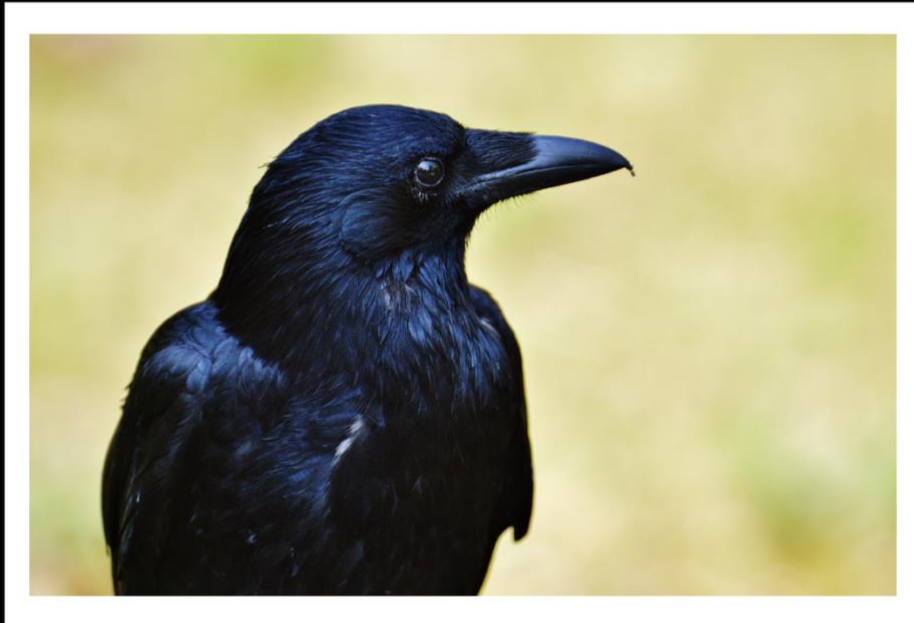


# THE RAVEN REVIEW

LITERARY MAGAZINE



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# THE RAVEN REVIEW

Volume III, Issue II

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*Alexandra Wollinka*

## **Locket**

My heart is a locket missing its hinges,  
Split halves, staring across a narrow hallway  
Among old pictures that hang on the walls  
Framed faces fading, forgetting to be missed.

I peer through the film of a dust-covered mirror,  
Searching under the surface for structure,  
Feeling wires in my jaw  
And tired eyes shifting in their sockets.

Most days, I lie on a twin-size mattress  
And listen to echoes of steady breathing  
From air vents in my bedroom walls  
The eternal sigh of tarnished metal.

When I dream, I peer from ceiling corners  
And wake to hear myself whispering over a speaker,  
A machine that whirs with the sound of gears  
Getting stuck  
And coming free again.  
Asking when I'll come home.

I am caught between two sides of a dime  
In the broken lock of a doorknob  
With the face of a stopped clock.

I am running out of time.

*Alison Jennings*

## **The Haunting of the Diner**

The disembodied essence of former beings  
on this planet, we're holograms from the past.

Our place in the world is where they least  
expect, not cemeteries or the gallows, but  
a local diner, lingering like cigarette smoke.

We'll manifest to be mischievous, steal things,  
close and open doors, exude perfume or sulfur.

Finishing customers' drinks, eerily swinging  
chandeliers, we bump paintings off walls,  
spooking patrons (though some get used to it).

There's footsteps and phantom piano during  
the off-hours, the jukebox starting by itself.

Within ourselves, an internal mirror darkens,  
as senses strain to function, merely a taste  
of mortality left, a buttonhole without a coat.

We haunt certain spots, behind the bar or near  
a well, where a child drowned in the 1700's.

Servants of too many masters—demons,  
spirits, shamans, and spiritualists—we're kept  
from the living realm but will never go away.

*Barry Green*

## **The DWI**

Under the leaf is a shard, a small piece of broken glass  
once part of a cover for a photo that hung on the wall of someone  
who lived in blindness for a year after seeing his wife disappear  
when he drove his car into a tree.

