

LODESTAR LIT, VOL. 1



MOUTHS DROWNED IN TIME

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On a Violinist Performing *Concerto in D Minor, RV 235*

The strings moan and mew. Caterwauling Vivaldi
shouts purposed through the centuried years,
the interpreter bouncing, hopping, hoping
the listeners approve the melodious moan.
Contorted the face of the heraldman,
drenched in a fury of porous hydration,
appendages dancing the frets, fretting not,
whipped into submission, controlled and controlling.
Violist, a mere thousand miles behind,
not viewing--conducting--this amorous speech:
Her eyes the spirit's baton, unbending;
Her smile the maestro, unbeaten in beat.

Eric K. Auld teaches English at George Mason University. His work has been published in *McSweeney's Internet Tendency*, *The Guardian*, *Reader's Digest*, and more. He currently lives in Northern Virginia with his spouse, cockatiel, and two budgerigars.

kirchner, silent, as the nazis approach

always this same field in
october, in november,
beneath the distant drone of planes,
beneath the fading memory of sunlight,
this simple action of holding out
yr open hand,
of offering the skull of some
 tiny animal,
and i forget which one of us laughs,
 and why,
and the edges of my vision
are filled w/ crows,
my mouth filled w/ their screams,
and there is never anything to do
w/ the ideas you fear but turn them
into the ideas you hate

there is never anything to do w/
the eyes of witnesses but
gouge them out

poem for when the truth is finally enough

everybody laughs at
the news of your pain and
why not?

the age of wounded animals has arrived,
the age of children locked in
cages for entertainment,
and listen

i am not a prophet but
i have foreseen the death of your god

i am not the starving artist
you remember with such bland fondness,
but i will eat his heart

i will watch your enemies
get drunk on the taste of his blood

what history has taught me
is that victory means nothing
unless some sorry asshole
can be made to suffer

John Sweet sends greetings from the rural wastelands of upstate NY. He is a firm believer in writing as catharsis, and in compassionate nihilism which, as luck would have it, has all the best bands. His published collections include *NO ONE STARVES IN A NATION OF CORPSES* (2020 Analog Submission Press) and *THERE'S ONLY ONE WAY THIS IS GOING TO END* (Cyberwit, 2023).

Legs

Summer was splintering into our last days of elementary school. Girls unable to stand the heat began to bear their legs. Soft, young skin revealed themselves to the classroom, yet there was still the heat of eyes. Those masculine things that peered with newfound hunger. Revelation that year was more than skin.

Trinity, big eyes and loud mouth, perhaps had the longest legs amongst the five of us. Her dark skin was untouched by hair, for her mother allowed her to shave. I was not permitted this. My legs remained covered even in the hottest days with long socks and long shorts. Embarrassment, at that age, was a lingering friend with a wide voice.

Cassie, the blonde girl, all-too-skinny but unfairly strong, had told us one day that her sister was pregnant. Her mother told her it was because her sister was mixing chemicals. A straight woman, her mother, with a tight, mean face. We never went over to her house.

Madison, who already had a large chest, was the only one of us with divorced parents. She lived in a town house and listened to angry music, but something about her seemed so much older than the rest of us, like her voice carried more weight. Mine didn't. Mine was just used as a tiebreaker; a smart, quiet girl who wasn't really all that quiet.

Samantha, the compulsive liar. I'd known her the longest. She'd falsified much of her hobbies to make herself both more interesting and more relatable. She never hesitated to go back on a lie if it meant seeming more agreeable to new eyes. I would catch her in the act and she would deny she'd ever said such a thing. Small and easily upsettable: that was Samantha.

We were like all others when we were together. Mean. Loud. Removed from the world. In our heads we forged games and stories, made ourselves older and untouchable, perhaps to escape the truth. We had grown up, even if we were still children, stuck in this place where we were

desirables. Where sometimes we thought this gave us standing and control. Those eyes that followed us around, they were in our trap. Young seductresses we thought we were. Really, we were just girls. Girls with big eyes and long legs. Sightless little things not come to grasp our true youth until adulthood.

The Takers, they were there with us in that classroom. I had known two to be my charges, my things to carry. But there were more.

I could hear the laughter, the normalcy. Trinity, bright and sunny, was sitting in the back of the classroom. I joined her, along with whoever else was there. She was wearing shorts. On her thigh was the hand of the boy sitting next to her. He was grinning. Slowly, he ran his hand up and down. Still, he smiled.

I asked Trinity why he was doing that to her. She said it was an exchange. She let him do it so he would stop bothering her. I couldn't look at the boy, at Victory. He was calm. He'd gotten what he wanted, this thing that had failed the fifth grade. His hand never stopped moving and Trinity just kept on talking like Victory wasn't even there – like she couldn't feel his touch. I felt a shiver. It stuck with me. Embedded in my spine, I could only watch his hand. Up and down.

