

Issue 72

Frostbite

Phoenix



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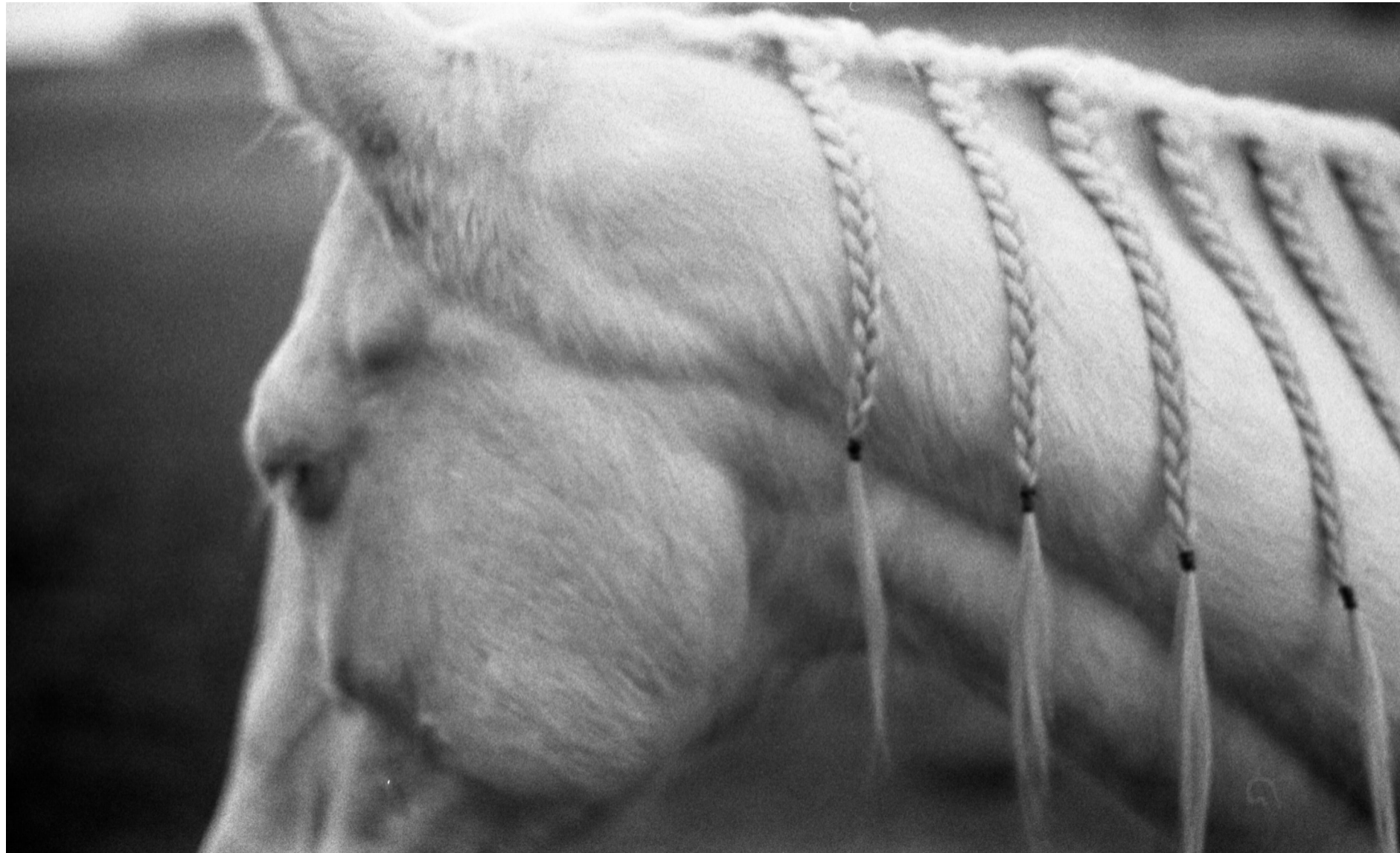
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Tom Fortner
Healing



Alyssa Dereme
I Tried to Bottle the Stars

I, foolishly, tried to bottle the stars
My head too big for my hands
I, selfishly, wanted them for my own
Nobody knew Mars as I did,
Not a soul spoke of Saturn's divorce,
Nary a person cared how lonely Neptune felt.
I, slowly, grabbed my jar
And hoped the heavens wouldn't notice

Racing outside, the stars winked at me
I craned my neck to see their beauty
Opening the lid, they started to fade.
I cried out to them, willing them to stay,
While I, the fool, chased them away
Throwing the jar in Ursa Major's face.
The sun tainted the sky and gently reprimanded my attempt

Now each night I venture outside,
I, the fool, apologize.
I hope for their forgiveness, their mercy, their love.
Which they give with such gracious joy
I now willingly share the joy of light up above.

