soul singed by your flashes of lightning,
 blinding my vision of love.

The eye of the storm
 offers reprieve,
 uneasy comfort.

No—I will await the rainbow.



Three Poems By Lynda Monahan

NIGHT TRAIN

sparking along through darkness
into that black tunnel
you feel the sway
that great rush of speed
your heart quickening
the flash of lights
moving across your hospital room wall

travelling through midnight hours
you are pulled forward faster and faster
wanting so much to stop
to at least slow down
to come to a station where you might rest

you fly through shadows
moving farther and deeper into the night
the long low lonesome whistle
the clack of the tracks the shriek of your name

TODAY

bitter is a word
the wind
I walk in

your voice
the cracking
of my dawn

today
singular
in my thinking

there is no room
for two

this ride we're on

quintessential
roller coaster ride
scream of windrush
boneshaking breathless blur

weightlessness

then long stretch of sameandsameandsame
then off we go again

freefall

no holding on to anything
arms in the air
pushed back flung forward

the slowest slow of uphill climbs this
the slowest slowest

slow

REGINA

The Nap

By Miranda Hanus

I dreamt my friend fell
Cops in the background
Very suspect

I dreamt I fell
Down a deep dark hole
One of my own making

Walls too steep
Situation critical
I was alone

I dreamt you fell
And I don't know why
You didn't reach for me
I've always been here

I Won't Get Out of Bed

By Jayne Melville Whyte

I won't get out of bed today.
You can't make me get up,
no matter what you say.

I've had a very busy week.
I'm tired of Zoom meetings,
of political hide and seek.

A virus is going round,
and I'm positively ill.
Hear the wheezing sound?

I'll say I have a cold,
or reveal the sad, real reason
and just say that I am old.

My bones and muscles ache
from daily wear and tear.
I really need a break.

I need some time to just be me.
I won't get out of bed today,
except—I have to pee.

NOTHING

By Tyran Leatherdale

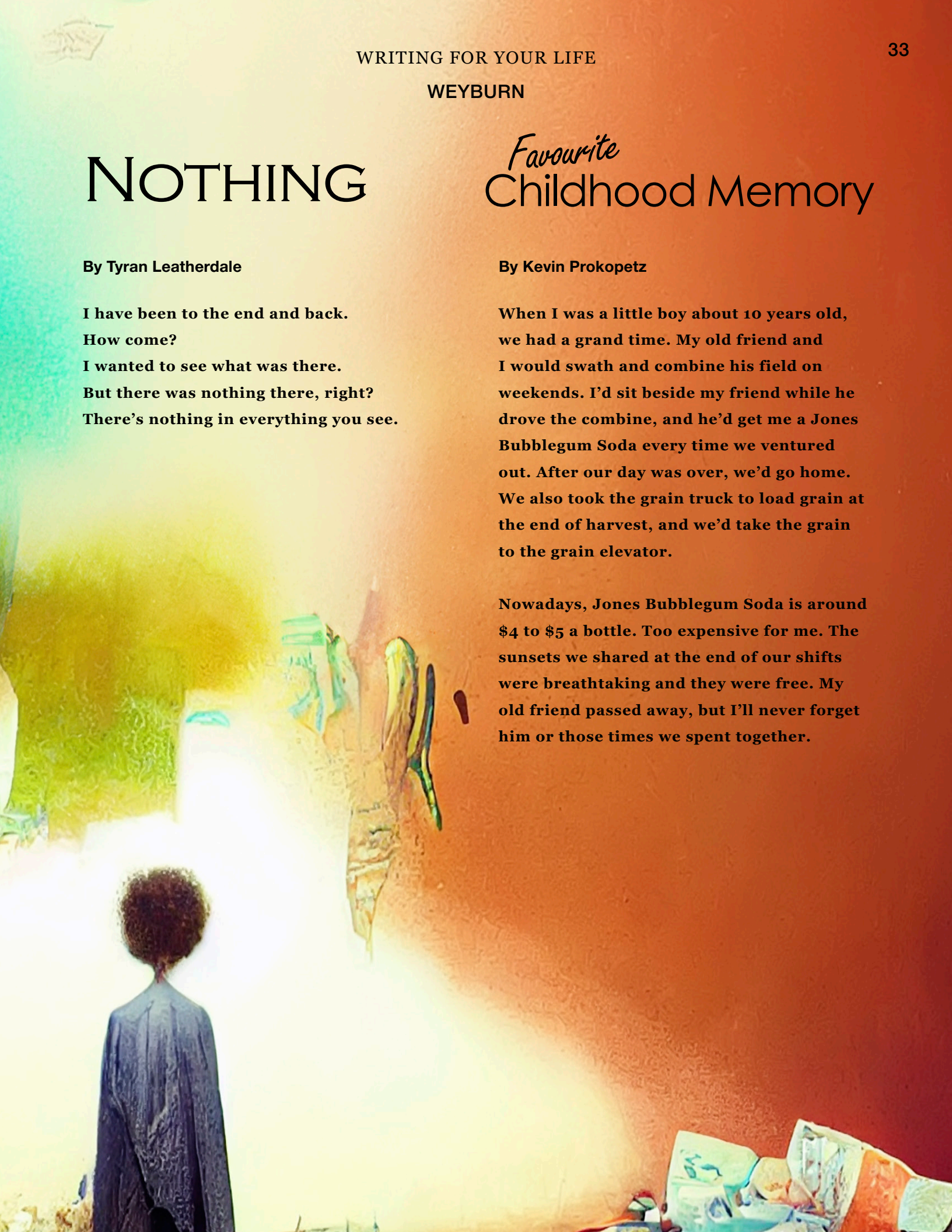
I have been to the end and back.
How come?
I wanted to see what was there.
But there was nothing there, right?
There's nothing in everything you see.