He can still smell the odor of his breath  
on the night that he dozed into the oblivion  
of street lights, the crush of steel playing a symphony on his legs  
as the song of a scream became his anthem of loss.

When the stars reflect in the shard  
he hears the music with its dissonance crashing,  
strings of violas and cellos like cats in heat,  
a vision behind his eye lids where scars are alive.

The fallen leaves scatter with a wind gust  
and uncover bits of frame, a torn corner of the photo  
that he burned when he pulled the shard  
across his wrist.

His goodbye failed to rise above the clouds  
but swirled over the loamy soil where he planted the seeds  
that were meant to be his gift to a future,  
trees that now bear no fruit.

His perception ceased on the day he found the shard  
and the bits of photo and frame,  
that joined with him as he slept again  
into the oblivion of street lights.

*Cathy Suzette*

## **War is a State of Mind**

War is a state of mind  
when you chose to fight  
day by day against the world around you.

Thoughts become a deadly weapon,  
everything could be a battlefield  
and with the perfect trigger,  
people could be the target of your words  
verbal shoots, bursts of bullets  
full of angry, sad, resentment,  
feelings as lethal munitions  
that you have stocked in your heart.

Prisoner of your own armament,  
you end up dying every single day,  
victim of your decision  
to live a life such as merciless battle.

While you are living in a state of war,  
you choose to refuse to give up,  
opening that door again and again,  
sticking with feelings that lead you  
to dig your tomb while you are alive.

You can walk out from there,  
holding a white flag,  
leaving behind  
memories, feelings, and regrets  
that hold you back to move forward,  
certain that peace does not mean you were defeated.



*Claire Scott*

## **My Mother's Grief**

Grief was in my mother's touch  
once removed like a second cousin  
grief was how she burned  
lima beans and didn't notice

Her stockings had slid around her ankles  
in baggy puddles of beige  
grief was how she spent days

Swaddled in loss, listening to Mahler's  
dark symphonies in a dark room  
my mother who was there, and not there

She never talked about our older brother  
who lived less than ten days  
his gossamer ghost wandered

Our house on slippered feet  
we could hear him in her sudden sobs  
we caught glimpses of him

When she sloshed scotch  
when she threatened to swallow  
her pills, to drive into a lake, to jump

And was taken away, red lights flashing  
on our white cotton nightgowns  
my brother, barely there, always there  
light as a lullaby, dark as a ledge

*David Jans*

## **The Meet and Greet**

I saw him standing near the far corner of the room. A tall, awkward sapling set apart from a cluster of trees swaying wistfully from breezy conversations. His branches twisted around a slumped-over trunk, and he stared directly at the roots firmly planted on the floor.

There are always a few in the forest of accounting associates who fail to reach their growth potential during the Adams and Michael LLC new hire meet and greet. It's no wonder. The prospect of an evening full of awkward conversations with unfamiliar and fully developed timber can be daunting for the schmoozing elite, let alone the shy and introverted.

He appeared to be an extreme case, so I grabbed a Taquito, a Corona, and I set out on a rescue mission. Mexican night. Nice. Nothing like a little south of the border flavor to break down those barriers. A few recruits masquerading as a Mariachi dance troupe took the mantra a bit too far by attempting to demolish a wall in front of one of my partners. Easy Ben. Easy.

Kudos to the event decorating crew. How they managed to transform a sterile rectangular conference room into a red, yellow, and orange colored fiesta is beyond me. The room looked downright cavernous, with the ten-by-ten seating cleared out. Impressive turn-out, and man, everyone seems so locked in. It's like I'm not even here. Good thing because this kid needs me.

"You know, it's okay to feel uncomfortable at these things. I prefer to see new hires who are uneasy. My name is David Chapman; nice to meet you."

His handshake was firm, and when he stood up straight, he matched every inch of my six-foot-three frame. Perhaps the fledgling oak had potential after all. He nailed the business casual look, too. The white dress shirt popping perfectly under the high-end, maroon-colored half-zip like a Stitch Fix model. But he looked like the proverbial deer in the headlights, with brown eyes as round as golf balls, awkwardly set upon an otherwise chiseled face topped by short-cropped similarly colored curly hair. They focused on anything but mine, darting around the room behind me.

