

Trestle | CREEK | Review

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Note: An arrow (—→) at the bottom of the page means no stanza break.

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The Gift

So, this came for me in the mail
wrapped in brown paper. No return address.
A braided willow hoop, beaded, beautiful
with dangles of blue-green glass
and a handwritten note that says,
“Dreamcatcher, used by the Ojibwe
to deflect harm from babies.”
So, nothing to do with dreams really.
A shield, an amulet.

I am not Ojibwe.
I don't know people who are Ojibwe.
This gift is a mystery.

I could, I could become afraid
that someone knows we are here
and is watching.
Or I could choose to believe
that someone wants to protect my baby.

So, I lock all the doors
and hang the dreamcatcher over the cradle
and give thanks to the mysterious giver
and to the Great Creator.

My baby turns on her side, and with her right eye
follows the dreamcatcher above her face.
She eyes the dancing circle of safety
and makes a fist.

Dial Tone



Heavy Step

There was a quick snatch, like a tree limb folding in half, and then there was the puncturing that went into her leg. She looked down in disbelief; atop her was the green twisting back of the alligator. It was happening suddenly, with no apparent cease, and it wrapped itself around her leg. She pulled at the shore and screamed, then she vomited, then she froze for two seconds, then she screamed again. There were six feet running near her, and six arms hitting and pulling and shouting and barreling. The flesh of her leg flexed and gave in underneath the pressure of the teeth. Her hands were pulling against the loose branches of washed-up trees. The alligator let loose and pulled back; its voice was soft and covered in water. She watched it go away and looked at her leg. It was small and run aground; it had multiple neat cuts that quivered and tensed. She was carried very quickly back to the car.

There was never any indication. She had been lying peacefully with her body covered up in the water. Her family stood nearly twenty feet away. She could hear their voices and murmurs through thick laps of water. The sun was hot that day, and the water was warm around her skin. Then there was the faint shift in pattern and the murmur of waves as another body came near to her, and her leg was snatched up.

The bottom of the van had a thin line of blood covering it. Everyone spoke rapidly, and the girl shifted painfully as someone wrapped their shirt around her cuts. Thirteen of them, all aligned in a funny and jagged way, and then again six arms all moving or still, and the girl couldn't focus quite so well. Her leg's pain turned into a steady groan, like a movement of thunder, or maybe more like a ripple in a lake. Her eyes closed four times and in those moments she saw three different images.

The first of these was an image of her family having breakfast. It was something familiar to her; outside of the kitchen window she saw over the lakes and rivers near her home, and her brother was opening his mouth and saying something to her mother. She smiled to see them, but she could not find her place to eat at the table. They all spoke quickly, and also so quietly, in some kind of manner that she could not make the words out. She frowned and yelled for them to hear.

The second was an image of her asleep in her room. Her father opened the door and walked over to her bed, leaning over to see if she was sleeping. He straightened up again and walked out, shutting the door softly. Then there was some kind of muffled speech behind the door. She saw all this through her bedroom window.

The third was a memory of her seeing an alligator as a child. She thought that it was a beautiful animal, and that she would very much like to reach and touch its back. Her mother held her close as they watched it swim. She moved slightly to see how strong her mother's grip was, but she knew she would not let her go. She squinted at the water and the alligator was gone.

Her eyes opened again in the van and her mother was near her. She looked out the window in an odd manner; then she moved her eyes and her brow was fixed upon her daughter.

"How are you feeling?"

"Very tired."

"Don't worry, baby. We'll be there soon."

The daughter couldn't hear anyone else's voice.

"I'm not worried, I'm only tired."

"I wish you would have stayed out of the water."

"That's not my fault."

"I wish you wouldn't have been in the water."

The daughter flexed her brow against a headache she had.

Her mother glanced up again and her look softened. "Dad's at the hospital."

"I saw you earlier."

"Down near the river?"

"No, after that."

"You were unconscious after that."

"Was I?"

"Yes."

"I saw you and I watching an alligator."

"Were you dreaming?"

"Maybe. I think it was when I was younger."

"What else did you see?"

"I saw your arms around me, and me wanting to touch the back of the animal."

"I don't remember that."

She choked on her spit for a moment. It tasted like metal.

"Mamma, I'm afraid to die."

"You're not gonna die, baby."

The daughter flexed her hands against the carpet of the van. The rug was full with blood.

“I don’t feel well right now.”

The van kept driving forward and her mother continued to talk, slowly and softly. The daughter shut her eyes.

“I think I knew he was there.”

“Who?”

“The alligator.”

“Oh.”

She sighed. “I think I knew he was watching me.”

“You did?”

“I think so. I should’ve moved out of the way. I think I did start to move out of the water even.”