Favourite Childhood Memory

By Kevin Prokopetz

When I was a little boy about 10 years old, we had a grand time. My old friend and I would swath and combine his field on weekends. I'd sit beside my friend while he drove the combine, and he'd get me a Jones Bubblegum Soda every time we ventured out. After our day was over, we'd go home. We also took the grain truck to load grain at the end of harvest, and we'd take the grain to the grain elevator.

Nowadays, Jones Bubblegum Soda is around \$4 to \$5 a bottle. Too expensive for me. The sunsets we shared at the end of our shifts were breathtaking and they were free. My old friend passed away, but I'll never forget him or those times we spent together.



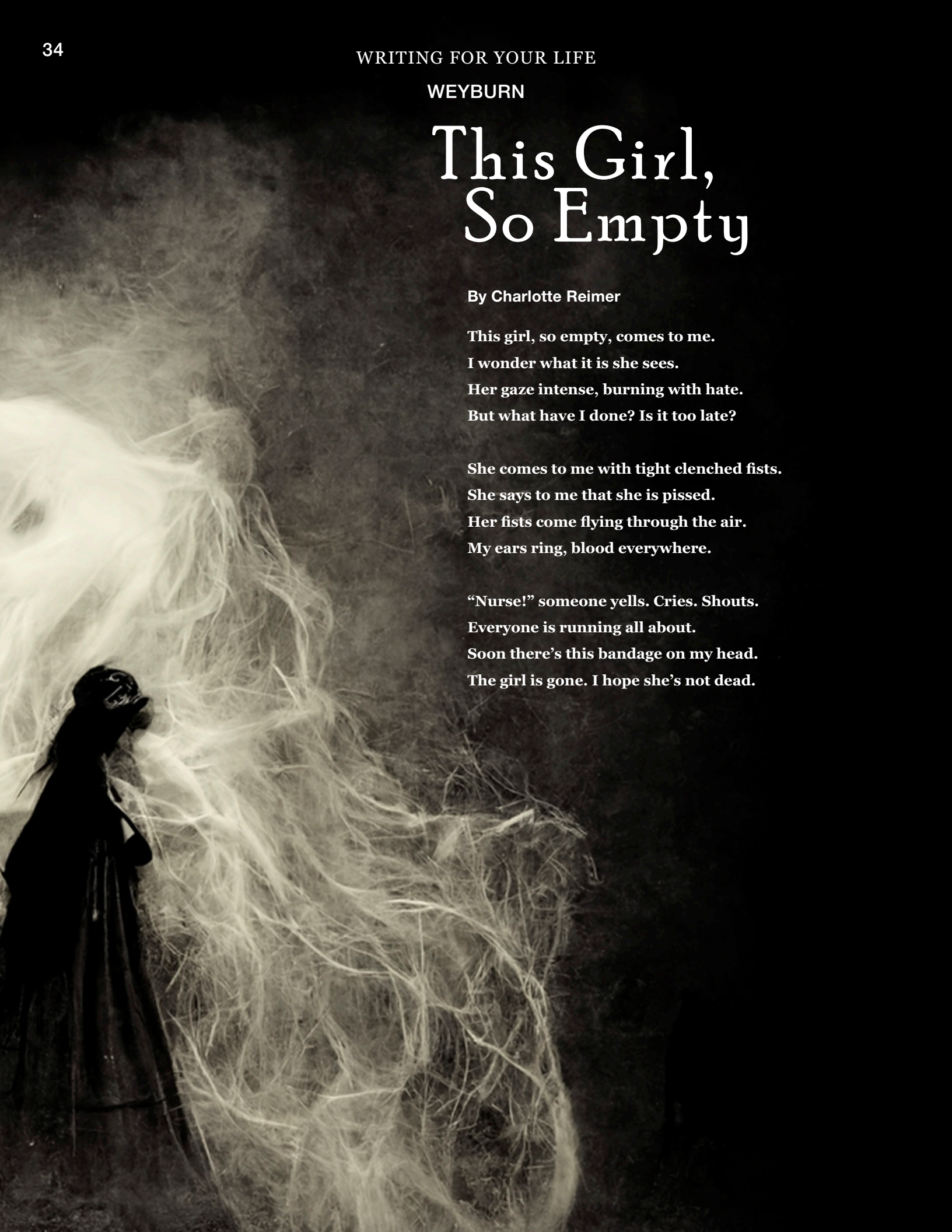
This Girl, So Empty

By Charlotte Reimer

This girl, so empty, comes to me.
I wonder what it is she sees.
Her gaze intense, burning with hate.
But what have I done? Is it too late?

She comes to me with tight clenched fists.
She says to me that she is pissed.
Her fists come flying through the air.
My ears ring, blood everywhere.

“Nurse!” someone yells. Cries. Shouts.
Everyone is running all about.
Soon there’s this bandage on my head.
The girl is gone. I hope she’s not dead.



BEAR ENCOUNTER

By Garette Strongarm

A group of friends went hiking years ago.
The first part of their hike was uneventful.
They didn't see much for animals at all,
except for some squirrels when they
stopped at a picnic table for a break and
some food. Just as they were finishing
up their lunch, they saw a bear and
immediately took off, leaving behind all
their rations to save themselves.

A couple of days later, one of them headed back
for revenge. He took the bear out with his own
two hands.

Years later, the group gathered again,
this time at the cabin. They sat beside a
warm fireplace, drinking hot chocolate
with marshmallows. They spent the night
telling stories about how he took out
the bear, only had one or two scratches