My taker, I called him Restlessness, told me he'd looked down the front of my shirt. I asked him when he did that. He said it was when he'd kissed me. I remembered the feeling, the burning on the top of my head where his chapped lips had touched. I saw him, when he'd joined us, us seductresses, as we sat around a bean-shaped table by the door, and he went around and kissed all of us on the tops of our heads. We had identical marks. I watched them fade as we grew apart. I felt mine sear every time I touched it, promised myself it was a memorial for that year. A graveyard of girls in my scalp.

Madison shunned me after she thought I laughed at one of Restlessness' jokes about her. I never even had the capacity. I was a loyal friend. We shared the scars of Restlessness, a bond that would be treason to break. Betrayal was not a member of my empty arsenal.

I remained silent during the lunch she thought I'd humiliated her. It took everyone else's convincing and my tears to persuade her I hadn't laughed. Madison I needed to keep. We exchanged feminine secrets in the back of the classroom, pulling them out of our backpacks so no one else could see. She apologized to me and I wiped my cheeks. We'd live to see another argument.

Cassie enjoyed the boy's eyes. When the rest of us wished to be free, even if we didn't have the words to say it, she reveled in the affection. She and Restlessness played games together. They were engaged. She was the girl who gave it up willingly, who played along. For some, this was fun, this was easy. For others, she proposed no challenge. I suppose I was the challenge. The modest girl, the subtle influencer.

Samantha wasn't sought after like the rest of us. She wasn't thin. She was funny. Maybe that's why she lied so much. She wanted to be recognized. We were something like best friends. She always wanted to be let in on the games I was playing by myself but never wanted to know the rules. At least there was some clarity. She hated Restlessness and she knew how to play protector.

There was a short boy, Desperation, who'd been following me around for a year. He wasn't handsy but he was obsessive. No recognition of boundaries. Samantha was the one to initiate jokes about him. She understood my distaste for desirability, even if I wasn't so aware of it then. We shared feelings, even in all our differences and disagreements.

I would know her again in my teenage years and while her personality was all the same, she was unrecognizable. I was left with the realization that I might have been the only one of us left with our shared memories. Not the good ones, those I would forget, but that graveyard stood proudly on my head and I had no choice but to burden it.

Glimpses of these girls follow me, their youth imprinted in my hair, and I carry them through womanhood, wondering if they've found peace from that year or if they are still tormented.

I, on the other hand, stand plagued. For in my unknowing, I seek to avenge them. To fight for our youth now that it's gone. To see them grown old even if I now recognize their annoyances. Even now that I know mine.

Slowly, I seek these things out, become them in their inverse: Victory, Restlessness, Desperation. I wait in hunger, transformed into something that bites, jaw clamped shut like a mythical Pitbull locked in the image of the bitch. Instead of a seductress I become a siren, singing my girlhood away, wreathed in Barbie pink, longing for the moment I can sever the head of the man, singular and unassuming, still frightened he might follow me, become the next charge.

I narrow my gaze, focused but innocent, and when I shower, I shave my legs.

Sofie Anderson is a newly graduated alum of Virginia Tech. Her work has previously appeared in *Furrow*, *Silhouette*, *Glass Mountain*, and *Virginia Literary Review*.

silence as a song

i grew up with silence.
my mother would wake my brother
with a jubilant song, singing
rise and shine, and give god
the glory glory, to which my brother
threw his pillow over his face and begged
for five more minutes of sleep.
my mother would wake me up
by flooding the room with searing light and
gently shaking me until she got a
verbal response.

silence grew up with me.
i never knew how firmly
silence was my companion until
i witnessed my mother rouse my brother
from a deep nap and sing a song
i'd never heard before.

i was twenty when i discovered a
piece of my childhood i hadn't known
was missing. i suppose silence is
a song all its own.

Lindsay Rogers (She/Her) is a writer from Cincinnati, Ohio. She is currently working toward her Bachelors in English at The Ohio State University with a focus on creative writing. She received first place and an honorable mention in Lord Denney's Players' 2022 Sonnet Writing Contest and her work has appeared in *An Inkslinger's Observance*, *Mosaic Magazine*, and elsewhere.

self-imposed whirlpool

ear to seashell; seashell to ear
conducting an ear infection
wave impending
caught under like wayward garbage

the inflammatory disease of the free
spirit bottled; ship in a bottle
i bother you the way growth
disturbs the balance of the concrete

looking glass/teardrop falling
from my eye while i listen
to the roaring ocean
weeping softly for the polluted water

these senses are going under
ears can't help me hear anything kind
nor eyes help me see a way out
don't get me started on my sorry mouth

d. h. lane (she/he) is a linguistics undergrad at syracuse university. you can find his works at beloved zine, dog teeth, swim press, and on substack here:

<https://delightfullyunhinged.substack.com>. while working as a freelance editor and submitting work to magazines, d. h. lane is also finishing her debut novel.