But she didn’t quite move enough out of the way, she remembered; and in consequence her leg was snatched up and jerked around, and she remembered teeth and the alligator, and the teeth were the alligator and the other way around as well, the alligator being the teeth. Her family began yelling and hollering and thrashing because they noticed almost immediately, immediately because they had been watching the alligator but not daring to say a word, only refraining from speaking because they might encourage its hunger too soon, but regardless it went and snatched up the girl’s leg and up and over she swung because the alligator was big, not full grown but still large, and heavy too, and strong, and it snatched and made some kind of horrendous noise.

She woke up later in a hospital bed and stared down at her leg.

“Oh man,” she said. “Oh sheesh”.

She looked around the room and saw her brother sitting next to her with his neck craned down and his eyes closed.

“Oh my goodness,” she sighed. “Oh my word.”.

Her brother, despite what she thought, wasn’t sleeping, and his head turned almost in place, looking over at her.

“Hey, bud.”

She blinked at him and frowned.

“How are you feeling?”

“Not well.” She looked down at her leg. “Do you know if it’s broken?”

“Can’t you feel it?”

“I can’t feel anything right now.”

“Ah.” He stopped and looked at the door. “Yeah, it’s broken.”

“Ah.”

“Ah.”

“Where are mom and dad?”

“They were here for awhile, but they left to go get some sleep.”

“Sleep? Is it late?”

“It’s a little after midnight.”

“Midnight? Why am I awake now?”

“You slept most of the day.”

“Ah.”

“Ah.”

“I saw you earlier.”

“Earlier today?”

“No, when I was sleeping.”

“Like in a dream?”

“It must have been.”

“Where were we?”

“Having breakfast at our house. It didn’t quite look like our house, but it sure felt like it. There were lakes and rivers everywhere outside, more than normal.”

“Did anything else happen?”

She thought for a moment. “No, I don’t think so.”

“Ah.”

She looked over at him. “You couldn’t hear me in the dream.”

“What were you saying?”

“I can’t remember, I just remember you couldn’t hear me.”

“Ah.”

“I was frustrated.”

He closed his eyes and folded his arms. “I can hear you now.”

She paused and took a small breath. “I’m gonna go back to sleep.”

“I’m gonna sleep too.”

“Goodnight.”

“Goodnight, bud.”

The next moment she woke up in her home. Her window was open, and the hot morning air was coming. She looked outside and saw the small pond that stretched out and away from her house. She squinted before hearing a knock on her bedroom door.

“Yes?”

Her father stepped in and quietly shut the door behind him, maybe assuming that because her leg was broken everything else was sensitive about her, including her hearing.

“Hey, champion”.

“Hey, pops.”

“How are you?”

“I’m doing well enough.”

“How does your leg feel?”

“Pretty weird.”

“Weird like what?”

“Weird like my leg got bitten by an alligator.”

He walked over and sat at her desk.

“I had a dream about you,” she said.

“A dream?”

“Well, I dunno. Maybe a vision. I saw you in it.”

“What was I doing?”

“You were standing over my bed.”

“Huh.”

She sighed and closed her eyes. “I was asleep, you know.”

“Oh, I’m sorry, honey. I didn’t mean to wake you.”

“No, not now. In my dream.”

“You were asleep in your dream?”

“Or my vision or whatever it was. And you stood over me and saw that I was asleep.”

“Huh.”

She looked over at him. “Why didn’t you wake me up?”

“You’re awake now, aren’t you?”

She looked back up at her ceiling. “I’m awake-ish.”

“Just awake enough.”

“Just awake enough.”



Self Portrait

Right now
I love grapefruits, I love to sweat
My hands are swollen like cotton candy from drawing up
long lines

but one day
I am buying a horse and changing my name to The King
I am growing my hair out
a long long braid will live down my spine
I will sleep on my belly
in canyons
and in poppy fields with garden snakes

There will be no incessant ticking
no Christmas lights
no bells at the hour

Only fresh pine nuts
hard to get to

Shaka

up the bustling sound
the click click click

fingers lift up, flick
a match, drift

around

Cold Months

“Don’t die!” I was sitting half-naked,
half-stoned, across the room from you, who
suggested we turn the heat up to 95°, take
the trash out later, build a labyrinth of wet
fabric throughout the coop. You were

about to play the news off your telephone
when an orange flame trickled up the
curtain and around. Fruit became red,
white, as you exclaimed “aren’t
you glad it’s warm now?”

bull rider

He's penciled in two pages
about rodeoing,
lingers after class:

*those bulls
something deep there
but also frustration*

*I can't explain it
the broncs
bareback or saddle*

*they're easy
no problem
but those brahmas*

*that's different
we're equals
or maybe*

*I'm just crazy
my mom's the daughter
of the last standing chief of the Blackfeet*

