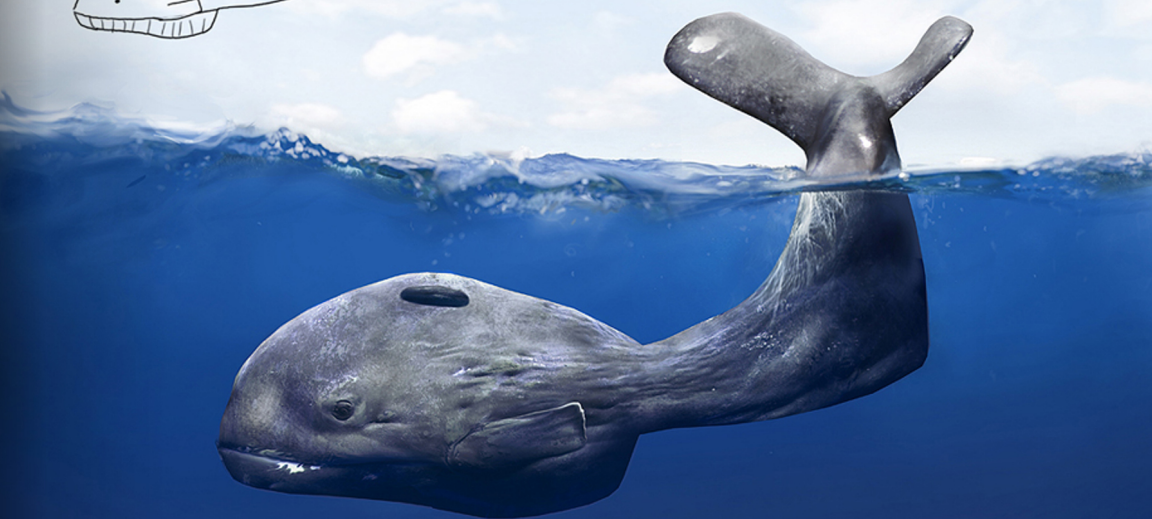


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Editor's Note

Our fifty-eighth issue is packed with dazzling poems and phenomenal flash fiction. It opens with "The Perfect Zen Dance of the Boulder" by a poet we first featured in our Poetry Special Issue last year, William Doreski. Next up are Devin Strauch with "Substitute Angel," a story that will change the way you think about pasta, and Mansour Chow with two haiku that might raise Basho's eyebrows. Anna Lea Jancewicz's story has a fresh take on what to expect when you're "Unexpected," and Anton Rose reminds us why they call them the wee small hours of the morning in his poem "Back Garden, 2 AM." A client gets "Even" with his barber in Fredric Sinclair's story, Sally Houtman answers the "Question Mark" with a poem, and Annesha Sengupta finds herself in the "Wrong Dream" in a fanciful fiction piece. Closing out the issue is the newest member of our staff, Amanda Chiado, who appeared in our Poetry Special Issue and also contributed a lovely poem to our special issue for Eirik and Monica, the founders of Jersey Devil Press. (For more on Eirik and his shiny new lungs, please visit our homepage—double-lung transplants are literally lifesavers, but they don't come cheap.)

— Laura Garrison

The Perfect Zen Dance of the Boulder

William Doeski

A glacial boulder larger
than my house. Before it,
a woman dances to music

in her head. Swinging her arms,
indifferent to my witness,
she dances the perfect Zen dance

of the boulder, in which
the dancer becomes the boulder,
the boulder becomes the dancer,

and thousands of tons of deadweight
exude a spirit so vital
I can almost believe I see it

smoking from upholsteries of moss.
I shouldn't stand here watching,
but the mass of her indifference

equals that of the boulder
so I'm caught in the neutral zone
that arrests all movement but hers.

As she dances past me her face
looks blank enough to write on.
Her limbs, however rubbery,

are strong enough to brace a planet.
The music sifts from her like flour
and dusts the ground where I stand.

At last I break free of myself
and retreat up the trail. Half a mile
later I still hear absent music,

still feel the warm air surfing
about her whirling arms, still
believe the spirit of the boulder

has responded to her artistry
by absorbing and erasing her
and leaving her body to twirl.

WILLIAM DORESKEI lives in Peterborough, New Hampshire, and teaches at Keene State College. His most recent book of poetry is *The Suburbs of Atlantis* (2013). He has published three critical studies, including *Robert Lowell's Shifting Colors*. His essays, poetry, fiction, and reviews have appeared in many journals.

Substitute Angel

Devin Strauch

She's in the shower and washing away her old apartment when she finds the first strand of angel hair. It slumps from her scalp, pretending to belong. She rolls it between her fingers and then traces it up, feeling where it connects with her skin. By the time she finds the courage to pluck it from herself, the water is cold and she's shaking and the pain doesn't surprise her, but she isn't quite ready for it. She chews on the soft noodle and wonders if her new boyfriend has a magic apartment or if maybe her body is just changing realities, to one where hair is spaghetti and spaghetti is hair. She worries that maybe she got so lost in her old head and old apartment and old boyfriend that even old lunches have fused to her skin. Mainly though, she wonders if her new boyfriend likes pasta.