"Nice to meet you too, Mr. Chapman; my name is Andrew, Andrew Price."

"Mr. Chapman, oh wow, way too formal there, Andrew. Please call me David. Listen, I wasn't a fan of meet and greets either at your age. Remember your buddies in the conversation mosh pit over there are just as nervous as you."

He nodded and looked at me like a young kid does during story time. His eyes seemed to settle into a more traditional oval shape and connected with mine a bit.

"My advice to new hires is simple. Put your head down and work, and make sure your audit work papers shine. Do it for long enough, and you'll gain the respect of your colleagues and propel yourself to more challenging work and clients. Always be humble, too, Andrew. Let your actions and work product speak for you."

I could sense the chatter of his colleagues, which created anxiety before my arrival, now sounded more like birds chirping on a spring day.

"So, Andrew. Tell me about yourself."

He reverted to the young oak tree for a moment, looking at the ground and losing an inch or two. To be fair, it is the mother of all open-ended questions, but I needed to expedite the vetting process.

Luckily some prime conversation fodder helped him regain his stature. He enlightened me about all things Bangor, Maine, his hometown pride shining first light like the sun does our easternmost state every morning.

And on and on it went. Free and easy. No awkward silence or one-upmanship. The rest of the room seemed to fade away as we discussed family, friends, my favorite clients, and sports. Baseball mostly. His Red Sox would be playing my Pirates in an interleague series this summer in Pittsburgh. Perfect.

I knew I should have been spreading the Adams and Michael LLC gospel amongst the rest of the new hire flock, but my feet were firmly planted with Andrew now playing the role of prophet. He had it all, flashing a razor-sharp intellect, easy-going style, and engaging personality, but his use of humor impressed me the most. We worked off of one another, the kid deftly adding cherries to top off my sweet one-liners.

The lights appeared to dim as we delved deeper into our conversation. We were on an island; one where fresh bottles of Corona seem to appear in your hand magically.

We finally did reach the point where we knew it was time to end it: our mutual love of dogs, the final destination. We basked in the warm glow of swapping tales of how our four-legged friends were preferable to the two-legged variety any day.

I extended my right hand, looked him in the eye, and wished him luck. As we were about to part ways, he said the most bizarre thing,

“Don’t be afraid, David.” He smiled warmly when he said it and turned to walk away.

It sent me reeling into a corner of my mind as a barrage of short video clips from the evening bombarded my headspace. As the production played out, I realized it starred only two players; the rest of my colleagues and his new hire class assuming the role of extras relegated to the background. Except for an opening scene comprised of a mash-up of colors, shapes, and intense sounds, the clips played out like a movie trailer. The genre, a mystery, one where two strangers meet and develop a special bond, but separate and go their own ways.

I regained my balance in time to notice Andrew about to make his way out of the room. My first step was poor, the right knee balky from too many basketball injuries, but I made up for it with a surprisingly pain-free dash.

I slid through the doorway into the hallway after slamming on the brakes, but he was gone. The hallway looked different, much longer than usual. It represented a pathway of so many memories. The glorious feeling of walking out of a presentation where I had the entire firm in the palm of my hand and the rush of sprinting out of the building after my wife Joanie called to let me know she was in labor with Amelia, our firstborn. The light seemed unusually bright.

Why in the hell would he say that? The question reverberated in my mind as I reentered the conference room. Besides the fear of failure, the propulsion of my rise to partner, I wasn’t

afraid of many things. He said it with such sincerity and kindness. Whatever he meant by it, the comment sparked some serious reflection and emotion.

Seeing my three favorite people in the firm on the other side of the room holding a conversation choked me up a little bit. So many memories. I was near the spot where we split a cold case of beer to celebrate becoming new partners. We were the young guns, determined to take the firm in a new direction. What a night. What a crew.

