

Fallen Garden

The flowers I coaxed into brightness have entered the season of rain and death, some shaped like mindless doodles and some like the silver spires of science fiction cities, some like warrior angels in heavy gold breastplates and some like metal spoons bent by telekinesis, some like broken traffic lights and some like the chewed stub of a pencil, some like failed revolutions and mass beheadings and some like a cold voice that asks for me by name.

Jesus Loves You

There were a lot of stars that night, constellations in the shape of a dancing bear, a winged horse, even a hammer and sickle, but there wasn't a lot of light. Different things looked dangerously like the same thing in the dark. A woman with the beautiful blank expression of a mannequin strolled out a window as if it were a door. Witnesses were anxious to describe what they thought they had seen, a bumper sticker proclaiming Jesus Loves You. Oh, how bourgeois! I hadn't been born yet when she fell with a scream or I probably would have been having a beer at a four-lane bowling alley that doesn't exist anymore.

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Howie Good is the recipient of the 2015 Press Americana Prize for Poetry for his collection *Dangerous Acts Starring Unstable Elements*.

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My Mother's Garden

The flowers that bloom here have done so since creation.

They hold the nectar of a God that simply wishes for recognition.

The cardinal comes by every morning
to tap at the window.
Tap tap tap day and night
at the window.

Everyone says it's Frances
but I don't know. It could be Vernon
or Sarah or Pop or Fay. So many possibilities,
who would want to offer a *hello* or *I miss you*.

The yellow rose still opens and closes with seasons.
The cactus spreads out and suffocates.

The life that flows through this space is expansive.

The bumble bee.
The nectarine tree.
The Mockingbird and her eggs.

The Bluejay and the remnants of footprints
of children who played hide n seek
cops and robbers
and fetch with their dogs.

There are unseeable roots here.

How beautiful the Hummingbird
and the whiz of tiny feathers.
How beautiful the hands that caress these leaves.
How lovely the voice that sings here and echoes a love that cannot be forgotten like the passing
of winds.

We consider a closeness every day
in our hurried lives.
We cannot forget the consideration of the fertilization of our beauty,
the way she cultivates legacy,

with the melodies of Songbirds
and dirt too rich to be discarded.

I know all the pieces of God live here.

Sarah Frances Moran is a writer, editor, animal lover, videogamer, queer Latina. She thinks Chihuahuas should rule the world and prefers their company to people 90% of the time. Her work has most recently been published or is upcoming in *The No Se Habla Espanol Anthology*, *Elephant Journal*, *Drunk Monkeys*, *Rust+Moth*, *Maudlin House*, *Blackheart Magazine*, *Red Fez* and *The Bitchin' Kitsch*. She is Editor/Founder of Yellow Chair Review. These days you can find her kayaking the Brazos in Waco, Texas with her partner. You may reach her at www.sarahfrancesmoran.com

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“Congraduations”

I don't know who's more productive
In this season; put your back into it.

Attach soft blinders to the face;
Cover unsure future plans.

The way the gown crawls along
The forearms and swishing yawls

Of your body like a beat-flat boa,
Chastened by extraneous newfound

Love that envelops you in the same wake,
Knows you like a vision, sees you like a prayer.

You're one hundred percent sober
Except when he's around which is often.

So you get ready, liquor up for a party
You don't feel ready for (in any case).

But darling think of all the fun you'll have
With any members who remember

Your tired body like a chant sung
By Tibetan monks outside your cold window.

And their near-frozen faces looking
At your gauche twenties outfit with the tassels

Until one of the tassels hits you just right—
You awaken into something new.

*

Blake Wallin is a senior English Literature major at Wheaton College. He's on twitter.

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Hello

It's me again, your ex girlfriend- sike,
it is an inbox full of missed calls- sike,
it is a Google maps street view of your house- sike—

it is the soft roar of rain on my dorm room window
You don't see or hear these things
Your twitter says you're at her house

They say cell service is shit in southern Jersey

We were a four chord pop punk atrocity,
the fresh smell of body and desperation
bloomed out of basement concerts and empty promises,
stale and inevitable

The Front Bottoms prophesied our disaster
you switched out our love for your want-to-be-something
I don't blame you
for becoming the sin

I said I reveled in this
Bedsheets cradled our toxic waste
till we swam in it

I recently inquired about the possibility of a Q&A with your bedroom walls

Have been wondering if they saw something I missed

*

Erin Conroy is a nineteen year old writer currently attempting to survive in limbo between the intricate world of college studies and the existential trap that is listening to sad music on her dorm room floor while unironically eating Pez from a Minion Pez dispenser. She attends Arcadia University in Glenside, Pennsylvania. Find her on twitter at @erinzilla.

