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Published with the support of the
Dean of the Sybil B. Harrington College of Fine Arts and Humanities,
the Department of English, Philosophy, and Modern Languages,
and Student Services at West Texas A&M University
Please Don’t Feed the Foxes

by Nessa Locke

From the airport, drive south until the divided highway zips back into a two-way road.
Sing “Amazing Grace” until you get to Tom’s Country Store, and turn right.
Race past the pack of barking dogs.
Once you see the ill-mannered rock, start looking for the devil tree.
My drive is on the left.
Do not go to the right, for that is the path to certain distress.

“This seems legit,” Marnie chirped as she scanned Grammy Eva’s directions scrawled at the bottom of a letter she had written on pale pink stationery.

Kinley raised a doubtful eyebrow at her younger, more adventurous sister. Grammy Eva had a unique way of making their lives interesting, and these directions were a perfect example. She couldn’t tell them to follow a specific road for a specific number of miles. She couldn’t give them an address to enter into the GPS. She seemed to be overflowing with obscurities and foolishness. Still, once the divided highway had merged into itself, they found themselves belting out three verses of “Amazing Grace” so they wouldn’t lose their way on the perfectly straight ribbon of road that led them to Tom’s Country Store.

“Almost there,” Marnie giggled with anticipation. “Now we have to find the rude rock.”

“No,” Kinley corrected her. “First, we have to get through the wild dogs.” They both laughed nervously when the dogs emerged from a dirt drive and began chasing the tiny car they had rented. Kinley hit the gas, and a cloud of dust engulfed the six or seven Labradors hell-bent on a rubber tire lunch. They didn’t hear the sharp whistle that called the dogs back to their yard, but they did wave to the man in front of the house, because his wave and his smile told them he meant them no harm.

Soon enough, the terrain began to change. The flat, straight road gave way to twists and turns. The bushes and grasses transformed into trees and jagged rock formations. Just when the girls thought they’d gone too far, and were considering stopping for directions, they saw the “ill-mannered rock.”

“Is it flipping us off?” Kinley asked. Marnie thought it was wildly hilarious and snapped a picture of the boulder with her smartphone. She snapped another one when they spotted the devil tree. A gnarly, black, dead thing, taller than a two-story house that seemed more as if it were slinking into the cracks and crevices of the earth, rather than growing upward from it. In stark contrast to the vivid greenery surrounding it, the devil tree hunkered over, barren of leaves or wildlife.

“Mmmm,” Marnie purred when they drove up behind a tractor hauling a trailer full of logs. “That’s one fine log hauler.” She didn’t mean the tractor. She was eye-balling its driver. The tree-chopping life had built this man into a fine specimen of a hard-working, red-blooded American. Kinley and Marnie didn’t mind one bit that they’d had to slow to a crawl on the last leg of their trip. When the young man turned around in his faded jeans and flashed a row of straight white teeth, they fell back in their seats, not realizing they’d been perched on the edge. He indicated he’d be turning, and they sighed as he disappeared onto the dirt road to the right.

“Well, that’s a damn shame,” Kinley muttered as they turned left into Grammy Eva’s gravel-topped drive. Marnie nodded in agreement, as they pulled up beside the white, two-story house that was Grammy Eva’s new home.

“Ohigod, they’re everywhere!” Marnie gasped when she spotted a young man on the wrap-around porch, pushing leaves over the edge with a broom. He resembled the log-hauler, as they pulled up beside the white, two-story house that was Grammy Eva’s new home.

“Omigod, they’re everywhere!” Marnie gasped when she spotted a young man on the wrap-around porch, pushing leaves over the edge with a broom. He resembled the log-hauler, as they pulled up beside the white, two-story house that was Grammy Eva’s new home.

“I don’t think Grammy’s home,” Marnie told Kinley. “Her car’s not here.” They strolled up to the porch. The man stopped sweeping and extended his hand for introductions.

“Hey,” he said with a smile. “I’m your neighbor Zack Fox. I live across the way. He nodded his head toward the road as he shook both their hands.