Adam, the accountant through and through, but maybe best known for comedy and his spot-on imitation of Alex George, the long-time leader of the firm. His thumbs extended out with such force, flexing his make-believe suspenders and pontificating about the good old days. We couldn't wait to unseat the old bastard.

Pete, the smartest guy in the room with big dreams. He could have done anything, probably cured cancer or built a new and improved microchip, but he chose public accounting.

And finally, Danny, the man who talked me down from the ledge during the Michael Carver Company restatement; the most chill person I ever met and an all-around good guy.

I looked forward to connecting with the guys to bring some order to the proceedings, but their conversation looked grim. Adam would turn it around. He'd point out my dalliance with the mysterious recruit, and all would be right with the world.

Yet here I was. A bystander on the outside looking in. Shielded. From them and the rest of the room. The lights continued to dim. The movie trailer played on a loop in my mind until a scene came into focus.

And action.

I was driving home after another long night at the office, upset at myself for missing another one of Connor's soccer games. My phone beeps to signal an incoming text. It's from Joanie.

I never did get to read it. The head-on collision with a semi-truck ignited the explosion of red and orange, mangled the glass into shards of every shape, and produced the horrific sound of metal crunching against metal.

Roll credits.

I was fading, the time available for exploration in the period between death and whatever comes next, slowly slipping away.

To my living room, where I saw Joanie sobbing while hugging Amelia and Connor. I touched her shoulder and whispered everything would be okay. She tilted her head ever so slightly as my hand passed through, processing the sudden surge of comfort working to dull the pain. She passed it on to the kids, strengthening her grip around their shoulders. They were both taller than her, flourishing amid awkward teenage rites of passage. I couldn't bear to look at our black Lab, whimpering and jumping up on Connor with her paws on his hip. We had a special bond. One last, "good girl, Elsie."

Something pulled me back to the office, to the place where I spent countless hours and fulfilled my dream of making partner. A place that ultimately led to my demise, the burden of an

impossible client schedule clouding my thoughts and causing me to lose focus and drift into oncoming traffic.

The hallway beckoned. Drawing me closer with an enticing warm yellow glow radiating in the doorway. Almost there. I stepped inside. To what now resembled a tunnel, illuminated by a beautiful bright light at the end of it. A lifetime of memories rushed by as I drifted closer. The most vivid, those of my wonderful wife and kids. Our annual vacations to Hilton Head Island, where we plotted the growth of Connor and Amelia on the Stu's Surf Side Subs sign, the thrill of watching Connor bury a shot into the side netting, and the pride of watching Amelia grow into a fine young lady and prepare to go off to college.

The work-related memories crept in, covering the colorful ones as a cloud would the sun on a rainy day, the regret of not spending more time with them permeating my entire soul.

I wish I could go back.

Back to the nights when I should have shut down the laptop and gone home.

Back to the time when Joanie suggested I seek help for the debilitating anxiety, which robbed me of joy when I was away from the office.

I could only go forward now. To the end of the hallway, where the light, which seemed so welcoming when I entered it, was now thankfully extinguished.

*Elizabeth BJ*

## **Returning**

I.

My home became a house  
with broken windows and rusty doors  
when your hands slipped inside  
like a diver swimming into the ocean  
but i was made of desert  
and your claws wounded the sand  
setting all on fire with friction  
until it crumbled down to the ground  
and I became a ghost  
who cannot haunt you  
because vacant buildings  
never minded intruders much,  
next time you see me  
i am a little girl who flinches  
at sight and not motions.

II.

I was rain  
not wet but divided  
into drops and hail  
hitting and caressing  
and cleaning and  
leaving footprints of mud behind

III.

A hand-made sweater  
knitted the patters my grandma thought me  
but forgetting all the words she would've said  
was being made  
to cure me from the cold  
of a long winter in July  
made with threads made with sentences  
from the lips of someone else  
who had claimed the kingdom of her body  
all back for herself  
as the only, truly, dignified

master, queen and heir.

IV.

The rain became the ocean

then a river

and I changed.

All the cells on my cover

that once knew them, clawed monsters

where no longer here nor theirs

and I swam against the current

back to the top of the land

and the ghost lighted up all the light bulbs

on the house, turn the stove on,

and out of thin air

I was me.