*I don't look Indian
and don't know much about it
all the Indians I know*

*are drunk rodeo guys
a couple of years back
a bull stepped on the back of my head*

*base of the skull
put me in a ten-day coma
after that this deeper stuff*

*with the brahmas got stronger
something spiritual
I was raised Roman Catholic my whole life*

*never believed it
never called bullshit on it neither
look at these hands*

*they've been broken many times
every scar is a story
how do I tell that?*

Then he offers to set me up
if I'm ever crazy enough
to try out those cagey *brahma bulls*

*University of Montana Western
Dillon, Montana*

Nez Perce Peace and Healing Gathering Battlefield

A child's plastic, K-Mart lawn chair
sits amongst beaded pipe bags, a buffalo skull,
moccasins and a U.S. President's medallion
on the buffalo robe. A young man
keeps three pipes lit around the circle
of this blood-soaked ground,
this massacre site.

An old man tells us visitors and his own people too:

*When the Big Hole Battle was raging a small child ran
from the teepees, ran confused toward the soldiers.
They shot her in the hip, crumpled. Her mother ran
to scoop her up, then back the way the people were fleeing.
They shot the mother through the back, blood spurting out her breast.
Mother and child managed to escape with the survivors,
but the child died in two days. The wounded mother lived well into
her nineties. That old woman sitting with you now
nursed that old mother during her last years.
So we bring a child's lawn chair here every year and ask
any young girl to come down and take it as a gift
to remember that little girl who died here,
and that mother who was wounded but lived for so long.*

A hesitant little girl and her mother come down to receive the gift.

The old man continues:

*Several years ago we gave a lawn chair like this
to a little girl and the next year her family came back
and said she would never sit in it. So we asked her why
and she told us she couldn't because the little girl that got shot
was always sitting in it. We want you to know that
in case your little girl is shy about this chair.*

Big Hole Valley, Montana—August

QUARANTINE NOTES

In early April, we had nearly finished gathering the work we would publish in this issue and were turning our attention to the business of making the magazine itself when it became clear that this year would not progress as we'd expected. North Idaho College shut down its campus, and we transitioned to a virtual publishing process.

In the midst of that transition, we contacted a handful of longtime friends of the magazine, and asked if they would write brief notes on their experience of the strange spring of 2020. The pages that follow are their notes.

Between spring and the delayed fall publication of this issue, our experience of the year has only complicated and darkened.

We have seen the continuation of our country's long history of state-sanctioned violence against our Black friends and neighbors, and we have heard the voices of many gathered to decry that violence and to call for justice. In cities in our region, those voices for justice have persisted even in the face of attempts to turn the mechanism of state violence against them.

We have seen the virus that sent us into quarantine seem to recede, only to resurge in our own cities. At the time of this writing in mid-August, there have been 6,787 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the Spokane-Coeur d'Alene region—likely many more unconfirmed—and 129 deaths.

Now, as summer begins to close and many campuses, including ours, begin to open, we are confronted with real uncertainty about what may come.

Into that uncertainty, we offer these reflections from our friends.

Jonathan Frey
for the TCR Editorial Board

Of Quarantine

Fear still spills from those white days.
She tells the story over a bowl of chicken soup
of the night her son's fever
climbed to a hundred and four.

Even now, I can see her slumped at the table,
chin tipped, her hand
trembling as she lifts the spoon to her lips
and blows softly to cool the soup.

When he calls out from a room
darkened for sleep, his voice
wanders like something she has already lost,
though this time he will recover.

It's not their voices that haunt me,
nor the way they pause in front of me now,
but the rhythm of spoon against bowl,
her breath unsettling the surface of soup,

and the white shadows of birds
not flying into the window
but braced against it, not singing,
but opening and shutting their beaks.

April, 2020, Coeur d'Alene, Idaho

1. A photo of a nurse with her facemask just off after a grueling hospital shift shows deep lines pressed into her unmasked face. Reminds me of a WWII photo of Seattle/Montana poet Richard Hugo just coming off a bombing mission over Europe, the lines of his oxygen mask deeply marked into his face. Both are war photos, but two different wars, and two different faces. Both faces are tired and express the stress of what each has been going through and will continue to go through. Both are brave and committed to the good fight they must be part of. Both realize they are expendable. But the exhaustion in Hugo's face has about it the pain of modern warfare—a young man pouring high explosives out of the sky down onto thousands of unknown persons, military and civilian. The exhaustion of the nurse's naked face, while just as deep, is tempered by the sense that she is saving lives, and is directly, immediately connected to those lives, not distanced from them by tens of thousands of feet. I know Hugo suffered for years from post-traumatic stress. I wonder what sorts of PTS our courageous healthcare and support workers will suffer?