“Oh…we don’t live here,” Marnie admitted. “This is our Grammy Eva’s house. We’re just here to help her get settled.”
“Oh?” He propped his arm on the top of the broom, and Kinley admired his pose. For half a second she worried whether she looked jet-lagged and road weary. She hadn’t thought to freshen up at the airport. Absently, she ran her fingers through her hair to straighten it. “It’s an awfully big house for one person. You’d think somebody with a family would want to live here.”

“She’s got family,” Marnie argued. “We just won’t all be here at the same time is all.”

He smiled and nodded. “Fair enough.” He went back to sweeping the leaves. “I think that’s your note on the door, then, ladies.”

Kinley grabbed the pale pink envelope that was pinned to the front door just above a small sign that read, “Ring Bell. If Nobody Answers, Sweep the Porch.” Kinley raised an eyebrow to Marnie and they both turned their heads toward Zack and admired the friendly way he followed Grammy’s ridiculous orders.

Girls, the note read. I had to go into town for a few supplies. Help yourself to anything in the fridge that doesn’t eat you first. I’ll be home before the foxes invade.

Love, Grammy Eva.

p.s. Don’t feed the Foxes, for that way lies only heartache and misery.

“You know,” Kinley thought aloud. “Happiness just might be overrated.” She smiled as she looked Marnie square in the eye.

“I think I might agree with you,” Marnie whispered. She turned to the man on the porch. “Hey, Zack Fox,” she called with a twinkle in her eye. “Would you and your brother like to come over for dinner sometime?”

“Brothers,” he corrected her, stressing the s. “There’re five of us.”

Five? Kinley thought to herself and gulped. Did they all smile like the log-hauler? Did they all wear faded blue jeans? Were they all as friendly as Zack?

“Well that’s alright,” Marnie squeaked with delight and practically cheered, “As a matter of fact, that’s even better!” She was already making mental plans and excuses to extend their stay. It was a very big house, after all.
Harvest Moon
by Vanessa Garcia

The night turns old, the sun grasping the orbit for sleep
As darkened galaxies appear before my eyes.
The lurking moon rises — its round, cratered and deep
Figure illuminating the Earth’s infinite skies.

As darkened galaxies appear before my eyes
Forms of smokey clouds sweep around the moon
Figure, illuminating the Earth’s infinite skies.
Stars surround it as it slips into shades of maroon.

Forms of smokey clouds sweep around the moon,
It creeps behind hiding like a phantom never sought.
Stars surround it as it slips into shades of maroon.
My gaze stays locked. My attention is caught.

It creeps behind hiding like a phantom never sought.
The tinted moon reaches its peak and now it is harvest.
My gaze stays locked. My attention is caught
whether it’s crescent, full or half a moon during its crest.

The moon reaches its peak and now it is harvest.
The lurking moon rises. It’s round, cratered and deep.
Whether it’s crescent, full, or half a moon during its crest.
The night turns old, the sun grasping the orbit for sleep.
Sirens were common in my part of town. I fell asleep with gunfire as my lullaby knowing someone else in my neighborhood would not wake up. I just hoped it would not be me.

2 A.M. I woke up to the crunch of a beer can. Dad was home- I prayed that he would come into my room to give mom a break from the previous night of torture she had endured. I heard a few screams and knew my prayer was not answered. Now I just prayed that mom would make it through the night, and that one day she would get the strength to leave this nightmare.

I guess the sirens were headed to our house because I saw the flashing red and blue lights dance across my room through the window. Their knocks sounded like gunshots echoing through the house. Dad knocked over a can of beer, shuffled to the door and screamed some profanities in efforts to rid the cops from his doorstep.

“Mr. Jackson, your neighbor called about a domestic dispute. We are here to make sure everything is okay. May we make sure everyone in your house is okay.”

“Go ahead, come in, I don’t min’ shootin’ a bunch of cops.”

At that point, I knew the rest of the night was going to be the worst nightmare of them all. Mom was just coming to when the devil himself grabbed her by the hair and yanked her up.

“If you so much as look through the window I’ll cut her throat,” he said it with such ease, like it was a normal threat.

I heard one of the officers radio, “We have a hostage situation.” I covered my head with my blanket and hoped it was all a bad dream.