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Later Works

At fifty you will have forgotten
the specifics of your sadness.

You will be invited backstage
to meet the cast
of an off-Broadway play
about gorillas.

It will always be

about gorillas.
You'll feel vindicated

when your colleagues speak
of horizons,
and the young girls roll
their eyes.

The word "horizons"
will register

as "black honey."

Your need for guns,
high-pitched voices
and gourmet meals
will sharply decrease.

You'll increasingly like
the idea of opera,
but actually attending one

will leave you angry
and confused.

On Being a Finch

The wild finches don't so much
disappear as succumb
to severe depression.

Everything good

about being a finch
has been compromised.

If I could shrink down the Renaissance Fair,
(and I have always
avoided the Renaissance Fair,)
it would appear to explode

midair, its overconfident jousters

becoming little wings,
its anachronistic beer gardens
an effort to dislodge

grains of sand
from the throat.

The Bedside Book of Vampire Fiction

The moon bellows and shakes
like jelly.

My fictive kin flavor the sky.
No apologies.

No glowing white
surface would have them.

There is no longer such a thing
as slow or forbidden.

They bump fists.
Each head is a fist.

Each fang a finger.
We stand on the corner

throwing gang signs
to other catatonics.

Still waters and flatter affects
flatter my figure.

That's me looking up
from a passage

on Lilith's ambivalence
about her own beating heart.

*

Glen Armstrong holds an MFA in English from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst and teaches writing at Oakland University in Rochester, Michigan. He edits a poetry journal called *Cruel Garters* and has three new chapbooks: *Set List* (Bitchin Kitsch,) *In Stone* and *The Most Awkward Silence of All* (both Cruel Garters Press.) His work has appeared in *Poetry Northwest*, *Conduit* and *Cloudbank*.

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Untitled

yes, you are here
and I recognize your importance
but I reject your extravagance

I heard a saxophone today

I heard a saxophone today
wah-wah oooh
wah-wah squeak
among the rustling of branches and the chirping of birds

I heard a saxophone today
down Edsam, up Lincoln
bouncing off of houses and chimneys

wah-wah oooh
wah-wah squeak
as I nap in my bed
in my house all alone
I can hear the sound of everything
and nothing else

the buzzing of motors
cars as giant insects
the echo-echo
of birds and airplanes
and a saxophone
far away
wah-wah oooh
wah-wah squeak

the sound of someone learning
a truly wonderful noise

among the sound of everything
and nothing else

*

Sean Wofford is no one. He lives where nothing happens and sometimes writes. Read more of his writing on [his blog](#).

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Conversations with the Moon

When you wink, I smile
Rush to open a window
Or two, to let your waning
Jokes in. Never before had I realized
What a sense of humor the moon had.
You make me giggle with hyperbole,
Your pledges of “forever”
Of “always.”

Because even you, with your calendar-
Dependent temperament,
Have no concept of time.

Scratches

Four score and seven iced coffees ago,
You told me, “We want different things.”

Why choose an amusement park?
Not amused.

My wide-eyed cat sprawls upon a table,
Begging to be ignored.

Yes, you want what that cat wants—
Space. Room to roam, but

I was never too great at stifling love,
Which explains all the claw marks.

Between Us

His favorite is the Lady's-slipper,
A rarity testament to his quirks.
Men partial to orchids can be trusted
To pleasure you down to your roots.

He changes by the side of a road,
Unabashedly mooning the sun.

Budding relationship with independence,
Scars stemming from run-ins with romance—
He's in need of an Italy Street equivalent,
Walls to hang memories and string lights.

You'll say, "Takes you a while to come through,"
He eventually answers, "But I always do."

Aurelia's Anthem

Speeding by old haunts with new Her,
Passenger seat apathy.

Ever since they demolished our pathway
Without consulting us, we have been unable
To find the way back to one another's lower backs.

