

Lodestar Lit, Volume II
By All These Lovely Tokens



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Published 1 November 2024 by *Lodestar Lit*.

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Lodestar Lit is co-owned and co-edited by Brenna Alyse Walch, Keenan Travis Robinson, and William Grey Cashwell. Visit us on Instagram **@lodestarlit** and our website, **lodestarlit.blogspot.com**.

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A Consideration

Ablaze the sky with a new day!
Ablaze the terror in their hearts!
Rattle the ground!
Shatter the windows!
Crumble the buildings!
Jubilee for God;
Massacre for the peoples.
Tomorrow snuffed in the ashes of yesterday.

Mothers under the grocer's boot!
Mirages of hope!
Televised comedy for the world!
Blasphemy in the alleyways;
God's blessing
Tomorrow snuffed in the pockets of the pot gut.

Ominous skies waken the world!
Coffee bean allusions for the spines!
The street lights on for 24 hours!
Children, duck down!
We are the bulls;
The china shops lock their doors.
Tomorrow snuffed up in wails for freedom.

Welcome, Autumn!
Cover the rubble with heritage!
Kill the memories!
Bring out the all-spiced air;
Cover the burning with knitted sweaters.
I embrace this friend!
Rejuvenate me, Autumn.
Hideout in October, masked humanities.
World's phenomenon in November.
For today autumn is a salvation!
Tomorrow, ignite in the auburn hues.

Anna Jorgensen is a junior at Southern Utah University studying English Rhetoric with a double-major in Philosophy while obtaining a minor in Legal Studies. Her creative writings aim to grab an audience that holds empathy toward the internal experiences of human thought and emotion while dealing with our current humanity. "A Consideration" was written amidst the tragedy and historical events of modern society as she tried to grapple with the realities of the world while navigating another fall semester of university.

Shortening:

Well, when you have a similar gummy smile and squint your eyes the same when you laugh and begin to crave tobacco and turn red after just a minute in the sun you realize that you are your father's child, not your mother's daughter, though she wishes she could yell like you but she just *doesn't like conflict* so you're the one that begins yelling back at him, a good ole' boy with a crooked mouth and dusty jeans and you think to yourself at least you got your mother's teeth even if they're tacked on to a father tongue that leads to screaming matches going nowhere because *wow can you talk yourself in circles, dear* but you think it's because yelling at one another is like looking in the back of a spoon and seeing your warped reflection and trying to make out the outline of your forehead but you just can't figure out where it starts and where it ends and one time you get so heated – distorted – that you instinctively draw your hand back, recoiled in defense, and realize that you're looking up when all this time you thought you were looking straight on; you are now a person not a daughter, and so you revisit this argument later over some beers and can't even recall what it was you were screaming about, probably something relating to Obama or cryptocurrency, but all that is settled now as he hands you a perspiring can *dad I'm fifteen* but that doesn't bother this jackknife man *if you're old enough to operate a vehicle you can have a few drinks* you don't even have your license yet but you take it anyway and now the drink has lost its novelty, that's another divide between you and him and you begin to notice these discrepancies more often so you start to exclusively wear heels or shoes with a platform so as to close that distance and later that night when you find yourself smoking a bowl with some friends in the local swimming pool parking lot, air heavy with summer's moisture and cricket-sex sounds, you inhale so deeply and grin with the exhale so that Jenna notices that similarity – an upward curve of the mouth – because she was sitting in the passenger

seat and you were driving when he threw up all over the backseat and she can see that same restlessness in your face so she grabs your hand, just for a moment.

Vivian Ealy (she/they) is a rising senior at The George Washington University. She studies English, Spanish, and Creative Writing and hopes to pursue a career in teaching literature! All of her work, forever and always, is dedicated to her sweet angel cat, Lincoln.

WEDDING DAY

By dusk,
the little boys of dawn
have turned into full-fledged killers
in the darkening streets,
sharpening knives,
popping bullets into pistols
like pills into mouths.

Shadows move in,
they spread out.
farther and farther,
so near your sanctuary,
you could stretch out your hand,
brush one of theirs.

So nervous,
you accidentally pull one in.
Before you know it,
he's by your side
but, having lost his weapon
in all the confusion,
trembling as you are,
no way to protect you
from more of his kind to come.

John Grey is an Australian poet, US resident, recently published in New World Writing, North Dakota Quarterly and Lost Pilots. Latest books, "Between Two Fires", "Covert" and "Memory Outside The Head" are available through Amazon. Work upcoming in California Quarterly, Birmingham Arts Journal, La Presa and Shot Glass Journal.

