

MOONFLAKE

press.

Snowscape



ISSUE #3

Dear Reader,

The weather is impossible to predict. We can only respond, react, and feel. We can only exist in a frozen place and time and reckon with our memories and emotions. It has been a joy to read submissions responding to the Snowscape theme and to sit with you all through the storm.

Let these ten writers be your guide through this winter's Snowscape, because they have emerged from the cold with knowledge and beauty. I hope that you find solace and strangeness in these pages.

Sometimes in a blizzard, we hope to get warm and stay safe. What I admire about the writing you are about to experience is that they allow us to sink deeper into the truth beneath the unknown. Sometimes we seek understanding, and sometimes we require something more unexpected.

So please — read on. Shiver in the Snowscape with us.

Marcella Haddad
Managing Editor

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Editor In Chief

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Poetry Editor

Shayal Kaur
Fiction + Creative Non-Fiction Editor

Trompe L'oeil

Is it moonlight or a fresh coat of snow?
I raise my heart over my head,
leaving my poem by the side of the road.

I meet a barred owl in a blueberry grove.
Is it my father, arose from the dead,
backlit by moon, lightly coated with snow?

A fawn is dropped off for the night by a doe
who slips in the woods to make her own bed,
ditching her poem by the side of the road.

Last call, closing time, past time to go.
How midnight changes everything, whether
the moon is bright or cloaked by snow.

Have you ever poured maple syrup on snow,
pressed taffy to lips: molten-sweet, sticky-wet,
a frozen poem made by the side of the road?

This slick black ice hides more than it shows:
the bottles emptied, bruises spread.
Half-lit on moonshine, coatless in snow,
I'm an unfinished poem, a dead end in the road.

Lissa Kiernan

What The Woodcutter Knows About Midwinter

The night is filled with frost, the start of a snowfall.

The wind is hag-ridden through the forest,
keening between the branches. In the darkness
he sets his axe at the base of the tree, notches
the trunk gently before settling to a knocking rhythm.

He sings candles and baubles into the air,
spins out the notes into the evergreens
and the holly berries, so blood-bright.
He sets the needles quivering, fills the hollows
of old nests with golden winter songs.

Finished, he hoists the fat pine onto his shoulder.
His reindeer-skin jacket pads him against the weight.
He pauses, a dark bird-shape on the cusp of flight.
Certain they are still listening,
he thanks the old Gods for their green benediction.
Then follows his own footprints, back towards the light.

Penny Blackburn

In Between

Frost flowers bloom through her reflection in the smudgy train-window. She dries her cheek with the sleeve of her coat that's too big on her and sinks into the chair. Sweet metal mixed with earthy dust hangs in the air, engraved in the squeaking, bouncing low seats. The smell of other people's history. Not *her* history.

A man in a flat cap sitting across from her glances up: young girl, crying on a night train. Must be some lover. Or a student. Or both. He returns to his newspaper, stretching it wide, pulling up a wall between them.

She buries herself deeper in her coat – an embrace from its owner, who won't call her *Cinege** anymore.

Below her seat, there's heat against her ankles. The rest of her body is cold.

Outside, a duvet of snow protects roots. Dark-green pines swim past. The moon stays.

Will she ever be able to stay? Will they ever let her in?

She only knows how to be in-between.

The seat under her shakes. The wagon starts to sway.

She clutches her armrest.

The man lowers his newspaper an inch.

Brakes scream on the icy tracks, pushing her deeper into the seat.

The man clears his throat, placing the paper beside him.

*Coal Tits

The wagon's dim yellow lamps flicker out.

Night lights float in. Sparkle of snow. Glow of the moon. The fresh shine of the air.

Not daylight, nor darkness: in-between.

After a few seconds, the lamps blink back to life, reoccupying the space, projecting her ghost-like reflection onto the window glass.

The train gains speed.

“Tickets, please,” a short, muscular woman appears next to her seat. She winces. *Where's her ticket?*

The woman watches her, patient, as she untangles herself from her coat.

She unzips a couple of pockets on her large hiking backpack. It has to be here somewhere, on top of her life's belongings. Would they believe she has a ticket somewhere? She fumbles until she finds a piece of paper tucked in one of the side pockets. She gives it to the woman.