There's a sunflower field in Newburyport
I'll never take Her to,
There's a song in my ugly heart
Beating just for you.

*

Sarah A. O'Brien enjoys dark chocolate, alternative rock, and wordplay. Sarah's work has previously published by *The Alembic*, *Every Writer*, *The Screech Owl*, *Snapping Twig*, *Ampersand Literary*, and *Unbroken Journal*, and is forthcoming in *Third Point Press*. Follow her adventures: @fluent_SARAcasm.

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Portrait

*in response to free verse and formal verse versions of a poem
by j.lewis titled "and if i dream" and "And If I Dream – II"*

I look at ancient, formal portraits
and I think: if I had been
the painter, I too would have
worked diligently, earned my pay:

painted the captain in his uniform,
his hand upon the blade, his
lady in her flowing skirt, hands
folded not to fidget in her lap.

But then, the work complete
and coin in hand, I would have
gone down to the market,
purchased parchment and coal—

I'd take these home and draw them
both again, in secret, draw them
in a private moment in the kitchen,
the lady standing with a spoon

dipped in a bowl of batter, captain
sitting in a wooden chair, tilted back
and leaning to scratch the upturned
belly of his favorite hound.

all the way from Benin

after "Provision" by Ehizogie Iyeomoan, in which he wonders why a grasshopper has traveled from Benin to Kano on the windshield wiper without dismounting

there was a hunger in Kano, an appetite
only to be satisfied by a grasshopper

an ordinary lizard, mostly below the level
of our notice, forced to crawl on its belly

is hungry: who are we to say the beloved
is too mighty or too busy to listen to its

prayer it writes upon the air with quick
flicks of its tongue? who are we to say

the beloved has not knelt in the dust
of some car park in Kano to read

the invisible prayer this creature has
inscribed? who are we to put limitations

on the beloved, say he will not work
miracles, even for mere redneck lizards?

who are we to underestimate powers
of mercy and of grace, who are we to say

the lizard's prayer has not been heard
and his requested miracle delivered?

*

Laura M Kaminski grew up in northern Nigeria, went to school in New Orleans, and currently lives in rural Missouri. She is an Associate Editor at *Right Hand Pointing*. Her most recent poetry collection is *Considering Luminescence* (2015). Her poetry practice blog is at arkofidentity.wordpress.com

Both of these poems appear in Laura's forthcoming collection *Dance Here*.

*

My phone keeps dying but the world does not

11:53 pm-

text messages. Facebook. Reddit. spoiler alert: i am probably going to die with my cellphone in my hand. my cellphone is in my hand and i think about how I am going to die. i drown myself in sleep and dream about losing my teeth. I scramble to shove them one by one back into my mouth like words that I vomited up and now must swallow.

2:23 am-

i wake up and stretch the days like a fine rubberband and feel like I'm no longer alive. allnighters turned into weeks into months into years and I still haven't slept, though i am the dead maggot burrowing deep within your skin.

2:43am-

i still can't shake the fear of losing life. if you widen your eyes just enough you can see anything. and as i stretch mine, the iPhone display turns to little scratches of light resembling a finger-painting of space i once did as a kid. through the haze i read buzzfeed articles that tell me i need more sleep to be a better person and that i should probably get a cat. but i already have a one and she sits on my belly as my mind fades slowly into the night.

3:13am-

articles online inform me of the fact that the amount of coffee required to properly function as a human being is exponentially proportional to the square root of people spoken to that day and this makes sense to me. and it's probably why i'm still awake. you turn to me in your sleep and ask me who I am but receive no answer. you roll back over and i continue to ponder this question until i am happy. but we both know that can't happen.

4:23am-

i hum listlessly to black veil brides and rise against as my phone beeps. more messages come in, more coherent than your mid sleep ramblings but I never truly 'get' them: ie this game I'm streaming right now would totally be up your alley, ie your so totally hipster, ie dancing girls emoji, ,shrimp emoji, racially offensive emoji, do you think if we died right now anyone would really care emoji.

4:43am-

i slam my iPhone down coldly. both hands are needed to battle with demons and apple makes iphones in sweatshops in china. i wonder aloud whether anyone killed themselves so that they could escape the madness of working on the source of mine, or whether they just landed in nets.