2. Psychotherapist and author Francis Weller speaks of an “apprenticeship to sorrow, to grief,” how it does not lead to “mastery” as most other kinds of apprenticeship do, but to what he calls “elderhood.” Grief has the capacity, he says, to act as a solvent, to soften our hardest places. Grief doesn't need to be answered, he says, it needs to be engaged. Grief is heavy; it drops us to our knees. We are not alone with it—there are the ancestors; there are the trees. It is an invitation towards immensity—how big can we become? And above all, he says, it requires courage, from the French word for it, which means, “a full heart.”

This language of Weller's stimulates some thoughts on mortality—how everything and everyone we know and love (or don't) dies and will die: ourselves, our children, the USA, Western or Chinese Civilization, the earth, the solar system, and all the galaxies and black holes—all ongoing transformations that we only partly understand. I have read that, in Lakota thought, the oldest great, great grandparent relative is Skan, the sky. All that we can see of it is its blue. I think sky here may mean “space” which in its great, unimaginable vastness awakens us to the fecund emptiness from which and back to which everything emerges and returns. Deep, ever deeper, space-fecund-emptiness grandmother. Everything else is contingent. Comes and goes. Mortality is built-in at the deepest cellular levels, and we know that, feel that in every nerve of our being, even as we flourish joyfully (or not) in our living. An “apprenticeship” to all that is not life-negating but is a quiet, unselfconscious aspect of our existence. No wonder the poets must be workers in/of the Love/Death matrix at the heart of the mysterious gift of being.

Juneteenth, 2020

3. Black Voices Matter: Listen

American culture has been blessed with a powerful tradition of Black writers, leaders, intellectuals, and preachers speaking with great depth and insight from the experience of being Black in this society. Here is a far too brief sampling of some of the many voices carrying on that tradition:

“As a white person in a society where every institution is geared to advantage people like me, it is literally impossible for me to be anything else [than racist]. In that, I am like a man in a male-dominated society. He cannot help being sexist, his good intentions notwithstanding. Saying he’s not sexist is like a fish saying he’s not wet. Many of us white people struggle with that...because we process racism as a loathsome character defect, when really, it’s the water in which we swim.”

—*Leonard Pitts, Jr.*, on what he hopes a white person would say, instead of, “I’m not a racist.”

“I have rape-colored skin. My light brown-blackness is a living testament to the rules, the practices, the causes of the old South.... If there are those who want to remember the legacy of the Confederacy, if they want monuments, well, then, my body is a monument. My skin is a monument.... I am a black Southern woman, and of my immediate white male ancestors, all of them were rapists. My very existence is a relic of slavery and Jim Crow.... As modern DNA has...confirmed, I am the descendant of black women who were domestic servants and white men who raped their help.... The black people I come from were raped by the white people I come from. Who dares to tell me to celebrate them?”

—*Caroline Randall Williams*

“And poppy colored faces
 And big brown arms
 And the field daisy eyes
 Of black and white black white black people
 And I’m gonna put white hands
 And black hands and brown and yellow hands
 And red clay earth hands in it”

—*Langston Hughes*, from “Daybreak in Alabama”

Pandemic Walk

The sun hits the grass at indirect angles as we end our day with a three mile walk. For the first time in fifteen years, we find ourselves alone on this trail. There are no other hikers. No dog-walkers. No cross-country runners. Just the two of us making our way across a field north of Spokane city limits, on land that was once dense with tall pines. When we first moved to the area, a neighbor told us that the developer who bought all of this acreage had planned to build a golf course. He logged it to make way for fairways and greens. “I don’t know if the county turned him down, or if he ran out of money,” he said, “but one day, he just stopped.” Before the virus, we could walk along the banks of the Little Spokane, but the day before the governor issued the stay-at-home order, that trail was packed with holiday weekend-level crowds, everyone trying to social distance from each other in the same place at the same time. The Parks Department shut it down, so now we hike across someone’s abandoned golf course dream instead. Twenty minutes in, we arrive at the perimeter of what looks like an old sand trap carved into the land. What might have been framed with manicured greens is now ringed with scrub brush and wildflowers. We kick some dirt in, and keep walking. After spending the first three days of the non-stop togetherness of sheltering-in-place falling into old traps of our own making, we’ve remembered how to fill things in—and smooth things out—for each other. We’ve been married for thirty-one years. Maybe when we are married for sixty-two years, we will remember faster. For now, it is enough to walk through the quiet together. The evening air fills our lungs. Our shadows stretch out in front of us as we make our way back to the car.

The turkeys pecking
for food on our lawn don’t stop
just because we’re home.