WITH THE IMPOSSIBLE

I have watched you occupy every distance, as sun, mountain.
house on a hill, traffic lights on the midnight highway.
always at the edge, and threatening to slip over the side.
but somehow, the far space you let go of, you suddenly reoccupy,
as if even the miles between places have their limits,
when the naked eye is as naked as mine
And yes, I've seen you float above the planet from time to time,
a simple aeration maybe brought on the rise of your breast,
or a quiet word in your ear from heaven, some of
that old firmament song, the angels picking you for their team,
but allowing you your home games on earth.
And another way you're not for me is your shine.
Who has ever caught a firefly? Or a second floor apartment
window for that matter? Or a face that could be a reflection
in the water for all the gathering these hands can do?
I've been intrigued by your footprints, the candy wrappers
in your trash bin, even what you recycle, none of which is you.
And I've expressed you in mathematical terms, found that I was
the margin of error. And in poems, well that goes without saying,
Perfect medium some would say Leaves me to wonder how
a dentist does it- Or jackhammer guy. But even the poems
exist as some exalted therapy. And when did therapy ever get the girl?
I should leave you to your distance. Maybe the horizon is
the better fit after all. There goes the day with you in it.
Here comes the night. It's your return trip. The moon's rising,
floating and shining. I always knew you had it in you.

IN LOCAL NEWS

Some guy
shoots his wife
and then uses
the next bullet
on himself.

Maybe it's
a parable.
Maybe
it's a metaphor.

But it's
an awful stretch
from there
to merely
falling out of love.

John Grey (he/him) is an Australian poet, US resident, recently published in *New World Writing*, *North Dakota Quarterly* and *Lost Pilots*. His latest books, *Between Two Fires*, *Covert*, and *Memory Outside The Head* are available through Amazon. He has work upcoming in *California Quarterly*, *Seventh Quarry*, *La Presa* and *Doubly Mad*.

Macon and Howard

False moons and fireflies
Echo in the tiny concrete diamonds
As if to say "I'm here"
"I'm home"
While Home however softly
Says it back.

Bedside Visit

Just a prick in the elbow, no pain,

don't look

Now soldier up, son! Have some pride,

There's a dire need for cleansing cuts

You have such a pretty blue vein,

Give up no tears for taking,

The guardian's outside?

I think

Yes, put on the gown,

Oops! The needle did pop!

oh lord

Someone call them in at once!

Grab the bucket and mop and

We'll batten down this body built for breaking.

oh lord

There's collateral to be signed.

I'll transport the gurney, the
doctor is ready

I'll slop the spilled blood down the drain.

oh merciful lord

For sedative reasons we'll
count down from 20:

18

still awake

14

still awake

10

still awake still awake still

7

Miles Harrison is a poet, writer, and performance artist from Brooklyn, New York. In his work, both theatrical and literary, he is interested in memory, the idea of the home, and one's relationship with one's selves. At this point in his career, he is best characterized as an emerging artist.

limbs for sale

the limbs are not for sale,
and the rush was over long ago.
you can't put down your credit card
or pull out your bulking wallet and expect
the lights to go back on. the store is
closed. the limbs are not for sale.

the limbs are not for sale.
i just got them back. had to find
the dealers and make deal, give
me back my arms and i will give you
my blood. so now i am bloodless,
but not armless. the limbs are not for sale.

no, these limbs are not for sale.
i found my hands buried in the sand,
stamped by someone else's bond.
the smearing lipstick on my knuckles
dried out in the heat. i can't wash it off,
the spot won't come out. these limbs are not for sale.

i already said these limbs are not for sale.
because if i give you my hands again, you'll keep
the fingers, and i need these fingers to
touch your face. but if i give you my fingers
and hands and arms, you'll want the heart (you
always want the heart). i don't have it. so my limbs are not for sale.

how to build a country

the books make it seem
stealing things is pretty, that
we take pride in theft.

they spin my country
as a children's playground set.
forget who built it,

you are here and free!
and the floors are cushioned for
your comfort. i know

my land is layers of
all the ghosts who wrought those floors
for my feet to walk.

who they are? lost. but
do you know what wind sounds like?
i'll start searching there.

Remson DeJoseph is a Doctoral student at the University of Delaware studying Renaissance drama and literature. Apart from academia, Remson is also a performer, playwright, and poet, whose work has seen the stages of New York City and Providence. Remson's writing has been featured in places such as *The Basilisk Tree*, "Chronicle Stories" and "Channillo."