5:23 am-

lay i continue on, searching online petitions. i crusade to stop the tyranny one tweet at a time:
roses are red/ violets are blue/ jet fuel can't melt steel beams. by now I know i've lost my own
mind but then "what is a mind to lose?" I tweet

5:43am-

i breathe my last breath. tweet my last tweet. loss is just a concept of imagination. another
manifestation of my own mind. but still i die my iphone in my hand.

5:54am-

my cat crawls atop my dead carcass and meows long like a diesel engine struggling.

6:33am-

thanks Obama, I am finally asleep.

*

Mallory Smart is a poet/writer from Chicago, Illinois. She runs the publishing company Maudlin House and has a cat. Her book "Im AntiSocial, Coffee Never Lies" comes out September 2015 from Bottlecap Press. Tweet her @malsmart. She's antisocial but likes the attention.

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Familiar Scratch

My thumb is a battery
and I like to rub my ankle until my nerves complete the circuit of my digits
It doesn't feel good,
but it does.

Once I grew my nail out and scratched my surface
just to see if I still felt pain
And boy, did it feel
good.
It felt like thumb digit electricity and yellow water balloons, air dried hair and watermelon juice and
honey in June bugs on leaves and train tracks.

But I'm no conductor, I'm no conductor
And I don't drive this Train.

My shoes lost traction the first day I got them
And I wear shoes till I'm just in my own feet
and then I can feel that scratch,

that familiar scratch
And I don't have to remind myself
That I can
Still
Make
Electricity.

The sidewalk was dirty.

*A sea of cigarettes and traces of
stale booze pass by like road signs
The ambience is free jazz
My feet are flirting with gravity
and I have to force them away as each
crack approaches my toes*

It's busy for a wednesday.

I couldn't tell if she was weeping
But she stood so firm on that
sidewalk in her deep purple gown
And she
was singing

She was singing and my feet married the ground
so I watched.

"it's gonna be alright, you know it's gonna be alright!"

Echoing over the free jazz
She was a nightingale
She was a hot air balloon
She was an angel or something

And then a drunk red dress
Clinging in unflattering places,
And falling off in others,
Stumbled down the street in pigeon-toe.

She stopped and laughed.

*

Deb Gilmore is a student at Arcadia University in Glenside, Pennsylvania.

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EMILY AS THE BUILD BETWEEN TWO FORCES

If the sky
would only step
the fuck back,

Emily said,
I could be
in love

without feeling
like God
was already

coming for you.
I said, that
doesn't matter.

If it mattered
to you, it
wouldn't matter,

she smiled.
We were so close
& yet

what would happen
after I couldn't
love Emily

anymore, after
I was in pieces
in the river

gave us a distance
that felt like
we needed faith.

EMILY AS WE SWAM IN CELESTIAL BLOOD

If we had more moons,
if we had thirteen moons

I would still count Emily,
the one Emily, more often

than I would count moons.
Having thirteen moons

instead of one wouldn't make
me crash any faster into

the shoreline of where
I want the ocean to lead me.

I can only imagine the sky
after I place Emily up there.

EMILY AS JUST INSIDE THE BOX WHERE THE LIGHT PENETRATED

For Oni Buchanan

I don't need to see
more of Emily
to know that warmth

in the darkest corner
of my own mind
is coming from her

own energies. I have
forgotten why I am
in this box, but I have

learned to love that
Emily knows exactly
where to find me.

*

Darren C. Demaree's poems have appeared or are scheduled to appear in numerous journals, including *South Dakota Review*, *Meridian*, *The Louisville Review*, *Diagram*, and *Colorado Review*. He is the author of *As We Refer To Our Bodies* (2013, 8th House), *Temporary Champions* (2014, Main Street Rag), *The Pony Governor* (2015, After the Pause Press), and *Not For Art Nor Prayer* (2015, 8th House). He is the Managing Editor for the Best of the Net Anthology, and lives and writes in Columbus, Ohio with his wife and children.