and made it out alive. As they sat there
remembering their adventure, the
snarling of a bear could be heard in the
distance, but no bear got to share their
marshmallows that night.

Untitled Poem

By Eric Valentine

I wore a hat on my head
I wore pants on my legs
I wore a shirt on my shoulders
I wore socks on my feet

Now I dress naked
wearing my heart on my sleeve



NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

ARTISTS

Jovic, Sabrina

A classically trained vocalist and artist who finds peace of mind in the arts. She is the co-creator and facilitator of *The Art of Music*, a creative experience for residents living in long-term care facilities in the Quinte area. Her works have appeared in diverse publications such as *Open Minds Quarterly* and *Unlimited Literary Journal*.

AUTHORS

Arima, Philip

Toronto poet with five books to his credit. His work has been adapted to both video and stage. Selections of his previously published work can be read at www.phliparima.com.

Braun, Gord

Yorkton resident. He keeps himself busy with music, computer tinkering, and “semi-active writing.” He writes from within his emotional neighbourhood and hopes to reach others with his writing.

Foster, Keith

Writes poems, book reviews, plays, and articles on Saskatchewan history. He has written three one-act comedies produced by Regina Little Theatre: *Domestic Bliss*, *The Gazebo*, and *The Super Shoe Sale*.

Frost, Laura

Novelist and short story writer with a penchant for delving into battles of the heart and mind and what it means to be alive. Her short stories have been published in print and online, and she leans on nature, baking, and adventures with her family to both calm and stir her writing muse.

Garvie, Neil

Poet and retired elementary school principal who finds writing to be therapeutic. He has published his own poetry collections, and his work has appeared in various magazines, including *TRANSITION*.