Finally, I decided to quietly get out of bed and creep toward the door. Our house is old, so I opened the door as slowly as I could, as it creaked with arthritic groans. I saw dad out of the small crack I had made in the door but he didn’t notice because of the blinding spotlight shining through the living room window. There he was, crouching behind mom with a knife to her throat. I opened the door more, our house was now completely flooded with red and blue lights. I swiftly crossed the hall with thankfully only a few pops of the old wood floor to the other room. In that room there were some loose floorboards I could pry up to access the foundation of the rest of the house. For fear of getting caught by my old man, I dove into the small space in the floor and started crawling. I got to a dip in the dirt that gave me just enough room to roll over and as soon as I did, my heart stopped. There was dad above me, only the floor between us. I thought I had been seen. He stared down at the floor with anger like I had defied him, but he didn’t say a word, or remove knife he now placed on mom’s back.

With every flash of light I saw another bruise on Mom’s broken body, all the way up to her face that was stained with blood and tears. With every bruise my anger grew toward my father. By the time I had decided what to do, I had a large amount of loathing fire built up inside me as I crawled with fury toward the floor of my parent’s closet. By the time I got there I was covered in dust and dirt, black from head to toe. I pushed up the floorboards there, pulled myself up, and brushed myself off. I found dad’s pistol in a shoebox on the floor. His fate was decided.

I pulled down the clip checked to see if it was full, and cocked the gun. Turning toward the door I realized I was in the back of the house. There were no flashing lights, just the spotlight that shone through the front window in the living room all the way to my parent’s bedroom. I could see mom’s favorite white dress wrinkled up in the corner with bloodstains that told the awful story of the beating she had received tonight. I boldly walked for the door where I would find my father, my enemy sitting. As I crossed the floor I saw a cop out the back porch door, he motioned for me. I ignored him. Hiding the gun at my side I tiptoed across the rough floor. I pulled the door open slowly letting it get its moans out of the way. The devil had made mom turn around to face him, sliding the knife up and down her chest and belly. He chuckled at the fear in her eyes. She lifted her eyes and went ghost white; she had seen me. I pulled the trigger but nothing happened. Panic swallowed me. I had to follow through with this plan. I turned the safety off but by that point dad was starting to catch on that someone was behind him.

He asked her what it was she was looking at, as he slowly turned his head.
“My son.” her voice was so shaky and quiet the words seemed to jumble together in a soft hush. He whipped his head toward me as I lifted the gun again. Bang! The first shot hit the wall. Bang, for all the pain you caused me. Bang, for all the anguish you caused mom. Bang. Bang. Bang. I unloaded the clip on him.

The house fell silent for a short few moments. Mom fell to the floor, the Devil slumped over on the couch and the cops kicked in the front door. I heard breaking glass behind me and the sobs of my mom as the cops carried her out.

Someone touched my shoulder from behind, I jumped. “It’s ok, give me the gun.” It was the cop from outside the patio door. I didn’t do as he asked; instead I dropped the gun, turned into his arms and sobbed.

“It’s okay, he can’t hurt you anymore.”

I wasn’t really old enough to watch the nightly news, but I guess the cops didn’t know that, or didn’t care. I sat at officer Wilson’s desk, the one who let me lean on him after shooting my father. I sat there taking in the nightly news, then my father’s old mug shot was shown, the headline I almost couldn’t believe.

“Officers kill another black man in home.”

That’s not what happened. I just stared at the television in horror. Officer Wilson was taking the fall for it. As he walked out of the Captain’s office, he came by put down his badge, and said, “It’s all going to be okay.” He left.

The captain issued a statement saying that the hostage situation was resolved and there was no racial involvement in this issue but the media disagreed. As riots consumed the streets, Officer Wilson took the fall for me. It took years for me to understand why, but he was holding true to his promise, “everything would be okay.”
This Is What Death Feels Like

by Abby Betts

This is what death feels like
A hundred thousand spikes
Piercing through your heart
Tearing you apart
From the inside out
You become a spout
For all your blood
That flows into the mud
As you slip away
Falling into the gray
From Heaven above
Came so much love
But for you it’s not there
Because you didn’t give a care
So to Hell below
Your soul will flow.

STARS

The stars are so bright
On such a beautiful night
Scoop up a hat full of stars
To cover up all the scars
That no one can see
But you and me
You put them in my heart
The day we both fell apart
And now they will stay
Forever, until the day
He wipes away my tears
And crushes all my fears.
Burning Fences

Nessa Locke

“What’s that noise?” my fifteen year old son asks as he rushes through the kitchen door. He startles me so badly I spill coffee on my shirt and curse the stain. He is not usually up at this hour.