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The Wicked Witch of the West

In the middle of summer
And the tree branches look like veins or shotguns
Sam is chugging a beer out of this girl's prosthetic leg
Her laugh sounds like the numbness of pills
With touches of cabaret.
"Oh, oh, oh, what a feeling," she says
As Sam kisses the basilica of her neck.
Meanwhile I'm lying in the grass
And being slut-shamed by mosquitoes
I like being bullied
And let them play spin the bottle with my ankles
In the darkness, our dead fathers are laying eggs
In the back of a Chevy S-10 pickup
Later in the night, we use our shame like a chainsaw
To cut down the moon
Afterwards we're standing on the northern bank
Of a river I don't remember
And I'm begging Sam to beat me bloody
With that girl's prosthetic leg
When suddenly a hundred billion phantom limbs
Wash up on the shore
The spoils of young people dying and old men talking
"Oh, oh, oh, what a feeling," Sam says
As he dips his toe in the water
The girl laughs and it sounds like the fall of Fallujah
With touches of vaudeville
I use her prosthetic leg like a broom to sweep up the shore
The absence courses through my body and lifts me into the air
Before long I'm cackling like a witch and riding across the sky
On that girl's magic prosthetic leg, casting a spell on America
So that we can learn to love again,
For all the amputees to come together
To smash the old world and build a better body

Clutching That Postmortem Mic

I find myself purgatoried in a karaoke club for the dead
Where the prophylactic gravity glues you to the barstool
And the bartender in red shoves shots of cheap formaldehyde
Down your throat and the suicides of all your friends
Are singing "Paradise by the Dashboard Light"
And you suddenly remember every little thing
As if it happened only yesterday.

*

Justin Karcher is a playwright and poet living in Buffalo, NY. He is the Co-Artistic Director of Theater Jugend as well as its Playwright-in-Residence. His recent works have been published in 3:AM Magazine, The Buffalo News, Plenitude Magazine, Melancholy Hyperbole, and more. He is the recent winner of the 2015 Just Buffalo Literary Center members' writing competition. A book of poems, *Tailgating at the Gates of Hell*, will be released in October from Ghost City Press. He tweets @Justin_Karcher.

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Alchemical

Her hair tints obediently
to shades of trendy mutations;

these have seen days of
as if inheriting its colour
from the black caverns
of an ancestor's proverb

and days of as if imitating
a stream breaking out of
the coldest mountain

and days of shedding
like the jaundiced rays
of a dried up summer's sun;

her hair can be frostier
than the ice she causes,

passing down to generations
its incapability to hold form

Quiescence

Last night the flies lost their wings,

if I had known they were
the kind of species

that survived the light like an epiphany
in a grave,

I would never have let
the dying bulb drop them
to the floor like nine pins

for, I would know
what the impassable route
is not

over slabs of smooth marble

is having originally risen from dust.

Route

The train stops swaying,

we cross a makeshift graveyard
and I think of the ominous
magnificence of the brambles I saw
a few short miles ago

the trees on this strip are full
with leaves

a few children play a skilled game
of stick and stones

a red cloth fluttering in the wind

mud mosques and *dhabas*
seated with charpoys

a bison pair keeping loyal
ly tethered to a nail, protruding from
a brick wall

and a *madrasah* with broken
windows that sounds of vacant
attendances;

I am scrunch foetal
like, my head buried in
my knees

eyes pressed to the bones
fighting nausea

my ears compensating for sight

the wheels begin
chopping the tracks again

*

Sheikha A. hails from Pakistan and United Arab Emirates. With over 40 publications in various print/online publications such as *Red Fez*, *Ygdrasil*, *A New Ulster*, *The Penmen Review*, *Pyrokinecton*, *Mad Swirl* to name a few, and anthologies by Silver Birch Press and Kind of a Hurricane Press, she has also authored a short poetry collection titled *Spaced* (Hammer and Anvil Books) available on kindle. Her poems have also been recited at two separate poetry reading events held in Greece. She edits poetry for eFiction India. She maintains a (or tries to) blog at sheikha82.wordpress.com

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Traveling Alone

I have barely spoken
For the past five days
Except to say I'm sorry
For various inconsequential
Trespasses
Understood by all to be
Inadvertent.

I am a stranger here
Everywhere
I tend to keep to myself

I've spent the past five days
Wandering a city as unfamiliar
As my own motivations
Pretending I'm not in a hurry
Even as I struggle to get to
Several attractions each day.
I don't even have to check my email
But sometimes I do.