“Bloody chilly, this evening, isn't it?” The woman smiles. A warm smile.

She nods and smiles back.

The woman scribbles something on the ticket then gives it back, “Safe journey, then, love... Tickets, please.”

The man has his ticket already between his fingers.

The train rattles onward, *tata-tata, tata-tata*, like her heartbeat.

Noemi Scheiring- Oláh

Winter Alchemy

Outside my window March rain turns to snow.
Iced brush, damp pine hold few remaining seed.
Muscle, tendon, blood and bone all know

The grip of winter, as winter takes its leaving slow
Belligerent, tenacious - more than just a touch of greed.
Outside my window March rain turns to snow.

Guileless inches mask sleety ice below,
Hide moist seed but not inherent need
Muscle, tendon, blood and bone all know.

Cardinal, flicker, squirrel, nuthatch, crow
Each now heed and know - this too the song, this too the creed.
Outside my window March rain turns to snow.

Inside each shuttering breath they live the ebb, the flow,
No angst, no doubt where this dance must lead,
For muscle, tendon, blood and bone all know.

Within the moment, no wringing hands, no woe,
In bitter gusts we swallow, seek - refuse just yet to bleed.
Outside my window March rain turns to snow.
Muscle, tendon, blood and bone all know.

Margie Gaffron

Blue Eyes, Dark Bird

In the black bite
and upheaval of winter

I feel you there
just out of reach

sly leaves compose your forehead
cover all the knowledge

and wisdom I would one day need.
You never met a day out of doors

you didn't love—work shirt
woven of bluebird and cloud

you would smile at my fancy—
it was plain blue-collar plaid.

The brittle glass of your blue eyes
weren't mirrors—they were faces in mirrors

expressing always what went on behind
the furled dark of your pupils yet

you could not see and I did not see
the dark bird behind you.

I see it now
a shade perched waiting indifferently

a mattering of holly obscures your lips
the growing things you loved.

Sharon Gazaway

First Snow

The first time you remember snow this year was over Thanksgiving break. It was the last day you had in your hometown before you get on your second ever plane ride and flew back to Boston. You had less than an hour before one of your best friends who you hadn't talked to besides texts, much less seen, in the four months you had been away at college, picks you up for Friendsgiving, and you have no clue what to expect. You know that you have changed significantly in the time, and you didn't know if your friends had too. What if these people who mere months ago were some of the most important people in your life have grown apart from you to degrees that your friendship can't recover from?

No amount of reading or pacing or writing or flipping through your tarot cards or trying desperately not to cry was helping the worry eating away at your mind and you find yourself shrugging your coat on, connecting your earbuds, and starting The Walk. The Walk was something you had carefully perfected over Spring 2020 while in quarantine, and it's still the best way you've ever found to process your emotions.

And you've been walking for a while, taking in your music and trying to focus on your surroundings rather than the thoughts swirling and bumping up against each other in your brain when it starts. You think at first that its started drizzling and worry that you'll have to make it back to your house before it starts to downpour, your head already spinning with the implications of not being able to have your walk, not being able to

like for the plants and animals who live outside all the time with nowhere else to go to watch it snow. They get to see the whole snow, from start to finish, and if it's a good one they'll get to see it build up onto itself to coat the grass and the roads and the tree branches in sparkling white powder and you wonder if you sat here long enough you would get to do the same. If you lay back and fell asleep on this diamond and woke up in a few hours, would the snow have wrapped you up from head to toe, creating a whole new ground, inches above the other one, as if you and the dirt had never been there in the first place? And suddenly a feeling stronger than any other fear or worry that has consumed your thoughts today builds up in your gut as you think about your life from the past few months and your life before, your old friends and your new friends, the official changing of the seasons and the fact that your second snow of the year will happen in Boston, a thought so alien and intimidating to you combined with the song blaring in your ears, reminding you that this place you've spent the past 10 years of your life in is not your home anymore and you can't tell if that's a good thing or a bad thing and your tears are ripped from their ducts, dripping down your face in frosty rivulets.

