



OXMAG

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IN THE LONG ARC OF GRIEF

by LAURA SCHULKIND

In the long arc of grief,
its end point beyond imagination,
I suddenly remember you—
how you stood at the corner of the buffet table,
one manicured hand resting on the white cloth—
and realize my miscalculation of your sorrow,
of so many things.
The hour of sunset, the pull of the moon,
the ebb and flow of the tide.

In the long arc of grief,
I no longer wonder how you tolerated the casseroles,
endured the Bundt cakes,
formed words.
How you put on lipstick, or shoes.
How you reached to find the clasp of your necklace
and survived the stillness of that moment.

In the long arc of grief,
I am not as I imagined—
all howl and hoof beats,
wild and furious,
clumps of hair in my fists.
I sip tea with milk,
ask if the salmon is fresh,
swim in the ocean,
watch the moon rise.

Each hello,
Each swallow,
Each breath,
Each turn in the mirror,
Each arch of my back,
Each step,
a rolling wave
catching moonlight,
here and away,
in the long arc of grief.

PERSPECTIVE

by SANDRA KOLANKIEWICZ

In the distance the plane flew erratically, but not more so than our own trajectory even bound to the face of the Interstate as we were, rushing home from a funeral, three hundred and fifty more miles to go in silence. The crowd had been mixed, some denied communion. Others refused because they had arrived unprepared, so long since their last confession they felt apart. Still more stood in line, inched forward one by one, crossing themselves at the last minute before salvation was placed in their palm or, if they had opened their mouths, tucked into the red spot between their teeth. Shoes and neckties were tight, only a few children there to squirm. A disabled man in the back pew talked loudly to himself in spite of the surrounding glares, his old mother beside him accustomed to disapproval.

KINEMATIC

by DOUGLAS W. MILIKEN

Houses are built so as to remain built. But theirs is a vision shaped by a need. It must be seen through. With meager tools strapped to their bodies, they paddle through dawn-still water to the house whose top-most floor is all that stands above the murky tide. A few use rowboats and canoes that they've found. Others man makeshift rafts. Their vessels are flawed, take on water, are weak. But these things are okay. Each need only be able to bear one man's singular living weight. Anything they gather can be towed.

The tools aren't correct but they're the tools the men have. With pry-bars they strip off shingles, peel whole sheets of plywood from the roof. Inside, the braver men cave in walls of moldering gypsum to hammer free the studs. The house groans and creaks like a ship at sea. Deeper below: it is settling. The workers toss their salvage into the water where others lash the floating lumber together with rope—this, if nothing else, they have plenty of: rope, or anyway things that are close enough. At the end of each day, they paddle their haul back to shore. Each day, the shore grows farther away.

By the second week, rafters and trusses fill the water. It's a day of celebration when the roof beam breaks free, and crashes, and does not sink.

FAILURE SONNET FOR E----

by DOUGLAS KORB

It was on the tip of my tongue. Complimenting you
on the softness in your shoulders, glowing under sun.

What made me stop was the needs of others and your
running to meet them - a bus picking up problems

on its long journey to Albuquerque, then laying them out
on a burnt rock to watch them bake and wrinkle in the sun -

smiling all the while. It was when the sun disappeared
into the arid ground, you got up and returned to me

with a handful of lemons instructing me to prepare.
It was my turn to grabble the bitter rind

and grate it into a turquoise bowl filled with other
ingredients, which mattered more, but went unnoticed.

ON OCTOBER 30TH I DISCOVERED

by AMY MARENGO

1

Fancy Coffins to Make Yourself

“More than 230 photos are provided
to help guide you toward your own casket.”

and I thought, “This is perfect for my coffee table;
move over, *Extraordinary Chickens*.”

then I saw a one-star review:

“This book should be entitled:
Build a Coffin at Summer Camp.”

and decided the book wasn't for me. After all,
I'm too old for summer camp. I mean, I have my own
coffee table. My own apartment where I live alone.

But 230 photos depicting the birth of a shoddy coffin
might be more for me than 230 photos depicting
the birth of an oak-inlay masterpiece.

2

Connecticut's *New Haven Independent*

Homeless Katie Carbo found a skeleton

braided in the roots of a storm-felled oak;

she wasn't creeped out:

“just someone's earthly shell.”

That night a state death investigator slipped

the skull into a paper Stop & Shop bag;

gathered around the caution tape, onlookers

booed his lack of indulging them a peek.

3

I dreamt tornadoes again.

I dream tornadoes all the time. I know they're coming

right before they arrive, and I try to get everyone

I ever cared about to a safe place nearby,

but they don't listen until the last second, and even then,

I wake unsure if they made it to my hand

reaching out from a splintering doorframe.

THE RIGHT WAY TO LOSE PENNIES

by DAVID HERNANDEZ

I'm picked, a penny
out of a nickel, a dime,
a quarter, and a half dollar.
The mother drops me
into a fish tank
and watches me sink.
I try to reach
the applesauce jar
so I could win her a free goldfish
but miss and cover the colored rocks.
She doesn't need me
to buy her daughter a goldfish.
She only needs to lose more pennies.

CONTRIBUTORS

David Hernandez is from El Paso, TX. In 2012, he finished his Bachelors of Arts degree at the University of Texas, El Paso.

Nearly 150 of **Sandra Kolankiewicz's** poems and stories have appeared in journals over the past thirty-five years. Her chapbook *Turning Inside Out* won the Black River Prize and is available from Black Lawrence Press. *Blue Eyes Don't Cry* won the Hackney Award for the Novel. "The Way You Will Go" is forthcoming from Finishing Line Press. She currently lives with her family in Marietta, Ohio, and teaches at a community college in West Virginia.

Douglas Korb is the author a chapbook, *The Cut Worm*, and his poems have appeared in or are forthcoming from *Tupelo Quarterly*, *NOÖ Journal*, *Hobart*, *Versal*, *Barrelhouse*, *Spork*, *RHINO*, *Poet Lore*, and elsewhere. He is currently on the board of directors for the Collected Poets Series in Shelburne Falls, MA. His erasure art can be found online at www.brokarthere.wordpress.com. He lives in Marlboro, VT, with his wife and two sons.

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Douglas W. Milliken is the author of the novel *To Sleep as Animals* (Publication Studio / Pilot Editions, 2014) and the codex *White Horses* (Nada, 2010). Other work also appears or is forthcoming in *McSweeney's*, *Slice*, *Glimmer Train*, and *the Believer*. www.douglaswmilliken.com

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