Mostly I find myself in public places
Tuning in on other people's conversations.
I am a talented eavesdropper
But a poor conversationalist.
It's as if I think that every stranger
Ought to know me already.
I sound cynical sometimes because
I just sort of blurt out what I'm thinking
Without even starting at hello.

I'm not even a very good listener
Stripmining the conversation
For the makings of a literary argument.
(In 15 minutes I could convince you
That I'm not a good person at all.)

I am barely listening as the tourguide says:
In the 1830s, there was an epidemic
Of yellow fever and city was filled
With above-ground sewers
Resulting in "premature resurrections"
Of the dead.

But after five days of doing all the things
I would never do if I lived here
I am starting to feel

More culturally evolved
Like a person who might achieve
Something
If I only had the time.

It's so peaceful here, isn't it?
Nicky! No running in the cemetery.

I did not even intend to write anything here
Sometimes the transmissions just come
I am an undercover language spy
Tenderness exposed to the ravages of the weather.
Why am I so compelled to steal other people's words
And write them all down
To widespread indifference
And polite applause?

(So what if I collect
The ephemera of ephemera?
That's my job, isn't it?)

They say it's the finest restaurant in the city
\$35 for a steak? I don't think so!

Now that I have escaped the ordinary bedlam
That I've become accustomed to
And embraced the congenial decay of this city
Where amiable spirits take their place at every table
Without need of invitation
My mind is filled with profound thoughts
I mutter to myself.

I want to say something to you now
About the convergence of time
How everything I'm doing right now
Has already been consigned to memory
And everyone I have ever loved
Is here with me now.
And everything I do from now on
Is an alloy of the present and the past.

I am writing this on a notepad
Stolen from the hotel in New Orleans.
(Revised at home on a borrowed laptop)
And after I win the Nobel Prize
(For literature)
I will tell everyone that I have written this
On a notepad from the hotel in New Orleans
As if this information had some significance to them

When I'm famous it will.

(And yet I would probably shudder
At the assumption of such familiarity).

Courtly Love

After dinner, my college friends and I
Were discussing the death of Courtly Love
And Annette looked up from the depths
Of her magazine and said
“I’m not surprised. It’s like that bitch had nine lives.”

And my friends and I laughed uneasily
And ignored her for the rest of the conversation.

And in the car on the way home, Annette told me
That she was in seventh grade when Kurt died.
She wrote his name on her hand in black ink
And played nothing but his music for days
And thought about suicide herself.
She’d told me that story years ago.
And several times since.
We’d been together for four years by then
An eternity.
And my pretentious friends from the University had insisted
They’d love to meet my girlfriend.
She’d dropped out of college
Was working as a waitress.
Theoretically, I respected her.
Whenever we went out, she paid.

“I knew what Courtly Love was,” she said.
“So why didn’t you?”
“I don’t give a shit what those people think
And you shouldn’t either.”
And all I wanted to do was get back
To my college friends
And speak authoritatively about subjects barely understood
So I told her I didn’t want to see her anymore.

And she said “Ron, I don’t know what I did wrong.
Tell me what I did wrong.”
How could I tell her
That all the things I loved about her
I hated now?
Her straightforwardness. Her eagerness to please.

I was young
But that’s no excuse
Is it?

Your Favorite Avatar

I'm sorry I couldn't come to the party last night
I'd desperately wanted to come
I hope that sometime in the evening
You sensed a brief disruption in time
And utilized the occasion to raise a toast to me

I was in transit to an unknown destination
One breath, and then an interruption
All my accumulations gone
Desires and possessions
Suddenly fallen away

Now I find myself dwelling upon
The meaninglessness of meaninglessness
Waiting in this molecular waystation
Craving life's lively agonies

The dead gather to gossip
And share petty envies
Entrusting our existence
To the vagaries of memory

I'll be your avatar from now on
Without your careful attention,
I will wither away.

*

Michael Koenig is a writer, editor, and designer in Oakland, California whose short fiction and poetry have appeared in recent issues of *The MacGuffin*, *Harpur Palate*, *Drunk Monkeys*, *Literary Orphans*, *Hardboiled*, and *Paterson Literary Review*. His work has also been anthologized in *Awake! A Reader for the Sleepless* (Soft Skull Press) and *The Shamus Sampler 2*, an international detective fiction collection.

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