*Greg Budig*

**Earthworms and Decay**

Spring is wet with mud.  
Thawing fields smell thick with  
earthworms and decay.  
Black, brown, and well-worn shades of amber.  
Landscapes emerge from  
crusts of tainted snow.  
The fog has entombed an atmosphere of  
change. The world is gray and blurred.  
The wet cold air climbs under your skin  
and into your bones and sits there for a while  
Spring arrives in disguise. Coats of snow worn  
in confusion and dismay. Soon it melts into the river.  
The passing of the equinox is complete.  
The sun stays to visit us and spend  
the afternoon.  
The End.



*KateLin Carsrud*

## **Someone Old**

Someone old holding  
someone new, pressed  
check to check.  
This photograph is  
one of the few  
I have of you.  
You're camera shy  
but not because you're shy.  
This picture I have  
was our third try.  
You didn't like  
the first two—  
because of your eye,  
a little swollen,  
all gray,  
glazed over,  
noticeably blind.

You look happy.  
I like to think of you  
like that—  
happy. Probably because  
I've seen you cry  
so often. So many times—  
at least once every day  
for every year  
I've been alive.

Behind you—Christmas lights,  
round old-fashioned bulbs.  
Your gift that year was  
a family tree:  
You and dad,  
sister and husband,  
me and husband,  
sister,  
brother.

Dad cried when  
you opened it.  
You cannot hang  
that oak board  
in the house anymore

*Rene Sisk*

## **Happy Pill**

The sun is out  
The birds are about  
With all this happiness there's still doubt  
Playing a lullaby that is blaring  
About caring is sharing  
But instead I'm swearing  
With angry eyes flaring

Every minute I'm only growing older  
I'm only getting colder  
Left with only my shoulder  
To feel my tears  
Left with only my ears  
To hear my fears  
Ignored by all my peers

I just want to forget about my insecurities  
To get rid of my impurities  
To feel a sense of security  
Freedom from anxiety  
No longer standing quietly  
A model for propriety  
Accepted by society

Maybe what I need is a happy pill  
Small like Advil  
To bring me thrill  
Will that give me the drive  
To thrive  
Maybe enough to just strive  
To be alive

Please just give me one, maybe two  
How about we make it a few  
Then I'll feel brand new  
Please just give me a happy pill  
I promise then I'll chill

After that life should go uphill  
The world will finally be sitting still

Would this cure my depression  
Or is that a silly question  
I need to make a confession  
When the door shuts  
I'm no better than the sluts  
Or the girl you make fun of who cuts  
Or the boys who get punched in the guts

It won't erase my sin  
But will the world love me even when I'm not thin  
Or at least help me love my own skin  
Will it get rid of the demons in my head  
The ones saying I'm better off dead  
Will it help get me out of bed  
Or just give me more dread

I need this happy pill  
I'm starting to feel ill  
Please just give me a refill  
Just one will change my mood  
Keep me from being rude  
Creating a positive attitude  
Only feeling gratitude

Instead I'll write about love and passion  
Giving me more compassion  
Or should I stay old fashioned  
Find something else to calm my nerves  
Work harder on changing my curves  
Remain quiet and just observe  
After all maybe that's what I deserve

Instead I took too many  
It was more than plenty  
I was only twenty  
Instead I caused others infliction  
Couldn't tell what was fiction

Couldn't stand the affliction  
Caught in a romance with addiction

*Rick Rohdenburg*

**Rest in Peace**

Father has put on his uniform.  
It bulges absurdly everywhere.  
His coffin, draped with a flag,  
prepares to sail for distant waters.

Forgive him his vanity,  
he who fought no wars,  
gained no glory, went to bed drunk  
and got up lopy,  
stumbling toward reveille.