“It’s the damn trash truck!” I snap at him while wiping my shirt with a paper towel. “Chill out, Keefer. You are too tense.”

He boldly crosses the kitchen to the back door and swings it open to reveal the city truck moving down the alley toward the next dumpster. We can only see the top portion of the truck. The bottom is hidden by the wooden privacy fence that lines our newly rented home. The trash truck has been picking up the trash at five-thirty every morning since we moved in a week ago; I no longer need an alarm clock.

“It looks like an elephant,” he muses. I peer out the door to see what he sees. It does not look like an elephant to me. It just looks like an old, dirty truck. The only thing it has in common with an elephant is its size and its dull, gray color.

“It makes a helluva lot more noise than an elephant,” I told him as I turned back into the kitchen. From the corner of my eye, I see him lingering and staring into the backyard. He lifts his hand and halfway waves at something I don’t see. I adjust my position, but my new line of sight reveals nothing. He gently closes the door and turns into the house.

“Why don’t you go back to bed?” I suggest. “You’re not supposed to be up for another hour.” Secretly, I just want some alone time. My child doesn’t realize that my morning coffee hour is also my meditation hour. I sort out my thoughts and plan my day and daydream at this time. It is supposed to be a relaxing time.

He is interrupting.

I am not relaxed.

“I’m getting in the shower,” he tells me. Good enough, I suppose. At least I’ll have a few minutes to myself. I move to the window and push the curtain aside. There is still nothing of interest out there. The dog has come around and started barking viciously along the fence line. She’s not a very bright dog. She should have been barking at the elephant, but it seems she is focused on an unseen cat on the other side. The hair along her spine has risen up, making her look like a deformed, cream-colored skunk. Goodness, I think to myself, elephants, dogs, cats, skunks. We’ve got quite a zoo at our new place.

We also have ghosts. Not real ghosts, but imaginary ones all along the wooden fence. The knots in the wood, in combination with the dark rusted screws used to secure the pickets, form odd faces with a multitude of expressions. Some of the faces seem to be laughing; some of the faces seem concerned, and some seem to be downright angry. The rain-washed rust creates an eerie, ethereal effect around the screwheads that reminds me of Alice Cooper. Keefer has told me that it is not several ghosts in the fence, but one ghost that hops from picket to picket, watching our progress through life. He says at night when the wind blows, he can hear the ghost whistle.

But here’s the thing. Keefer’s dad Earl is schizophrenic. He’s not the kind of schizophrenic who wanders the streets in his unwashed clothes claiming to be the reincarnation of Abraham Lincoln while opening people’s gates and allowing their pets to “Live Free!” Nope. Keefer’s dad is the kind of schizophrenic that hears voices that tell him The Witch (I’m the Witch) has been poisoning his morning brew (his coffee, not actual witch’s brew) and needs to be punished. To punish me, he’ll murder our child and burn the house to the ground, because these are the things I care about the most in life. (I know, it sounds crazy, but the man does suffer from schizophrenia, after all.)

When Keefer was seven, we managed to escape the hell we were living in with Mr. Schizo, and have been hopping from house to house, state to state, ever since, just a half a step away from a man who has made it his mission in life to rid the world of The Witch and The Witch’s Spawn. It has been a horrible subsistence. Every once in a while, he’d catch up to us and remind us why we needed to remain so diligent in staying away from him. I don’t recommend this lifestyle to anyone.

About five years ago, we heard that Earl had been sent to prison for whatever reason. The source was reliable, so we relaxed our lifestyle a little bit. We managed to go to a few movies without looking over our
shoulders every five minutes wondering why that man two rows back seemed so intent on staring at us. We
gave up to the idea of going to the free concerts in the park without having to stay within sight of one another. I
allowed Keefer to have sleepovers with his friends. We felt free. It was a very nice five years. It was the
closest to happy that we have ever been.