A Conversation

Dani Combs is a former TCR editor, who now works as an RN at an acute care hospital serving a small city in the Inland Northwest. During her stint as editor, we published curated selections from her wide and wonderful collection of found items and documents, a collection that includes all manner of cast-off ephemera that offer glimpses into the lives and minds of the people who have made or used them before casting them aside. Included in her collection is a set of lists Dani gathered while working at a local grocery store, featured in TCR #31. We talked via text over two mornings in April, after Dani finished night shifts.

April 28, 2020, 8:52AM

Trestle Creek Review: Hey, when's good? Now or later?

Dani Combs: Now is good.

TCR: Cool. How was work?

DC: Work was wild. I work on a fifteen-bed unit on the first floor, and it's a med/surg unit. The third floor is also a med/surg unit, but they have like thirty-something beds. Tonight, we were told that 1st and 3rd will be combining to one floor. The floor that had housed us will become a surgical floor, and another old surgical floor on 2nd will become a "respiratory floor."

So, after tomorrow, I am losing my small home floor and losing my sweet half-locker for a quarter-square locker.

TCR: Permanent change or just for the pandemic?

DC: We are being told it's permanent.

TCR: How do you feel about it?

DC: I'm open to the change, but a lot of people are upset about it. We have a small floor and a tight-knit group that feels like it's being broken up. Also, ironically, we are worried about hours because, in the whole hospital, our census is low.

This is just the recent development from last night, not an overarching theme of what has been going on with Covid.

TCR: But you're dealing with labor concerns in the midst of Covid?

DC: The lack of hours is related to not doing elective procedures and also because people are only coming to the ER for actual emergencies. Our ER is seeing fewer people but more seriously sick people. The interesting result of this shift has resulted in a light being shined on management's attitude towards floor nurses and how we are treating each other.

For example, there was a young nurse—inexperienced in life—who went on a last-minute cruise before everything got shut down, and she got Covid. Ok, we all know and see the likely way she got it, but no one knows for sure.

Fast forward: She goes on the local news for an interview, says she doesn't know how she got it, and speaks highly of our hospital for the way they are dealing with everything. Well, in reality, the situation at the hospital is bad. We are having to reuse single-use PPE masks, put them in baggies to incubate, then put them back on our faces. No one agrees with how she dealt with her media opportunity, and they start hot gossiping and tearing her apart. She ends up quitting, and no one seems to see that all the senior nurses just ate their young.

TCR: Is that toxic culture coming from the rank-and-file or from management/admin?

DC: It is coming from floor nurses who work side-by-side with her. My response was, "She is one of us, and she might be dumb, but we have to support her."

Management has its own problems. I approached my manager early on about hazard pay. She said, "Well, you're a nurse aren't you?"

That is the attitude I personally have gotten from management. Nurses are definitely signing up for possible exposure to infectious diseases, but they are not signing up for reusing single-use PPE. That is why hazard pay should be had by anyone who is essential during this pandemic. I am lucky to have a job, and I will show up, but I will make my opinion heard and advocate for myself and my coworkers.

I have filed a grievance regarding how we are informed about the risks of contracting Covid and exposure from coworkers. The hospital is struggling to keep up with the demands on employee health. Our union contract has details outlined for informing staff of exposure from coworkers. We already assume we are exposed by patients, but coworkers feel like a safe zone.

We aren't even a hot zone and we're having trouble navigating this. Imagine New York, Italy, China, everywhere else! They might not have unions, and if not, who is advocating for them? That is the scariest part to me. Every single staff member that interacts with a patient is a patient advocate, who is our advocate?

Ok, I'm off my soapbox.

TCR: That contributes to the toxic environment between staff, yeah? The sense that you're not supported or advocated for by administration?

DC: Everyone wants change in leadership. I do hope something will come from this. The unification around a desire for change is murmured and hard to put on paper.

TCR: So, this is maybe overbroad, but how do you see this culture connecting to the increase in a corporate/business model of healthcare? As opposed to, maybe, that older model of hospitals being run as charitable organizations, affiliated with churches, etc.

DC: I think the business model has been corporate for a long time, and the image of charity has been upheld as a storefront. Initially I thought, "With all these sick people, there will be plenty of money flying around for hazard pay." Unfortunately, hospitals are just like any other business. No customers, no money. The thing I think will change is where we produce our PPE and medical supplies.

TCR: Meaning: more local supply chains?

DC: Exactly. Previously they were imported, and we had low reserves in-house due to "lean stocking." And then when we needed tons more we didn't have access.

TCR: Just tell me when you want to go to sleep or whatever, we can pick this up later as needed.

DC: Yez, I must sleep now.

TCR: Ok, go get some sleep. Are you working again tonight?

DC: I am! I'll be awake at 4:30 this afternoon, work 7 to 7, back home by 8 tomorrow morning.

TCR: Ok, if you feel like continuing, we can pick up tomorrow.

DC: Yes, continue.

TCR: Cool. We will. Good sleep!