*Scott T. Hutchinson*  
**Old Manson River**

I appreciate my association with the Christian-Biblical hermits, though sainthood probably isn't floating my way any time soon. Since I've lived in isolation—dense forest land along the river—people tell themselves that I've been in deep contemplation for my thirty years here and I understand the Country, the Water, and the Mysteries. A few have even sought my counsel over the years, asking for spiritual guidance. I humored them, offering uncontrived views on solitude and prayer. Looking back, I'm glad I did that—practicing remote toleration instead of setting camouflaged pit traps and running them off with my guns.

In the last year, I've become a widely known, sensational and sympathetic creature. Once the internet learned of an old dude named Manson Graves—henceforward known as Old Manson River—once it became broadcast that I existed and I'd fallen on hard times in my squatter's rights hermitage, then I became a superstar.

I'd made myself a place in the sun and woodlands along the South Anna River for three decades, with only the occasional kayaker or hiker or penitent discovering me. Off the grid—that's the way I always wanted things. The land belongs to Duke Canterbury, who inherited it from his father. I tell everybody: Deacon Canterbury, Duke's daddy, gave me permission to live here *in perpetuity*. I'm eighty-years-old now, and the makeshift cabin that I cobbled together and reinforced over the years kept the snow and rain off my back. When I was younger, I even managed to haul a wood stove out here; I scrounged, found piping, installed a chimney all by myself. Fuel's never been a problem, as long as you keep adding to the lean-to covered deadwood pile all year. With shelter basics in place, I proceeded: fry some fish, poach a rabbit, roast a quail, scramble robin's eggs, plant a few taters, munch on dandelion greens. I tanned blankets from deer hides, went to Goodwill once a year for clothes. Recycled found bottles and cans for booze cash. My needs were met.

River land—even the flood plains—has become a precious commodity. Filthy-rich Duke Canterbury wants to develop condos with water views. Once the stories got out that I was alive and entrenched, and that I was considered a trespasser—then everything changed. My simple way of life would have to make way for greed and progress, because there's no tangible evidence, no written agreement to attest to my arrangements with Deacon.

What began as a leaky roof rain-trickle became a hurricane bank-swell of people, all wanting to meet and greet *Old Manson River, The Hermit of Canterbury Woods*. News outlet pilgrimages hauled their cameras through the prickly forest, or dry-packed them in using canoes to navigate the waterway. They greeted me with fast food and canned goods. Me and my long grey beard, my rope belt, my patch-worked pants, and overcoat—I wore the trappings and grease of flavorful story. A couple of features asked the big questions: like, what would become of my cats and my chickens?

I was court-ordered to move. And that's when Pity began pouring in. The pickets outside of Duke's Canterbury Industries bore clever signage, like *Canterbury Industries just keeps*

*rollin' over Old Manson River* and *You Make Us Sick and Weary* and *Ol' Manson River He Jes' Keeps Rollin' Along*. People I didn't know stood behind me during interviews, holding signs over their heads that blared out *Let the River-Man Run* and *Take Us All to the River*. I appeared visibly shaken during all of that. Bloggers and Influencers noticed, clued in everybody else in the world and got some kind of online contribution thingy going for me, raising over \$240,000.

As a result, I was offered compassion and primo transitional housing—which blew up in my favor when Duke's boys came through with a bulldozer and a pack of matches. The Question: can you plow under what's on your own property? The protesters loudly say *no*, while the law stands around with its hands in its pockets. I know the game.

Duke and me had us a long woodsy walk and talk a year before all this began. We had us an agreement. He wanted to be certain that I remembered each and every one of the disposals, got 'em moved before construction. When the dozers came, he didn't want the big blades turning up bones or rings or teeth any more than he wanted them to find signs of archeological-heritage sites. I'd done the wet operations for both him and Deacon, and I knew where all the leftover dry scraps were—but my old spine needed time, since twenty-three spread-out graves is a lot of back-bending. Ol' Deacon would never have thought the future through the way his clever boy did—Deacon would have set me up in some dilapidated house in the middle of nowhere, and I'd have liked it. Easy. But Duke, he's a modern tech-savvy kind of criminal, and he knew how, if he played the bad guy, then Bleeding Hearts would donate money by the pint into saving an innocent counter-culture hero from a corporate bully.