A month ago, all hell broke loose once again. We awoke at five in the morning to the squeal of the
smoke alarm. Keefer had been so scared. I'll never forget the twisted expression of fear I saw on his face
when I found him in the smoky hallway face to face with his father. Keefer held his Louisville Slugger in
swing-ready position, and Earl held a bright red two gallon gasoline jug. I don't recall exactly what happened
next. I have a vague memory of standing over Earl as my two-foot pewter statue of a gargoyle lay on the floor
by his head, which was surrounded by a nice, thick pool of his blood. Keefer pulled me out of the house
before it burned.

Later, at the hospital, we stood over Earl's deathbed and listened to him promise that he would find
a way to get back at us. He hissed it over a swollen tongue and then gurgled an inaudible threat through a
throat full of blood with his last breath.

I was emotionless and numb. I was only there to make sure the asshole was dead. Call me cold-
hearted if you like. I am what I am today because of this man.

When Keefer emerges from the shower, I am still standing at the window, staring into nothing. I
think about my son, and the fact that that schizophrenia is often hereditary. I have watched him every day
waiting for a sign that he is anything like his father. Of course, he is not. Not right now anyway, but the first
symptoms of schizophrenia do not usually present until the early twenties. So I watch, and I wait.

“Did you put something in this?” Keefer asks. He is studying his coffee mug with a confused
expression. Just for a second, I see his father's face asking me if I've poisoned his coffee. Just a flash, mind
you, just a memory. It freaks me out anyway.


He nods with approval and sips at it. We go about our business getting ready for the day. As we leave
the house, Keefer chuckles under his breath.

“What's got you?” I ask.

He jerks his head toward the gate and says, “The ghost in the fence is laughing at you.”

I think this is funny. He's such a bright boy and he has such an active imagination. “Why? Am I
trailing toilet paper or something?” I turn to the picket he's pointed out and see the creepy face of the fence
ghost grinning at me. There’s something about the grin that seems evil to me. I shudder and turn away.

The wind kicks up, pushes through our yard and whistles against the fence, and for the first time, I
hear the voice of the ghost that Keefer has heard late at night. Only, it's not a whistle. It's a moan, and it’s a
whisper, and in that whisper I can hear the death-filled hiss of his father's voice, “I told you I would find a
way, you witch.”

Keefer chuckles again. Suddenly, he doesn’t seem so innocent and imaginative. Suddenly, his chuckle
seems low and ominous, and he seems so much like his father…
Liberty

by Erin Webster

The same sky covers me like a familiar quilt as it did both of us this time two years ago. This time, though, you're the one spreading that blanket. You died as a martyr for my perception of the world.

The only truth lies in the one who silenced you. The ringing in his ears as a result of your sudden absence will keep him silent too.

A police report is my only clue; “Alright, I’m done, I’m done,” the words they placed in the same mouth they closed, after they closed your eyes and before they closed your casket.

How could the course of two bullets so alter the course of everyone who loves you?

In memory of Josh Hathaway
I Really Hate Clowns

by Jasmine Aranda

I really hate clowns.

When I was six, my mom decided I needed a big birthday party. The party had lots of food, a giant Spiderman cake, a bouncy house and my entire first grade class was invited. I was moderately excited, given that I lacked friends, and I was hoping to make some by having a great time at the party.

I was an hour into my party and my grandparents had already come and gone. My aunt had forced my cousins to come by and deliver a present; however they merely dumped it and took off with several chunks of my cake. My only friend came over as well, but his mom got in an argument with my mom and so she took him back home. I wound up sitting alone on the couch, a birthday hat strapped tight under my chin, and hot tears pooling in my cupped hands. Then the clown showed up.

He had a big red nose and a pointy yellow hat. He had blue diamonds on his eyes and rosy pink blush over pale white makeup. The plush buttons on his jumper swayed to and fro, as if they were holding on by a thread, and his shoes were ridiculous- he wore Sketchers.

He came into the living room in an over exaggerated tip-toe, holding a large sack over his shoulder like Santa Clause. I looked up at him and wiped away my tears. Clowns weren’t my favorite at the time, but as my birthday had been so terribly lonely, a laugh or two would have made things a little better.

The clown set down the bag and a wide toothy smile spread across his face. His teeth were dirty and yellow and made him a little less funny. He held a finger to his mouth and made the shhh sign and smiled again. I giggled and got settled on the couch to watch him.