Nailah Kailani

Precultural and Postnatural

Eyes clear the day he was born
Hands that grasped for his creator
Unbalanced as a fawn
Pure and worshipped

If a person could blossom into a flower,
He surely did
Cultivated and crafted by the world,
He learned to let
Nectar drip from his lips
Using a language I could barely understand,

The first day I met him,
He took me into his arms
To tell me how beautiful I could be with him by my side
So I welcomed him inside of me

Power from the very land I had existed upon,
suctioned up into his body
He learned to bleed more from it,
Leeching the very micronutrients
From the soil

I handed him a torch once
So that he might light the path ahead
With my back turned
I didn't expect to feel heat so soon upon myself

Too late I realized
He wanted more of me

Too late I realized
The land he stood upon,
Had soured and yellowed,
And that now he wished to stand upon me

As he sectioned me up
He stole an olive from my mouth,

So that the land could no longer nourish me as it always had,
He first stood upon my fingers,
Then he stood upon my throat
Finally he stood upon my pelvis,

He took the spine out of my friends
With his silver tongue,
That told everyone I was an animal
Sub-human

Thus they believed,
Thus I was abandoned,
I who had been created by the wrong god
Formed from the clay of the Earth,
you had not yet siphoned the golden life from,

For misery had never entered my soul
If everyone believed me to be fiendish,
Who would prove I was not?

Alone in this world
I watched others move past me
Arms decorated and adorned with gold
Stolen from my core
Pockets lined with oil
That used to run through my veins
I can forever feel the poison nectar of his tongue
Seeping into me

Alyssa Dereme

What is Forever?

Eternal, everlasting, never-ending,
Such a phrase means so much.
Yet the word has been tossed to and fro,
The definition faded by human touch.

Always, constantly, endlessly,
The word comes in handy when monotony strolls on in.
The daily tasks and repeated "hellos"
Driving to the same places at the same times each day,
It seems "forever" means as much as "laundry" does?

Non-stop, consistently, continually,
The hustle and bustle of passion
In the streets of New York and L.A.
The tame, quiet reliability,
Of a cabin in Colorado.
Such a word encompasses each unique aspect
Of a place one thinks will never change.
Forever, it will never sleep.
Forever, it will remain in peace.

Permanently, durably, evermore,
The love we all hope to experience.
Our mothers are always there with an embarrassing childhood story,
Our fathers never budge when a boy comes into the picture,
Our friends never cease to find topics to talk about.
The memories we hold, the days we cherish,
Exist forever in our hearts.

Tom Fortner

City Behind Flag



Henry James

Do You Ever Notice

Do you ever notice
the way the sunbeams play off your eyes?
How they seem to illuminate the world around you.
Do you ever notice
the way that one strand of hair always sticks out—
in a manner which you probably hate, but I adore?
Do you ever notice
the way my heart skips a beat when you look at me?
Can you tell I still get butterflies when our eyes meet?
And at the risk of being cliché, do you ever notice
the way you light up any room you are in
and the way your laugh uplifts me?
Do you ever notice these things
or do you look in the mirror and see
a few pounds too many
your dad's nose
the pimples which won't go away
a forehead that is too big
a face too unsymmetrical.
How I wish I could lend you my eyes
if just for a moment.
For you to see yourself how I see you;
to be reassured of the breathtaking beauty
of your perfect imperfections.

Aidan Thornhill

Sweet, Sweet Aspartame

A fizzy brown masquerade out
from the rainbow faucet: clicking
fool's candy that means four more
to get the head just right, just
right at that 16oz line
and a sweet relief!

Not long (we're a sticky pair)
because I'm messy, clumsy,
and spill it all over the counter,
your shoes, but only I am stained,
my face cherry-like
at the embarrassment, but you

smile! Sweet, sweet Aspartame
dripping down from marbles,
glasses—my glasses, everywhere
—and even when I scrub, it sticks!
like you! like glue! like a good,
brown soda-pop full of Aspartame!

Grace Rook

Count by Two

In winter I look for burrows
A hole full of mice tucked away and breathing
Together and warmer for it in the ground, heated together like gray coals
I look for sets of two
For salt and pepper shakers at the table
For gloves and socks and boots
I slip a ring through one ear, and then the
other
But I see, looking down, two feet
Crunching dead twigs and I see them
With two eyes, they both see all over myself
The loveliest symmetry
And I have two hands which seems right
A good pair to hold onto each other
To bring the world in towards me, a complete whole
Holding onto myself through the whole winter
Counting my pieces up by twos

A. Chapman

Wolf Tracks in the Snow



Caroline Gray

Heavy Enough to Hold

They say the soul is woven,
embedded evenly in our muscles,
that it is pressurized,
released uniformly in our bloodstream.