My apartment isn't exactly rustic, but the TV and hot tub will do Old Manson fine until the time comes that Duke places me in a river condo. We have that in writing. The Bleeders are all happy. Hey, I'm eighty. The flesh and tissue ain't what they used to be. I can finally be done with ashes and dust, eating squirrel, chopping up trees and kings and paupers, stealing from songbirds. I'll rest the old bones in warm water and a big flowing bed and call it a damned fine day.

I know my Bible: hermits don't please the Lord—isolation fails to produce moral fruit or social contract. But I've made my peace, God and God bless—I love this country.



*S.F. Wright*

## **Modern Women Writers**

I was running late,  
Not that I was  
Interested in what  
The professor  
Had to say,  
The class having been boring,  
The novels  
Tedious.  
But I'd already missed  
Three classes,  
Was afraid  
That if I missed  
This last one, too,  
That the professor  
Would fail me.

So, I was rather  
Annoyed  
When I hit traffic.

And I was even  
More vexed  
When I pulled into  
The lot and remembered,  
Upon seeing  
A campus security guard  
Patrolling around  
In an old Ford Taurus  
Converted into a  
Campus police car,  
That the car I drove  
Didn't have a sticker:  
It was my mother's;  
Mine was in  
The garage.

I parked near where

The security guard  
Slowly drove;  
And getting out,  
I got his attention.  
He rolled down his window:  
Tired-looking guy,  
Around 35.

I started to explain  
My situation,  
But before I got  
Two sentences out,  
The security guard  
Waved his hand,  
Said don't worry,  
I wasn't going  
To get a ticket;  
Go to my class,  
Take my exams.  
He had an accent.

For half a second  
I was about to say  
That I didn't  
Have an exam—  
Just some class  
I had to show up to  
So that I'd get credit  
For being present.  
But, of course,  
There'd have been  
No point in that;  
So I thanked him,  
Locked my car,  
Hurried to my class.

I don't remember  
Modern Women Writers;  
Barely recollect  
Any of the books—

But I do recall  
The security guard.

*Shannia Bernal*

## **Deviance in the Dark**

Enclosed in little space, I see  
darkness staring at my eyes;  
my reflection gloriously glaring  
from someone else.

The foreboding feeling  
of dying from being entrapped  
comes close in each breath  
we shared. To be encircled  
and strangled by the figs of new  
wonder, I am your host and you  
are my parasite. I permit  
you to sip more of me, leisurely,  
until my existence quiets your restless  
roots. You will live beside

my presence with a prayer  
of the future. Because you  
are the parasite and I  
am the host, you will never wither.  
You will desperately cling  
to this dark room which holds  
no falsehood  
just to hear the small  
shifting sound, the soft gentle  
breathing, the warmth of skin briefly  
touching. Here,

exposed in our defenseless state,  
perhaps, I must admit to the cries  
of my own—of the inexplicable  
thirst finally satiated  
by a voice  
speaking tenderly. In the sick  
twisted way of enumerating utility  
and finding preys to consume, maybe  
I am not your host, and you are not my parasite.  
Let time flow and we'll see

if colors would look  
as clear and as familiar  
as the first breath in the morning.

*Stephen Jordan*

**Cook County Caelus**

A heavy dark hoary blue you spill  
atop the dome—frosted airplanes only rim  
underneath and birds don't even try  
I let fuzzy eyelashes close like useless teeth  
My pooling sight sending everything swimming.  
If you could lift up the edge, I'll scuttle out—  
It's getting hard to breathe.

My dear Chicago sky, you've capped me cold this early eve  
You trapped me twisting under your  
darkening bowl. I'm fixed in tight tonight.  
I break lose my frozen legs, step back from the lake's edge  
Walk on my ankles  
I could capsize near lake's horizon  
Or pitch back into the city, keel through the concrete maze.  
Scraped hands out in front.

*Tamar Kapanadze*

**Abyss**

She owns nothing.

Wandering through the empty nights  
devoted to disappear.

She owns nothing.

Not even the cage where she imprisoned  
her lunatic self.

Not even a single burning hope.

She owns nothing but  
uncertainty.