He did his usual tricks; squeak nose, flowers that spray water, pulling numerous objects out of his loose clothing. At one point his arm receded into his sleeve, and came out twice as long. His face looked shocked, then he smiled like he did and waved the elongated arm at me. I laughed and waved back.

He did the same trick with the other arm, and excitedly waved at me and I at him. It was funny because the arms didn’t match- one resembled a hairy man and the other a woman.

He did his signature tiptoe around the coffee table and held an arm out for a high five. I stood up on the couch and leapt to hit the hand. The clown kept it out of reach, and mocked silent laughter at my struggle.

The clown went back and opened the bag from the beginning of the show. He pulled out a ball and began to juggle. I clapped excitedly for him. Then he pulled out another, and another, and another. He juggled maybe six balls before he slipped up and sent them flying. Shrugging humorously, he dug into the bag again to start over. This time, he used different objects. He pulled out four knives and began juggling them at once. His smile stretched across his face, and he bopped his head side to side with each rotation of the blades. At this point I became slightly unsettled, as I knew playing with knives was dangerous, and I didn’t want the clown to be hurt.

The clown caught the knives and awaited applause. I gave him a quick clap and then turned around on the couch to peek into the kitchen. The clown was no longer that funny, and I wanted her to make him leave. Not seeing her, I turned back to the clown and saw that he was juggling again.

My parents’ heads went round and round in his hands. His jovial expression never faltered as he approached me. I stood in a frozen panic, lumps pulsating from my throat to my stomach and back up again, then all the way up.

He dropped the heads and placed his hands on his face, his mouth a big round O of shock. My legs were paralyzed, and I failed to move. The clown came forward and scooped me up, and carried me out to the backyard.

He booped my nose and stroked my head. He made kissy faces and smiled. In a sense, it was like he was trying to calm me, up until he jumped in the swimming pool and held me under until I drowned.

I’m not too sure what happened to the clown after that. No one really knows what happened to me either. What I do know is that for the next several years after that day, people are still having birthday parties above me. They laugh, they play, and for some reason they still invite the damn clown.
Summoning of Solace

-M. Royce Dyer

When the days of Fall reaches mid-October,
That day at noon therein lies
The Witching Hour

When grasshoppers convulse with cacophonous thunderous claps,
and the flies plump and succulent await aimlessly,
for the spiders must feed and feast well.
One scepter of grain’s stalk, wild-weed of the prairie, spurs unceasingly steadfast.

It rains on one half of this place,
and remains dry on the next,
this is the sprinkle of divination.
This is that hallowed damned-destination.

\textit{pitter patter},
What’s the matter?
Raindrops ascending into the soil,
As light barrages and triages of spectral illumination,
unveil turpentine clouds,
which await, enveloped to explode.

Because, the real people
are those that have departed,
made deceased,
gone dead.

I have a lot of dirt to move in one lifetime,
and I intend to kick up every particle of dust.
Youth is not my ally, mortality is.
For it promises closure, whereas the former,
abounds by bondage.

Hinter’s green leafs leaves,
untraced instances in the shade,
yellow orbs where the bees whirl,
in their lulling buzzing uproar
dancing and darting between branches and within the stems.

Meddling mellowing melodic morning songbirds lurk in the treetops.
This one bush, Eden unto a wasteland.
How the gardener’s toil,
brought this mischief by accidental wistfulness.
The watermelon fermented slush
sour as a drunken gourd,
did the maggots in the compost but sleep.
Swathed in swarms of flies that burst into aerial swirls,
when you but encroach upon them.
The idle beetles that doth bathe into dormancy,
from fear of the approaching storm.

Birds’ swooping from one tree to the next,
Humanity continues on by in an awoken walking slumber.
Unaware, unseen, and ever in an unacknowledged unison,
eternally arisen.

\[ \text{tab-boot-ta-toob} \]
\[ \text{woot-woot-ta-who} \]
\[ \text{cab-hut-ab-hub} \]
\[ \text{ab-hut-ab-toaub} \]
\[ \text{wbnab-boot-ta-bongb} \]

bulbous clouds that grow into the sky,
like gnarled strands of roots intertwined and intricate,
lest this but disturbance chance,
what the winds would speak.
Like messengers that hark the seas of time.

