

# *Periwinkle Literary Magazine*



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The Wicked Witch  
by Lisa Armstrong



My daughter can spin a yarn  
Her imagination is rich  
But what if I told you  
I'm not the wicked witch

The tower is a metaphor  
Anxiety lives in her head  
Sometimes she locks herself away  
And doesn't leave her bed

The prince is no Romeo  
Broke my little girl's heart  
I tell her he's a waste of space  
But can't keep them apart

I'm not the wicked witch  
I'm just a mother who knows  
Once upon a time I loved  
[A man too much]  
And withered like a rose

# Recurring Dreams

by Kim Mannix



1.  
twisted in tresses  
rolled and wrapped

like a housefly

in a silver web

smell of wild roses,  
smoke clutching to golden locks  
after a season of burning birch

warmth of the hair cocoon,  
the weight of it upon the chest,  
in the quietest  
dark

2.  
down  
down  
down  
which is the worse fate?  
falling or stalling?

3.

there is a baby  
crying  
and skilled hands  
that cradle  
shh shh shh  
little one  
let me swaddle you  
in hair

4.

from the tower window  
the view reaches  
past forest and meadow  
beyond blurred lines  
that must be rooftops  
of an untouchable village  
where girls with pinned ringlets  
run their fingers  
over red apples in the market  
feel the breeze nuzzling  
their bare necks

5.

bone rung  
ladder  
tied tight  
with hair  
is still  
a bridge  
to somewhere

# Clementine

by Isabella Fiore



i don't need anyone.  
i just everything and  
everyone and too much.  
god i can be needy but  
i can also freeze you out.

i can't tell if i'm sad or i'm  
gay. maybe they are  
synonyms. maybe there is  
something about queerness  
that is inherently sad.

my mom told me yesterday  
that i need to get my meds  
fixed. apparently it's not  
normal to not want to leave  
the house. i used to be someone  
different. i wish i could be  
that girl for her again.

it is suffocating to be this sad  
all the time. i can't remember  
when i was able to clearly  
breathe. isn't that scary? to  
forget what being happy  
tasted like?

i

I don't cry anymore. I can't  
tell if it's good or it's bad  
but I do know that one day  
I will crack and spill over.  
everything will come pouring  
out of me and it will hurt  
like a bitch. perhaps then i  
will feel human. maybe it takes  
swimming in a fountain of my  
own tears to start to breathe  
again.

i

# Skin

by Isabella Fiore



i wear bras with ballet  
backs and feel like a princess.  
is this what femininity  
tastes like?

my body is a temple  
and by that i mean i am  
afraid of it.

hip bones and structure  
and tears and bad hair  
days. bitch this is what  
girls are made of.

there are not enough  
words to sound out  
what i think of the skin  
i swim in.

my gay and my body  
are conjoined sisters.  
they will not leave  
each other no matter  
what it is i do.

my body is always  
dry like my sense  
of humour and  
emotional state.

this was supposed  
to be a poem about  
my relationship with  
my body but instead  
it is confused and lonely  
and awake on the  
wrong side of the bed.  
why is that.

## The Offering by Holly Day



The crows settle in the field outside  
noisily fighting over the things I left them.  
One flies right past my window, a cheap necklace  
studded with tiny glass beads  
clutched in its beak, another bird tight behind, contesting its claim.

They squawk and caw in frenzied delight  
over old glass rings bought at yard sales  
earrings and pendants made on my back porch  
a handful of little dolls pinched out of tin foil.  
They stalk my treasures until the sun goes down  
leaping and hopping and shrieking in the grass  
finally leaving the field too empty and quiet.

# Let Down Our Hair

by Kristin Garth



Rapunzel blooms from a womb of desire,  
of coveted greens of a neighbor's  
garden most dire, a ravenous mother,  
unscrupulous dad. Trade her for favors.  
Wrap her in plaid swaddling, a debt paid  
the day she is born — petite possession  
never to be shorn or degraded  
by fingers or the indiscretions  
of man. Ethereal blossom, preserved  
by a witch, twitches in windows, the same  
libidinous itch to be disturbed,  
to let another inside. Our first games  
are to seek what is directed to hide,  
letting down our hair when we decide.

## Things We No Longer See

by Laurie Gelfand



Basements are below ground, dark, musty, hidden, less-than, forgotten. It's where you put things you don't want to see or no longer need: junk, extras, water heater, boiler, dirty laundry, sometimes people. We forget those things are even there.

Sharing a room with my two younger, rambunctious half-brothers was becoming unbearable for me, as was my parents' daily drinking habits and the chaos that ensued, so at the age of six (after much begging on my part) my parents moved me to the unfinished basement of our small home in Wyoming.

The basement was seven hundred square feet. In one corner piles of dirty laundry sat neglected in front of the washer and dryer. Another section held a large mound of junk and other items we no longer used. The only source of light was a tiny window that allowed you to see a slice of the sky. Otherwise, it was dark and dank, the smell of mildew permeating the space. You could feel the coldness emanating from the concrete walls, and in the winter I could see my breath when I exhaled. None of this bothered me though; I was thrilled to have my own, peaceful space away from what was happening upstairs.