April 29, 2020 8:09AM

TCR: Good morning! Let me know when you're ready, and I'll hit you with a couple more questions

DC: I'm ready.

TCR: So, if you were trying to capture this moment in your life in an image or a couple images, what would they be?

Like a still life of Dani's world, circa Spring 2020.

DC: It's kind of the same for me as everyone else; uncertainty about the future, loneliness, friends coming together from far apart.

I go home, I go to work, I try to shop once a week.

Afraid to go in public wearing scrubs. Again, back to fear and uncertainty.

On the other hand, I've gotten an outpouring of generosity from so many friends. Not just in them reaching out, but donations of masks, ear protectors, Red Bull, N95 masks, letters and packages sent to me, face shields. All of the physical donations were shared with my unit, and their generosity spread to doctors, nurses, CNAs. It's been wild.

So that's what the coming together has looked like. Physical protection for me and coworkers when my hospital couldn't supply that.

An image, though: Single-use masks being put into plastic bags to be worn into a Covid patient's room, contaminated, put in another bag to incubate, then put back on our face. That was in the beginning of Covid. We weren't wearing masks all the time—we were told not to wear a mask all the time.

Another image: Hand-made ear protectors that pulls the straps off our ears so we don't get sores. My friend's sister-in-law made some, and they made their way all the way around my unit and to multiple doctors and nurses.

Another: Relishing adult acne caused by wearing the mask all day. Trying to feel cute while also feeling super fucking gross all the time even after a shower.

I went into this thinking: Wow, thank goodness I have my job and that won't be going anywhere anytime soon! Now: Getting my unit shut down (today was my last day working on 1st) and getting merged with another fully-staffed unit. They are offering voluntary furlough, and they can call us off twice per pay period now if they need to for low census.

I didn't think my job or my hours would ever be a concern during this.

TCR: So what would you tell December 2019 Dani, at the beginning of all this, and what would you ask 2021 Dani, at the end?

DC: December 2019 Dani, I would tell her to buy a Nintendo Switch because they will all be out of stock and she will have to get a Switch Lite.

And to keep up on the policies being put in place with the union and advocate advocate early on for those who don't or won't speak up for themselves. 2021 Dani, I'd ask her if the fear was warranted.

TCR: What's your hunch on the fear question?

DC: I honestly don't know.

Egg Noodles

My mother boiling the bone broth,
caressing the carcass,
thing that was just breathing yesterday.
Her mother rolling the egg noodles
out near the garden,
men in the living room shouting their jargon.
My mother watching her mother,
witty and wry,
hanging the wet flour outside to dry.



[cloud]

thick fog hung over the morning
like hair hangs from my head
suspended by strands
of silver tied to stars
like breath from the ether
like
the outline of a shape
hangs suspended
like the head of a mountain spirit
giving breath to the morning
before there is heat
and
that heat
disrupts
our vision like waves over asphalt
like
a pillowcase to cover
a body,
crumpled like paper

before
there was
a girl, sick,
on a couch
concrete, immovable, incoherent
as dizzy and disoriented as the boy I
watched spill his guts over the side of
the Disc-O ride at Oaks Park
when I was outwardly
a child
I stood in line, watched, then it was my turn

the metallic smell of carnival rides
is sickening, intoxicating
but at least it doesn't stick to the insides of my nostrils
like
your violence stuck to the inside of me
at least

I chose
to go to that theme park,
could
stand up, walk
around
and
away from
the sickening smell

my grandmother and cousin
didn't leave me at the theme park,
wasted,
tongue incapable of forming words,
rolling around in my mouth,
useless

no, it was my friends,
and then,
they had vanished,
did not
hang around me like
hair
or
fog
but
blew, like dust from a dry ground
to leave me on a couch,
the bottom of a darkened house

with a man
who saw me as a
lifeless bag
who did not care
if his hands were welcome
if this stranded creature
did not want,
not even in the smallest way,
his body to be there

because
an empty bag
must be filled, right?
it is an object,
that is its purpose.

so that man
filled me with
his anger
and pain

and the Disc-O
spun me
until I was
dizzy as shit

then I came to
and I couldn't stand
on my legs again
but I could
understand
I needed to come the fuck down
on you
with a leg like a brick

—>

and my throat could
yell
in its slurred, broken way
that you needed to fuck off

you did not
purchase a ticket
you did not
you did
not
you
just
pushed your
way
through the
ticket booth
like
your head was clouded
like you only saw
red
when there was a
breathing, beating body there
a sacred outward expression,
a home.

the man, like sun rays
that burn flesh
that pierce skin
and cut hair
took away the cool water of morning
and before then

there was a cloud,
silver and hanging from stars.