You eventually pick yourself up and trudge back to the house that you currently live in that will never be home again with just enough time before you get picked up and whisked off for the night's festivities. You enjoy getting to stand out in the backyard with a mug cradled in your

hands and comment on the snow with your friends, retelling shared memories of snows of years past, and you love eating dinner in front of your friend's massive windows, enjoying a warm meal and chatter in front of the fireplace, watching the snow begin to blanket the ground.

But your favorite part is on the ride back home around midnight, as the winter winds kick in and whip the snow into twisters that whistle threateningly around you and you feel a certain triumph that you're safe and protected in the car. You let your friend chatter on and on as you lean your head against the window, worries from earlier blown away with the wind, watching the houses whiz by, drunk off the highs of seeing people and catching up and dynamics shifting clearly back into place. And then you're at your house and you step out and say goodbye and your friend has rolled down all his windows and started blasting a song he knows you both love even though it's much too late and quiet in your neighborhood to do so, and the snow falls softly on your hair and jacket as if forgetting its severity and anger from moments before, and you think this may be the best first snow you've ever had.

Isabella Astute

A Protection Spell For You, My Love

Find an old glass jar with a lid that screws
And a piece of tape to track everything in your recipe
Nothing worse than an unlabeled jar of unidentified fluid, amirite

Mince garlic until fine
Chopping destroys the vacuoles
And releases allicin, a sulfur compound
Responsible for the spicy heat & smell
allicin can treat multiple drug resistant bacterial infections
as well as viral and fungal infections

I stood in a garden as a white-haired woman told me to stick garlic in soil
(not directly; our collective greed leaves the soil here uninhabitable even for garlic)

Don't worry about it too much
Just let the sun and rain do what they do
I potted the garlic and forgot about it
A couple weeks ago
Spokes of green shot to the sky

Chop onions too
Let these earth creatures be your base
My sweet allium
Maybe you chop in uniform squares as a practice in discipline
Or maybe you chop roughly, to let go of perfection
If you cry,
Let your tears flow into the jar
Tears flush the adrenocorticotrophic (ACTH) hormone, produced in response to stress
(discovered by Evelyn M. Anderson in the 1930s)
And I know you're stressed

Grate ginger
Her rhizome
A golden jewel

Squeeze lemon into your jar
Guard your cuticles if anxiety's gnawed them
Use both arms

Press together
Grunt with force
It'll activate the autonomic nervous system

Pluck each rosemary petal
As a prayer to those transitioned
There's a rosemary bush around the corner from my apartment
When I walk the dog, I whisper to her
Run my fingers along her spine
I whisper to my Aunt Mary with whom I share a birthday
An ancestor before my first breath

Rosemary Aunt Mary
Rosemary Aunt Mary
Aunt Mary Rosemary
Aunt Mary Rosemary

Sprinkle cayenne
Sneeze out your demons
The ones who keep you up at night
Something said or left unsaid
The smoldering embers from times still vacant in your mind
When your body was no longer yours

Stir in thick golden raw honey
A salve for the burns that still linger
More effective treatment for post-operative wounds than antiseptic and gauze

Add apple cider vinegar
To preserve and protect

Close your eyes gently
Whisper gratitude
Embryology has taught me it's an infinitesimal miracle any of us are here at all

Cut a piece of parchment paper
Screw on the lid
(very important step to prevent rust, you'll see why in a second)

Bury it in the ground
I know what I said about uninhabitable ground

But the caress of the earth holds wisdom and turbulence
Another cloak of projection

Sing to your jar this (I learned from Ira):

When fear starts creeping in

We will still be strong

When fear starts creeping in

We will still be strong

When fear starts creeping in

We will still be strong

We will answer with a song

When they try to divide us

We will still be strong

When they try to divide us

We will still be strong

When they try to divide us

We will still be strong

We will answer with a song

Dig in a month's time
(ask the moon; she'll tell you when)

Ally Noyes

12:24 a.m.:

Two Roommates

“Spins,” she says
and then bows to vomit
in the bathroom sink. “February
makes me sick,”
her voice a broken bottle.

Outside the snow falls. I hold
her unwashed hair as footsteps
break the clean white thickness
of the streets.

She wipes her mouth
with her wrist. “He said he could
drink me under the table.”
The snow falls relentlessly,
piling up, burying cars.