That maybe the soul rests,
tucked in an empty crevice,
somewhere between your heart and lungs,
kept in place by the routine swell of each breath.

Yet the soul is weightless.

The universe exhales wandering golden embers
that sift through nebulas,
releasing an iridescent vapor
that drifts among worlds.

If we are lucky,
it will brush against what is finite,
barely for an instant,
flickering across our warmth.

But only when we reach does it lean into us.

See, vacant flesh is no anchor
to the breath of life.
Yet purpose is the soul's gravity,
and only truly living makes us dense.

To feed your soul,
you must live like it can leave.
To hold it steady,
you must be ardently unbridled.

Only hands heavy with life can tether
what longs to wander.

The cracks in your body give the soul a way in,
And a heart well lived is full
And to be full is to be heavy
And by bearing weight, the soul finds its anchor.

So we live,
knowing that significance rests on the possibility of loss,
that we are all someone who failed us,
And that to find purpose, we must become what we never
had.

Emery A. Ball
water always moves



Henry James
Mourning

I have a problem mourning
the loss of things that
haven't even begun.
Hello is still warm on your lips
and I am mourning the thousand ways
our friendship might end.
The comfort of your presence
holds only the promise
of heartbreak in your absence.
I cannot unravel the joy
of our meeting
from the sorrow
of our parting.
You say hello and a voice inside me
is already whispering
goodbye.

A. Chapman

eight months, No Contact

on my father's neglect

One day, I awoke, sitting in the passenger seat of my car

the sunlight covering my skin in a delicate warmth yet all I felt was

the cold, empty brokenness of a heart that wasn't mine.

How can that which came from my mother's womb resemble only my father?

in look, in sound, in smell?

a nose, a mouth, a mind?

When I woke, I felt the regret of living a life that's not mine,

given place in his daughter,
in me.

to try again, to start anew.

I must do what wasn't done

and try to bring life to myself
and maybe

bring life to him

in another time, in another place.

Maybe my own womb will someday carry out the hope that I was supposed to have

that he will never feel.

Tom Fortner

The Nook



Bailey Beller

Tradition



Cooper Henson

Evidence of Having Been Cared For

Sure, once or twice I have come to know love.
(Love! What a curious word love is!
How strange the term feels resting in my throat!
So odd is the taste of the expression atop my tongue!)
More than I can count, though, I have been shown,
in one way or another, that I have been on the mind of
someone that is very dear to me, that I exist to them.
Take, for instance, the following:

1. Yellow daisies on the doorstep
2. A well-cooked dinner still steaming
3. An eveningtime tell-all phonecall
4. A surprise visit from an old lover
5. Purple martins choosing the front porch as home
6. Two pairs of footsteps placed together in the snow
7. A cat's gifting of a dead mouse left at the door
8. Lipstick stains on the side of the cheek
9. Crow's feet around the eyes formed from a smile
10. The missionary stopping at one's doorstep to speak
11. Intertwined jewelry on a bedside table
12. A star's steadfastness in a navy sky
13. Hearts carved into the sand holding initials inside
14. Waves of the ocean ceasing right at one's toes
15. Handwritten letters in the mailbox
16. See you later and until next times
17. Photo albums saved from burning buildings
18. A door handle's discoloration resulting from frequent use
19. Anticipation of the drive home
20. The box of birthday cards sitting in the closet
21. Two toothbrushes lying side by side on the vanity top
22. A half-filled canvas

The world, though rough, has her
consolations if only by allowing oneself
to bear witness to that subtle gnawing
That comes with being cared for.

A. Chapman

December layers become you

there is something so intimate about taking a layer of your winter clothes off
when you step inside
a jacket, snow covered dust
gloves and scarves and gloves
do you feel bare beneath?

is the warmth shedding off of you or are you still hot beneath the long sleeve
skin tight against you
tighter than you ever wear in summer months
i watch you strip from the cold and wonder if you appreciate taking them off
or if it's too vulnerable
are you vulnerable with me?

do my eyes scanning
scanning each fiber
the tease of a collarbone and art of your cold air blushed nose
painted pale color
red blooming vines beneath your skin
where else are you red blushing blooming
for me

winter kisses you and it looks like my lips
tastes like you
your skin and warmth
and it's just my eyes on your shoulders out of the jacket
chilly smiles and abrupt giggles from the cold you say
from the warm air adjusting maybe
from the way i stare at you stripping just a jacket
scarf and hat
a glove, two

i scan your hands peeking out from the remaining layers
is my gaze warm or cool
can we warm your cold skin? the warmth of my tongue the taste of your hands
your peeking skin
chest bare before me

i adore the winter bringing me this gift of watching you undress
even if it's just the layers against the cold
winter's kiss i wish to share

my skin to yours

layers coming off

stripping

for us

for me

Bailey Beller

Mt. Fuji



Aidan Thornhill

Untitled 11/20

And what if I were to stop? I've been thinking about that a lot lately. I'm not even sure if it's because I actually want to or not. Probably shouldn't. But do you remember when the gush of icky love sat sticky-like at the forefront of my rose cheeks? Well, it's unlikely because *that* was another person, not whoever the 'am' is now. So, I'm not even sure that it's possible to stop—not stop, but to catch the fish of the stop. Because? It's foggy in my sockets, my eyes refract everything like a kaleidoscope. Gives me a headache.