My parents hung sheets from the ceiling to create walls, and placed a large piece of brown carpet on the rough cement floor. I had an old dresser and a bed with delicate pink roses

My parents hung sheets from the ceiling to create walls, and placed a large piece of brown carpet on the rough cement floor. I had an old dresser and a bed with delicate pink roses painted on the black iron headboard. My rickety wooden toy box held all of my belongings: dolls, Etch A Sketch, slinky, Silly Putty, Coloring books and Crayons. My prized possession was my blue electric blanket that we bought at K-mart. Twenty minutes before bedtime I'd crank the knob up to level nine and wait for it to heat up before slipping into the blissful warmth. It felt like a warm hug. One year the temperature in our Wyoming town plummeted to forty-two degrees below zero and lasted for two weeks. But even that didn't prevent me from spending most of my time in my private space.

I developed an acute sense of hearing while underground. I listened for the sounds from above that told me what the mood was upstairs. I listened for my father's booming footsteps. When he lost his temper, he sounded like a huge dinosaur lumbering through the house. Some nights I would hear an object smash into something, shattering sounds. My father's growling voice yelling "I'll rip your goddamned head off!" These were terrifying sounds. I could hear my brothers' cries. They were cues. And even though I was scared too, my reaction was always the same: fly up the stairs as fast as I could to my brothers. I had to protect them. I saw the fear in their eyes. They were huddled in the corner, arms around each other, crying.

Basements, like Pitbulls, often get a bad rap. Sometimes it's justified, like in the movies, such as *Silence of the Lambs* and others that present the basement as a torture chamber where horrific things happen. Or in real life, such as when Elizabeth Fritzl's father locked her in the cellar of their home and kept her captive for twenty-five years, while he sexually molested her and even fathered several children with her. There is sometimes a fine line between a safe place and a prison.

Our childhood spaces help to define who we are and set the tone for our lives. On the one hand, the basement was my sanctuary, a protective space tucked away from the chaos upstairs. It gave me independence, quiet, peace, and a place for my creativity to soar. It's where I learned to enjoy my own company. But it was a double-edged sword. My time below ground also created a separateness, a disconnect with those around me. I saw myself as alone, a disparate faction of the family. "They" were a cohesive entity, "they" were upstairs, "they" were a family. The four of them had a bond that didn't quite include me. My brothers and I belonged to my father by blood, but the boys belonged to both of them.

Even though I preferred to be alone in my room, I was at times plagued with a deep sense of loneliness. One night, I laid in bed and wondered if anyone would come to me if I were in distress. I only time I recall being summoned upstairs was for supper. Over time, I wondered if I was even noticed. I decided to test this out, and began to fake-cry. At first it was a somewhat soft cry, like a child who dropped her ice-cream cone. Nothing happened. I cried louder, as if someone had snatched a toy out of my hands. Still nothing. I turned up the volume and began to wail, like I had been slapped. I heard footsteps. They were my stepmother's footsteps.

A few minutes later, I heard her voice at the top of the stairs.

"What is it Laurie?" There was irritation in her voice. She was not happy that I roused her out of bed. I was a bother, a nuisance. I immediately felt embarrassed and didn't know what to say.

"Nothing," I said softly, my voice laced with resignation. I pulled my electric blanket up around my neck and drifted off to sleep.

# Contributors

- **Lisa Mary Armstrong** lives in Scotland with her children. She tutors law and researches women and children's experiences of the criminal justice system. In her spare time she enjoys reading and writing poetry and fiction and playing the piano. You can find her on twitter @earlgrey79\_lisa or view more of her work here: [lisaarmstrong2179.wixsite.com/website](http://lisaarmstrong2179.wixsite.com/website) .
- **Kim Mannix** is a poet, fiction writer and journalist from Sherwood Park, Alberta. Her work has been published in several journals and anthologies in Canada and the U.S. and she's a contributing editor of Watch Your Head, a climate crisis anthology. You can find her on Twitter @KimMannix, usually posting about kids, cats and music.
- **Isabella Fiore** (she/they) is a writer who chronicles her experiences through love, sadness, and figuring out what it means to be a queer "woman" in her world. her publications include Cathartic Lit Magazine and TEEN-ZINE. when she is not writing, isabella can be found baking, napping, or wrapping herself in a blanket like a burrito. find her at @isabella.fioreee on instagram.
- **Holly Day** ([hollylday.blogspot.com](http://hollylday.blogspot.com)) has been a writing instructor at the Loft Literary Center in Minneapolis since 2000. Her poetry has recently appeared in Hubbub, Grain, and Third Wednesday, and her newest books are The Tooth is the Largest Organ in the Human Body (Anaphora Literary Press), Book of Beasts (Weasel Press), Bound in Ice (Shanti Arts), and Music Composition for Dummies (Wiley).
- **Kristin Garth** is a Pushcart, Rhysling nominated stalker. She is a Best of the Net 2020 finalist. Her sonnets have stalked journals like Glass, Yes, Five:2:One, Luna Luna and more. She is the author of 20 books of poetry including Candy Cigarette Womanchild Noir (Hedgehog Poetry Press), Flutter Southern Gothic Fever Dream (TwistiT Press), and Girlarium (Fahmidan Journal). She is the founder of Pink Plastic House a tiny journal and co-founder of Performance Anxiety, an online poetry reading series. Follow her on Twitter: (@lolaandjolie) and her website [kristingarth.com](http://kristingarth.com)
- **Dr. Laurie Gelfand** is the author of "Love Before Sex: How to Establish Love and Commitment Before Bringing Sex Into the Relationship" and "The Big Talk: Talking to Your Kids About Sex and Dating." She worked as the family therapist for an alcohol and drug treatment facility in southern California, and is now writing full time. She is currently working on a memoir about her early childhood and teen years. She lives in Los Angeles with her husband and two dogs.