Brittany Ober

and eat it too

i can only ever write in blues and hope
yellow peeks in through frosted shutters
striping your skin with honey and shadow

our fingers nesting gentle enough to
hold a soft shelled egg between them
palms warm despite the snow

i can't lean too heavily into you in case
the branch that holds you snaps
splattering sap on the frozen ground

freedom is a pure thing: i trust you
please be careful, the sky is so cold
it's harder to come down than you think

we deserve a decadent ending
epilogues filled with strawberry jam
optimism that gives you cavities

Natalia Queenan

The Winter Moon

The full moon sighs,
looking down me.
The reason is that
my notebook is always empty.
The winter moon
tries to give me words
to express winter.
I'm sorry,
I'm already in spring.

Yuu Ikeda

Lissa Kiernan

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The Whispering Wall, Lissa Kiernan's second poetry collection, was a semi-finalist for Tupelo Press' Dorset Prize, and winner of Homebound Publications Poetry Prize. Her first book of prose, Glass Needles & Goose Quills, won the Nautilus Gold for lyric prose. She founded and directs The Poetry Barn and AIM Higher.

Penny Blackburn

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Penny Blackburn lives in North Tyneside, England and her poetry has featured in a wide range of online and print publications. Her pamphlet, A Taste For Bread was released last year by Wild Pressed Books and her collection with Yaffle is forthcoming in summer 2022.

Noémi Scheiring- Oláh

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Noémi grew up in a small flat at the edge of a Hungarian town. She's now a nomad in a small world. Her writing has appeared/forthcoming in Janus Literary, Sledgehammer Lit, Ellipsis Zine, Reflex Fiction, FlashFlood, The Write-In, and Writers' HQ's Flash Face-Off reading events.

Margie Gaffron

Margie Gaffron's poetry has appeared in several journals and anthologies including One Sentence, The Progressive, Friend's Journal, Liminal Age, and Autism Parenting Magazine. She enjoys experimenting with many forms and styles hoping to find the bedrock as well as the fluidity of language.

She lives in State College, PA

Sharmon Gazaway

Instagram @sharmongazaway

Sharmon's work has appeared in The Forge Literary Magazine, Daily Science Fiction, Enchanted Conversation, New Myths, Metaphorosis, The Society of Classical Poets Journal IX, and her poetry is featured in the anthology, Dark Waters. Sharmon writes from the Deep South of the US where she wishes it snowed more.

Isabella Astuto

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Isabella Astuto (they/them) is a writer currently majoring in Creative Writing at Emerson College, with minors in Journalism and Media Studies.

They have previously been published by orangepeel literary magazine and jfa Human Rights Magazine, as well as won awards over the years from contests run by Scholastic Art and Writing and Adventure Write. While they are currently located in Boston, they are originally from Lancaster, Pennsylvania

Ally Noyes

Instagram @ally_noyes

ally (they/she/he) is a queer trans dreamer and schemer based in bulbancha (new orleans) louisiana. she is a student of traditional and allopathic medicine which means they loves biochemistry almost as much as he loves laying in fields of daisies. you can find them on twitter: @ally_noyes

Brittany Ober

Brittany Ober (she/her) is an English teacher and mom by day and a philosophy student and poet by night. Her chapbook *Easy Beat* was published by Dancing Girl Press in 2010. Her poetry has been published in *Ample Remains*, *Wrongdoing Magazine*, *The Aurora Journal*, *Interstellar*, and *Main Squeeze*, among others.

Natalia Queenan

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Natalia (she/her) graduated in 2020 from Barnard College, where she studied English and neuroscience. She believes in finding unexpected warmth in the coldest things.

Her work is published in several journals including *Hecate Magazine*, *Sledgehammer Lit*, and *Ample Remains*.

Yuu Ikeda

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【Bio】

Yuu Ikeda is a Japan based poet.

She writes poetry on her website.

<https://poetryandcoffeedays.wordpress.com/>

Her published poems can be found

in <Nymphs>,

<Selcouth Station Press>,

<Sublunary Review>,

<Remington Review>,

<Sad Girl Review>,

and more.

*nur weil ich langsam erfrier find ich zu dir find ich zu dir ich weiß genau wo kein mensch
jemals war bin ich dir nah bin ich dir nah um mich nur strahlendes weiß hier tief im
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