Vibrations of Rain Drops, 2019



Taurus Son



I cannot remember

what the thought was last night
between knobs of edamame
corn on the cob
butter butter
and a good red wine

Thoughts skip like pebbles
across brown sheen
of morning coffee.
I search the ocean
of yesterday's brain

Was it ice cube trays?
My father's alcoholic
fury at pulling one from the freezer
two-thirds empty?
How he'd bang our hands
against the kitchen doors
if any cupboard was left ajar
My mother's lemon meringue
Her scorched stiff peaks
as if a fire-breathing dragon
had passed by?

It may indeed have been the lemons
my grandmother grew
A peppermint stick pierced
through oily yellow skin
How it becomes a straw
to suck up all that sour
turned to sweet
in one long draw—
cheekbones hollowed in

My neighborhood is quiet

nearly always.

I hear the arrival every time.

The two vehicles, parking. Idle.

Paramedics and firemen.

The neighbors once more have fallen or
have been struck ill or worse.

Worse has yet to happen.

I've watched for four years,

but the past six months have been
a record high of calls.

I wonder about the call to dispatch.

Does anyone have to say anything
other than the address?

A name?

"Hi it's me again."

I watch and wait to see
who's pulled out this time.

Mother's Day it was the wife.

I could hear her cries and
tear-filled gargles from my garage
where I waited for the sounds to
vanish but they lingered like
the smoke to my cigarette.

Another neighbor told me they
are boarding themselves up.

Waiting to die. Wanting to die.

And yet, the wife calls every time.

Like her will to live resides
more in her thumbs and forefingers
than in her heart or mind.

I swear one time she told me
her husband died, but

he's been alive and, well, alive.

→

I'm anxious every time.
I still can't place why.
I hold space for them,
probably more than I should
or I'd like to admit.
She complained once,
about the dandelions and weeds
and the atrocity of our yard
compared to hers.
What a world—
she pays some high-end company
to mend her grass—
what a luxury
to live in a world of green.
He's told me stories of his sons.
Of a terrible accident
on a teen camping trip gone wrong.
He had a friend who would loan him his cabin.
This friend also stored ammo in his attic.
The story goes
the kids were shooting flies,
one hit the ammo in the rafters,
enough to blow the whole place up
and all the kids in it.
One was his gay son.
He patted my back.
I helped him find his cane.
They really should be cared for,
tended for, looked after.
But they are orphaned,
left to bite at the world
and bemoan their own ache.



[Is there a shark in your story?]

Is there a shark in your story?
thorny, ragged skin
a barrier from the cold dark

Are there b u b b l e s of air?
w a r b l i n g spheres floating ever on
no time to pause
and S m e l l the S e a w e e d

Does your shark have milky eyes?¹
feeding icy parasite§§
for hundreds of impossible years

being blind
the darkness doesn't bother them

they can't see the bubbles
shining pockets of life
fragile and strong in the deep pressure

Can you see?
rows rows of jagged teeth
smooth your battered skin
Is there a shark in your story?

¹ Greenland sharks are the only true sub-Arctic shark and the only shark that can tolerate Arctic temperatures year round. Some populations of Greenland sharks are commonly parasitized by the copepod *Ommatokoita elongata*. This parasite latches on to the shark's eye and destroys the corneal tissue, rendering the shark partially blind.



Ameerah Bader pled the Fifth.

Spokane artist, **Victoria Brace (cover artist)**, was born and trained in Russia, where she graduated from the Moscow College of Art, earning a degree in painting in 1987. Her work can be found in private collections across Russia, Western Europe, and the United States. As a child she was kept busy with a sketchbook and a pencil. She was exposed to art in old towns, monasteries and art museums. After college, she taught and sold her work at an art club in Moscow for several years. In 1999 Victoria moved to Spokane and worked in the computer graphics industry, doing graphics for games. Her paintings are deep, with rich colors. Her subjects are ageless and wise, with a story to be told by each of those portrayed. Her paintings of downtown Spokane and the surrounding areas bring alive the shapes and textures of the place. Victoria left the computer graphics industry and dedicated herself to full time painting in 2008.

Crystal Carney is a student living in the Pacific Northwest despite harboring a specific distaste for cold weather. A lover of tea, unbridled snark, and Asian food, her hobbies include knitting, chasing her toddler around the house, and taste-testing every loaf of bread her husband bakes.

Dani Combs finally got her own apartment and a big kid job. She still loves chili and Lilly.

Erin Davis lives and writes near the Little Spokane River and teaches English at North Idaho College. Her work has been featured in *Assay: A Journal of Nonfiction Studies*, and in anthologies published by Thoughtcrime Press and the Spokane County Library District.