And what is it that YOU want to do?

Sleep probably, and not wake up. I like dreaming. But all is a dream—or at least it feels like so. Things are real, they are, but sense is borrowed and I only feel it when I share cigarettes because they're preowned things and lips carry EVERYTHING. But I also don't care. I'll smoke with anybody, it isn't intimate. It's like going to the movies—tasting a story, just a boring one. Beer's different, though, and I'll be damned if I dare let another ass taint my glass bottle. That beer took months to ferment, *for me*.

And what is it that YOU want to do?

I'd like to make myself anew, something other than a number. Off the top of my head, my names (at the moment) are 7.5, 20, 90, 600, and there's a new fifth one, but I don't remember. Numbers don't mean much to me anymore, number don't like to mean something. So yeah, I'd be something other than wrapped in plastic orange rulers with pinky-green capsids in my bowels. Gross. But that'd reckon hellfire because I'm told my cheeks are better soft and blue—not rose. Rose is blood: gunky, and plain hard to get rid of.

Don't wanna do anything.

Brianna Eaton

us and them

after pink floyd

december 18th

- i.
it's late, the street lights are blinding, and i'm so tired,
i can barely keep my eyes open. i begin to think to
myself that if i ever make it out of this trip i'll never
go on another with you again.
- ii.
my legs hurt from sitting in the car all day. it seems like
metaphorically and physically we've barely moved.
the traffic has been bumper to bumper all day. we
went ahead and rolled through our destination and argued
about stopping for dinner at the nearest town. ironically,
sitting in silence for three hours is closest to you i think
i'll ever be. *is it always going to be this way?* questions
enter my head and i am too much of a coward to break
the silence. *will we always have a plethora of thoughts
occurring back to back with horns blaring out the ones
that really matter the most?*
- iii.
after dinner you skip the remaining traffic, riding the shoulder
of the road to the interstate exit to bypass traffic rules and any
unwanted conversations. dinner was quiet and you offered to
buy me something at the gift shop and i said no out of spite, and
you'll never know but this will always be something i regret.
i should've just bit the bullet. i think in most situations i should've
just always bit the bullet. god i am such an ass, but i really believe
i learned it from being right on your heels the past few years.
why are you such an ass and what turned you sour? i fear i will never
know and i will be confined to create imaginary stories to make excuses
for your actions because in my heart i can never believe you are
a bad person.
- iv.
i roll down the window, yes on the interstate, probably to get
a reaction and of course i get none. i stick my hand out the

window and i feel so nauseated i can't even pretend to sleep.
i know, deep in my soul, this will be one of the last authentic
times with you, and everything else will be an act to pretend
like things are like they use to be. but they won't ever be
because sometimes people outgrow each other or won't
swallow the lump of pride that sits high and large in their
throat. i feel like i'll never get anything right, and that people
pass right through me but really i am passing right through
people and i'd love to know your thoughts and how you
feel about yourself deep inside when no one is watching.
i feel our miscommunication so deep in my soul. with
each misstep i feel my bones cracking and breaking into
tiny pieces, floating within the space of my body.

v.
*me and you
and god only
knows its not
what we would
choose to do.*

Emery A. Ball
memory



Aidan Thornhill
moonshine ghazal

sprouting out from beneath a hedged uncertainty,
you've met me just like a magnolia, so sweetly

a little pink, yellow, and white, then a smile is found
gliding down the stem of a shortleaf pine so sweetly

some seven ears of a soft amber-green tulip dance and
sow a brazen heat into each other so sweetly

sounding from the smooth pick of a sassafras string,
a red maple face is held and cradled so sweetly

how you run through the meadow and the breeze,
throw pinecone bombshells back so sweetly

green-glitter fireflies beckon us to return now to
a moonlit glass burning with rye so sweetly

holding what's left of the night, we melt like dough
in firelight, spilling syrup all over, so sweetly

Special thanks to Max, our former Editor-in-Chief and Art Editor, who helped Phoenix stand back up and was everything we needed. And to Jackie, our previous Assistant Poetry Editor, for being a strong supporter of Phoenix and always being there. Congratulations again on graduating. Phoenix loves you.

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