Gobeil, Beth

Prince Albert poet and retired pre-school teacher. She facilitates writing workshops in and around PA with the Artists in Communities Program. Her *Breathing Room* (2015) was short-listed for a SK Book Award.

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TRANSITION

FALL/WINTER 2023

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Hanus, Miranda

Recovering journalist venturing into the realm of fiction. A member of the Standing Buffalo Dakota Nation, she will soon be published in an upcoming anthology of Indigenous poets.

Kilbreath, Audrey

Holds a BA from the University of Regina in English and Psychology. She greatly enjoys writing, especially personal essays, poetry, and children's stories. She currently lives in Weyburn, SK with her husband Jachin.

Kornelsen, Liz

Prairie Poet. Author of *Arc of Light and Shadow: Poems with Art*. She previously published in *TRANSITION*, *Green Teacher*, and *The Whisky Blot*.

Leatherdale, Tyron

Raised in Stoughton, SK and now lives in Weyburn, SK. He went to Southeast College in Moosomin, SK to be an electrician and would like to become an addictions counsellor and someday create his own business.

Manns, Paige

Recent high school graduate who was in grade 11 when she wrote the essay published here as an assignment for school.

Monahan, Lynda

Author of five collections of poetry, including *the door*

at the end of everything (forthcoming with Shadowpaw Press Premiere). She has been writer-in-residence at St. Peter's College, Balfour Collegiate in Regina, and Victoria Hospital in Prince Albert. She facilitates the CMHA Prince Albert WFYL group.

Ouellette, Addison

Fourth-year education student at the University of Saskatchewan. He grew up in Davidson, SK, where he played a lot of sports. He has always loved using writing to express emotions that he found hard to talk about.

Prokopetz, Kevin

Has been attending CMHA Weyburn for 6-7 years. He was born in Quebec City but now resides in Weyburn, SK. He is a lover of music and plays guitar and drums.

Reimer, Charlotte

Likes to create artwork and spending time with her cats.

Strongarm, Garette

Loves Xbox series X console and video games. Her favorite colours are green, red, and black. She likes working on her artist drawing skills.

Valentine, Eric

Enjoys riding his bike, listening to music, watching TV, and his PlayStation.

Whyte, Jayne Melville

Member of CMHA since 1975. She wrote *Pivot Points* (CMHA Sask, 2012) and compiles the CMHA SK Newsletters for the Division. Jayne enjoys WFYL at Regina Branch and works on an archive of her lifelong mental health journey.

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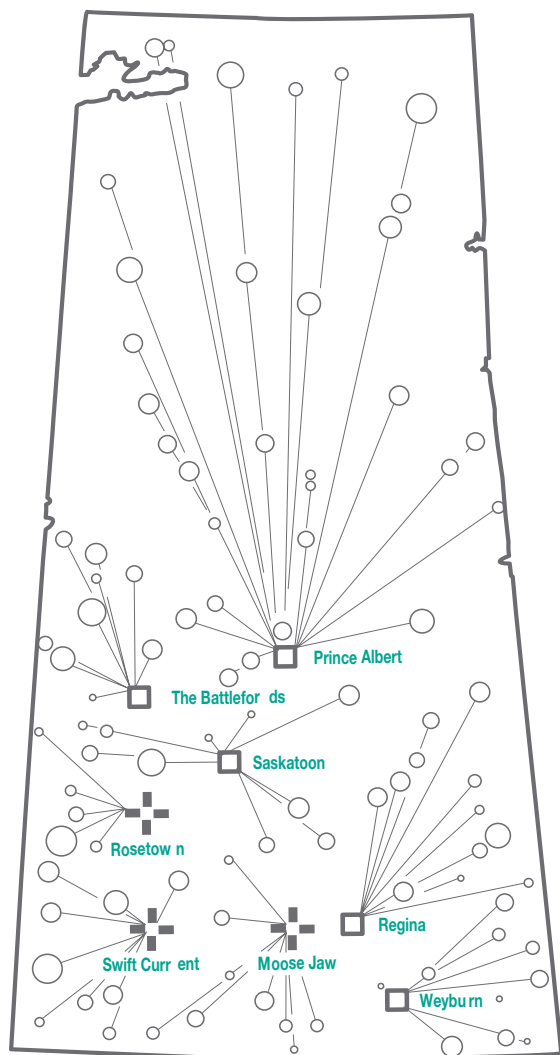
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