Roger Dunsmore taught Humanities, Wilderness Studies, and American Indian Literature at the University of Montana (Missoula & Dillon) from 1963-2013. He is the author of numerous books, including *You're Just Dirt* (2010, FootHills Publishing) and *Earth's Mind: Essays in Native Literature* (1997, University of New Mexico Press). His fifth volume of poetry, *On the Chinese Wall: New & Selected Poems, 1966-2018* was published by Drumlummon Institute of Helena, Montana, last September. (Here, among echoes of Archilochos and Meister Eckhart, can be found a poem for a loose ram, a poem for a woman kissing all the icons in the Byzantine Museum in Athens, a poem for a trapper in Montana whose pet wolverine loved Oreo cookies, and a man named Mike Blue Horse, 'best night-hawker on the Hi-line,' dancing solo in a bar in Montana.) He was a founding member and mentor of the Bent Grass Poetry Troupe, 2005-2013. Humanities Montana selected him as one of their Humanities Heroes in 2012. Dunsmore has been short-listed to the governor for the position of Montana Poet Laureate twice, 2005 and 2007. Currently, he is beginning his sixth year of staple-gunning the work of other poets monthly to utility poles and in small businesses in his Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, neighborhood.

Kai Eagley is a photography student working on related classes at NIC to get started as a career photographer.

CONTRIBUTORS

Jenni Fallein has published one book of poems, *If Beauty Were a Spy* (Foothills Publishing, 2010), and has had the honor to publish poems in *Gumball Poetry*, Trestle Creek Review, *Poems Across the Big Sky*, and Roger Dunsmore's local Utility Pole Press. She lives and swims in beautiful Coeur d'Alene. She also is a meditation teacher, a painter, and leads a monthly kirtan at Garden Street School of Yoga.

Lucia Gregory resides in North Idaho. She approaches photography intuitively and works to discover uncommon beauty in everyday life. She shares images on Instagram (@looshagee).

Farley Egan Green lives and writes in Coeur d'Alene. She is a former Trestle Creek Review staffer whose work has also appeared in the *Smoky Blue Literary and Arts Magazine*.

J. Lyon is a writer full of contradictions and errors who embraces the nontraditional route in life. They also make really good pies, but don't tell anyone.

Although **Maribel Martinez Mogilefsky** did not pursue a degree at North Idaho College, she has enjoyed attending classes over the years. Her main interest was the pottery class with Professor Larry Clark. In addition, she enjoyed the dance programs and the swim training class with Lynne Pulizzi. For several semesters, she returned to the pottery class because it fed her need for self-expression. It was a great joyous space of creativity and community. As a lover of art, any time spent in the expression of creativity is important for her mental health and sense of well-being.

Another creative practice for her is photography. She loves capturing simple moments that express and measure my gratitude for life. It's an exercise of intuition and trust that the beauty and wonder of life shows up in simple ways. She strives to see the everyday moments around her with a new vision. Photography for her is a meditative practice, looking for the stillness in the moment.

She has a BFA degree from the University of Montana, 1995. Her focus was painting. Currently she works for the Coeur d'Alene Tribe at Marimn Health as a yoga and meditation instructor.

Eli Poteet is a gender non-conforming queer artist residing in North Idaho who is working on creating space and also committed to playing in the dirt.

Abel Siemens is an undergraduate student currently enrolled at University of Idaho, studying creative writing and literature. He has in the past been accepted to speak at the Northwest Humanities Conference, which took place on the campus of North Idaho College. His work has been published before in multiple publications and anthologies, including Trestle Creek Review, *Foliage Oak Literary Magazine*, and in *An Anthology of Emerging Poets* by Z Publishing House.

M.N. Strohman is an NIC graduate living in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, with her family and four cats.

Georgia Tiffany has received grants from the Washington Commission for the Humanities and the National Endowment for the Arts. A native of Spokane, Washington, she now lives, writes, and teaches piano in Moscow, Idaho, where she has co-created and co-organized two collaborative poetry/art shows for Third Street Gallery and the Prichard Gallery, and serves as a visiting scholar for Idaho libraries. Her most recent work can be found or is forthcoming in such publications as *Chautauqua Literary Review*, *Threepenny Review*, *Expose*, *Willow Springs*, *Midwest Review*, and *Poets of the American West*.

Willow Tree: a quite animated clump of cells creating lines on paper and sounds in the air.

Trestle | CREEK | Review

welcomes submissions of any genre of literary or creative work for its 2021 issue. Submissions of poetry (3-5 poems per submission), prose (5,000 words maximum), or black-and-white artwork (any style or medium) may be sent via email. We consider work by any member of the North Idaho College community—including students, faculty, staff, and alumni—and by residents of the Inland Northwest.

No previously published work can be considered, but simultaneous submissions are welcome. Please include a brief bio with your submission. More information and complete submission guidelines are available at our website, www.nic.edu/tcr. Submission deadline is **January 31, 2021**, for May publication.

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