This is what they speak of when they reference female rage

He looks down at me with deep-set eyes from a face of heavy-set features, and a mouth full of teeth that glint in the light, always ready to cut. He has a suggestive way of asking questions—no one who is convinced he is right actually means to understand— and he asks, why do I always speak of marriage as if it were a cage, of wives as if they were prisoners?

I smile, not nicely.

It is a smile shared by generations of women—my great grandmothers and their great grandmothers. It is a smile that stops the mouth from biting, that keeps the tongue from spitting venom; *you do not understand because you are a man*, it wants to hiss—

you are a spoiled, lonely, miserable man who did not have to craft herself into her mother's right-hand when her father would not;

I flew through forges on the wings of Saint Joan to save that woman; a descending angel of death: I was created to burn, folded and pounded and beat to near-breaking, crafted into a weapon just to be forbidden from drawing blood—

(and do not ask whether I would have liked to; you already know the fearsome reply)

—and you do not need to hear of the bitterness in my left breast, the rage that still smolders in my gut when you speak of family—

Eve takes the fall for her husband: shaped from his bones, taste of eternity still lingering on her tongue as she is sentenced for his sins.

Your pain does not make you immune from hurting others: we too are pulled into the furious undertow, unable to free ourselves from your grasp.

(Your pain will take twenty years off of my life, just as it has already taken fifty from the woman chained to your fourth finger).

So do not pretend to understand my hatred, this rage that poisons and pervades and plots, Medea planning murder, Judith sharpening her knife, Clytemnestra cleansing her bloodstained hands;

And I; I, with my Medusa tattoo and my bruised-blue knuckles and my unequal wages and my bleeding womb;

I have suffered long enough watching women I love eaten away by the vulturous sex; I have touched my sisters' scars, sponged the blood from off their lips, seen them offered at an altar like beasts to the slaughterhouse.

Tiamat cradles their crushed skulls in her hands, crowns the cosmos with their ribs, ashes strewn amongst constellations,

as I carry the suffering my mother could not tell me of, and I count my injuries and

I remember.

M.L. Krueger (she/her) is originally from Colorado, but spends most of her time in Washington, D.C., where she is pursuing her BA in English literature. In addition to writing for various school blogs and publications such as *The GW Local* and *George*, she is an amateur poet and creative writer.

Sunday

Maxine, nine years old, couldn't remember what day in April she had brought Fishy home, but he ended up dying on a Sunday in December.

Fishy was actually a toad, snatched out of a pond with Maxine's bare fist as a wild tadpole. She took him home in her cupped hands, water rapidly leaking out from between the seams of her fingers as she leapt and ran through the backyard and then through the back door. Maxine's mother was *not* happy, but eventually took pity on the poor, gasping tadpole and became a monumental aid to Fishy's continued survival. Mother rehomed Fishy first in an old water glass, then in a fishbowl, and finally in a ten-gallon tank. He grew to be about the size of a fist, lively, smart, the ultimate specimen of a toad and probably very handsome among his own kind, but in the end domesticity did not treat Fishy well. Though Maxine pampered him to the best of her ability, Fishy lived for about seven months compared to the ten years Google had led her to expect. She found him, keeled over and unresponsive, ten minutes before Maxine and her mother were meant to leave for a Christmas mass.

If Maxine entered the living room to find Fishy's deathbed, Maxine's mother entered soon after to find Maxine, in her nice velvet dress with the red and green trim, wailing and clutching the gooey thing to her chest like it was her own heart carved out of her body.

Whatever Maxine was trying to say, it was insensible except for distress. She dropped Fishy onto the carpet twice, fumbling stiff fingers, and though she and her mother flinched terribly each time, Fishy's floppy corpse did not explode upon impact. Maxine finally managed to pick him up and keep hold of him, crying all the while. Mother kicked her heels off and slid a purse off of her shoulder in wry defeat.

“We’ll stay home,” Mother said.

Fishy’s funeral was solemn, at least to Maxine. Above the child’s head, Mother had to constantly turn her mouth into her own shoulder, hiding disgust and laughter alike as she handled Fishy’s body. Mother gamely found a shoe box to lay the body in, but she drew the line at an immediate burial. For one thing, they were both still in their Sunday best, even if Maxine’s dress had a wet smear across the front.

“And for another thing,” Mother continued, “The ground’s frozen.”

Christmas was in about a week, but it was due to be a white one. The ground outside was awash in a two-foot-deep layer of snow, powdery and light at the top but packed densely towards the bottom.