There shall be this night, a slight blight of natural sleight foretold as a mercurial sight,
as it is like a moth ebbed into a candle’s molten wax, trapped for the rest of revision.
Lest the moth should detract its attachment and descend upwards into the darkened midnight here,
of whites and purples laced beneath the smoldering orange glow
of distorted celestial bodies engulfed and aflame.

There shall be this night, a moon aloft, aglow, and radianty fronted by affright,
as if it were an eye suspending hazily upon the horizon,
hanging up unto the curvature of the land,
cultivating an unknown and unforetold suspicion,
that all beneath its gaze are but specimens suspended in molten wax,
waning in warning.
And when this time comes, I will not be in wanting,
for in this moment, I shall have found a serendipitous solace,
from the world and all her calamity.
Mt. Massive Madness
by Trevor Grundlach

The tender breeze touches my face,
and the Sun evaporates the dew.
I begin to quicken my pace,
feel the rocks slip beneath my shoe,
and the sun evaporates the dew.
Now I climb above the tree line,
feel the rocks slip beneath my shoe.
And breathe in sweet air - mountain pine-
Now I climb above the tree line
to see my goal, the great summit.
And breathe in sweet air - mountain pine-
Pushing my lungs to the limit
to see my goal, the great summit.
Step after step I climb higher
pushing my lungs to the limit.
The great vistas my eye’s desire
Step after step I climb higher
I begin to quicken my pace.
The great vistas my eye’s desire
The tender breeze touches my face.
The Zen of Smiling

-M. Royce Dyer

We finally got you a room,
but you then began to leave us.

I was not the kindest of hearts,
but I gave you my heart.
I would love for you to fight back now,
please don’t leave us yet.

I miss those hours when you demanded acknowledgement,
and now you’re hardly even noticeable.
You are my Pinocchio,
and I say that of the deepest of respects.

I witnessed life differently through you,
there I witnessed the harsh sentiment of true compassion,
enjoyment refined to the dullest of humilities.

You taught me compassion when I had none left to give.
I wish I could make you better.

…
Did you hear me play when you left?
I had everyone entertained except,
the nurses and your mom,
as they sat and changed you,
one last time.

I miss you.
I hope you damn well know that!
You were the complete to my incomplete,
my sanctity to my hubris.

I love you till this day and all the others that proceed.
In you I will always find a need.
“Thank you for being there,” you said
I wasn’t and am not worth two shits.
We’d be better off if it was you and not me that remained.

I love the zebra noises you now make.
I know in these instances I am not alone.
When in those moments the family is gone,
about on their adventurers they couldn’t take when you were still awake.
Remember how we gardened and sat up all night when you cried your lullabies of pain. I didn’t know what you were going through. I wish I only knew. Maybe then I’d be more than some special kind of sick dick.

I love you my little man, you rocked the cosmos there and back again. What ever will I do now that you are gone?

Of course man I carry on. Like my devilish self to my wayward song. It was all fun and games till you departed on that clairvoyant triad.

I hope that it’s all stellar out there. I mean I have my doubts. That’s why I’m writing from the echo. Of what was, and won’t be. Don’t be sad. You’re still a part of me.

Lost at sea, turbulent, and without a paddle down Cripple Creek. I love you. I need you. I miss you. Wholeheartedly.

You were my rock in that space that came crashing into my planet. Thank you for the extinction, this solemn secular excretion.

I’m still wounded deep. Marred and scarred little the battle armaments of charred victims, taken too early because of our perilous symptoms.

I hope I make it back to you. Someday. Somehow. Everything Zen, That comes between then, here, and there. …

Sometimes, when I’m not around anyone, I can let down my guard; remove my guise of the deceiver. It’s rough being impregnable by emotion, especially when you’ve worn an invisible visor for so vast a vacancy.
It’s funny though, quite hilarious even…

I’ll think of you then, when you were grinning,
spite all the unconventional trepid bull-malarkey-poppycocck you endured;
how you were able to smile and grin that toothy, pearly snarl;
how you never took shit from anything.

I’m smiling then: you taught me to smile again.
But the funny thing is, I’m crying every time,
because I’m struck by an overwhelming euphoria
mingled with an immense and immeasurable
certainty, that you’re now gone.