“Then where do we put him?” Maxine asked, gazing sadly down into the shoebox. Fishy was splayed on his back, limbs akimbo, his belly and underside a pale, smooth cream spotted with darker circles. He looked like mold.

Mother sighed and took the shoebox out to the garage. Fishy’s temporary burial place was on a middle shelf, between a tool box and a flashlight. Mother plied Maxine with ice cream and quality bonding time until she stopped sniffing, and after a few days the child was back to being as chipper as ever.

In the meantime Fishy stayed in the garage, undisturbed in peace or restlessness until spring.

On a Sunday, one hour before Easter mass, Maxine was in the garage, eagerly peddling her bike towards the street to ride figure-eights out in the sunshine before Mother caught her and herded

her back inside. It felt like she was getting away with something—she was wearing her Sunday best, this time white tights and a pastel gingham dress, and Mother would not approve.

In Maxine's haste, she jostled the shelf in passing with the one of the handlebars of her bike. She had just enough time to look up, let the bike fall out of her grasp with a clatter, and catch the shoebox before it hit the floor.

She stood still and did not open the box, staring at the lid with a sudden, remembered sadness and a grim expectation of decay. She left the bike propped against the wall and carried the shoebox out of the open garage, placing it onto the concrete driveway to finally open the lid and see what had become of Fishy in the light.

Fishy hopped out, alive and well, escaping a few feet to the left to reach the lawn and rest his feet onto fresh grass for the first time in a season. In the face of Maxine's wild joy he did not react, but he also did not struggle when she swept him up into her grasp again.

Jasmine Seal (she/her) is a junior student at Washington State University, working on a creative writing major, a fine art minor, and an editing and publishing certificate. She hopes to be a novelist one day.

Ten and Two

License Check

Phone Check

Seatbelt Buckled Check

Hands need to tend to

Ten and Two

I tend to forget

sideview mirrors

To check both

sideview mirrors

I look

In the rearview mirror

I see a closed garage

Sweat from my palms

Make it difficult to grab my

Keys

I'm alone in a car

The smell of leather pokes

at my nostrils

The sight of a closed garage keeps me

Protected from the
rays of daylight.

What will happen once I exit?

Ten and Two

Too much

Space...And

Time crumbles with every

Thought That secures me

Like a mental seatbelt.

It's simple really.

All I need to do is

Turn

The

Ignition.

Well actually open

the garage first

Vijay Jelin (he/him) is an English major with a creative writing concentration at UTSA.

Screen Qriter

When you start a class about screen writing you think

You think about all the shows and movies you live

About the joy they brought you on a blue Tuesday

You wanna recapture that

You want to feel that blue wash away again

The blue that's seeped down into the toes

Each step a splash in your cliché spiral into nihilism

But you come back

You see the tide hasn't even hit your ankles yet

You don't know if you're allowed to feel sad

All the praise of feeling you. feels wrong.

But it's all you got

It's the thoughts that burns out the fastest

The thoughts that maybe you can fix yourself.

Tongue

Even they know

I'm too complacent

Too much of the wrong dog

A muzzle broke in with the rancor bite

Ripped into a record-shard desert

A nicked needle

I thought I was the one who broke it all

I barked wrong

It was words that got me whispering at

I tried eating my own skull when

I should have eaten the sun

I should've made my oasis at night.

Where no one lives

Elisha Thompson (He/Him) Is someone who wants to write. He wants to try and make things that feel right to him, and sometimes that's dark, sometimes it's light. either way, it's him. Even if it's not perfect, not the best, not in the right way. It's still getting somewhere. It's making progress, just like he is.

The Night Remains

The roads are darker here than where I was.
The streetlights trace the building's face
Like a lover's languid hand, the last night
Before the inevitable becomes the past.
Framing the facade,
An absent sort of god.
Or perhaps the streetlights scatter
Like a conspiracy of words:
Meaningful, paper thin,
Fewer still and still diminished,
The artist keeping canvasses
Beneath their cotton sheets.

But laughter barks from under doors
And throws my gaze beyond my eyes.

There are always more meanings than
We can bear to hold. And
Wading through the pooling dark,
Alone but not solitary,
The poem spills from concrete capillaries
Reaching its greedy fingers through the
Mess of experience, clinging to the night
As on it marches, ignorant of its ecstasy.

M.P. Harrison (They/He) is a poet, director, and performance artist based out of Brooklyn, New York. In their work, both theatrical and poetic, they are interested in memory, the idea of the home, and one's relationship with one's selves. At this point in their career, they are best characterized as an emerging artist. You can find them on social media at @thatoneguymiles, or contact them via email at milespfh@gmail.com.