Months pass and soon she finds her fingers sneaking through her regular hair to feel the growing mass underneath, like a bowl of brains on Halloween. She worries her boyfriend will find out, so she started cutting it off every morning after he leaves for the day. She slices the thin pasta off, naked and alone in the bathroom. She watches it drop into the toilet and down the drain. Their pipes are starting to clog from the wheat, but her boyfriend already asked why their trash was always full of the odd noodles, so she has no where else to dump the angel hair.

It's not until she cuts her finger with the blade and instinctively sucks on the wound that she notices her blood is starting to taste

less like copper and more like tomatoes. By then their toilet has stopped working, so she's been cutting her noodles into plastic bowls and hiding them deep in the fridge, past the rotting lettuce and forgotten strawberries.

Her boyfriend loses his job and she's already lost hers, forever ago before her nail clippings would turn into parmesan cheese.

"We're fucked," he says, coming home and opening a beer and slouching on the couch.

"We'll be okay," she says.

"How are you going to live? How are we going to eat?"

She wants them both to eat the pasta, her pasta, but she feels it's something he has to ask of her first, something she can't offer without him recognizing it, wanting it, demanding it.

"I guess you're right," she says, wishing he would bite into her. "We're fucked."

DEVIN STRAUCH is a writing undergrad at Metro State University in Denver, graduating Fall '14. He likes to take apart computers and get lost in rivers.

Two Haiku

Mansour Chow

Porn/Spam Haiku #1

“Busty young babe plays”
“Rubbing her little wet clit”
. . . So much loneliness

Porn/Spam Haiku #2

“Beauty stuffing huge pepper”
Make a sandwich in between
“Sluts share cock in jail”

MANSOUR CHOW wants you to know that most third-person bios you read on contributor pages are written by the writers themselves. However, in this case, Jersey Devil Press have written it for him and want you to know he is one of the worst human beings on the planet.

Unexpected

Anna Lea Jancewicz

(for David (not Lee Roth))

Finally, one afternoon, in a fit of desperation, you fish one of Husband's plain white undershirts out of the Semi-Clean Pile and with a Sharpie make a custom maternity shirt.

I'm not just getting fatter, ok? There's another human in here.

Husband says you shouldn't count your chicken before it's hatched. And in fact, when folks begin to ask *What are you hoping for?* You find yourself replying *A human*. Husband prefers *We're hoping it'll be Asian. Asian babies are really hip now*. He also lets them know, in a confidential tone, that werewolf does run in his family. *On my father's side* he whispers, sotto voce. You think this may be true.

Husband proposes naming the baby *David Lee Roth, Jr.* You make a counter offer. *Only if we can go with Anna Lita Ford, should it be a girl*. Stalemate.

You love *Fern*. Also, *Opal*. Husband decrees: *No naming babies after plants or rocks. Why beat around the bush? You may as well name the kid Bongwater*. You scowl.

Ulcer Hellhammer, Husband says, beaming. *That's gender neutral*. You agree to disagree. *What about Agony Hellhammer?* he asks. *Is that more girly?*

This baby will be Irish and Jewish, he says, *You know that means it'll have a tail and horns*. You add to the gift registry: lots of little kilts, lots of little hats.

You attend childbirth classes, the kind where the instructor wears a large pendant around her neck that resembles the Venus of Willendorf. She plays tranquil New Age flute music at the end of each session, and urges you to visualize rainbows and waterfalls. Husband elbows you as you both sit cross-legged on the floor and whispers *I think I have dog crap on the bottom of my boot*. You smell this to be true. You both agree you are out of your element.

You decide to just have the baby in your own bathtub. Your birth plan goes something like: “Play *Whole Lotta Love* on repeat, very loudly, and yell *fuck* a lot at the top of my lungs until we see a head.” Amazingly, this works really well, and none of the neighbors call the cops. Husband says *Led Zeppelin is for queers and losers*. You’re the one who is shitting a broadsword, so he can eat it. But you love him so much more now, somehow.

The baby has no Asian features, of course. And surprisingly, no horns *or* tail. You do note upon waking, after the first postnatal full moon, that your wee darling is spattered with a fair amount of blood, chicken feathers stuck to rosy cheeks. Ulcer Hellhammer is still the cutest baby you’ve ever seen. It’s true. She really is.

ANNA LEA JANCEWICZ lives in Norfolk, Virginia, where she homeschools her children and haunts the public libraries. If she could fistfight any historical figure, it’d probably be Martin Luther or Herman Melville. Also, she has no familial feelings toward her dog. Her writing has recently appeared at *Bartleby Snopes*, *The Citron Review*, *Rawboned*, *Squalorly*, and elsewhere. Yes, you CAN say Jancewicz: Yahnt-SEV-ich. More at annajancewicz.wordpress.com

Back garden, 2 AM

Anton Rose

With sleep, slippery, evading my grasp,
I ease myself out from under the covers,
stumble toiletwards, and piss.

The dog is wide-eyed too, and when
she runs to the back door, tail awag,
I open it obediently.

Grass underfoot, the black air is brisk,
scant guard provided by evening attire
of pants and slippers. The dog, donned
in her fur coat, takes the chance
to piss too, and together we smell the air:
trodden cut grass, barbeque embers,
and a strange sharpness from the wheelie bin.

The lawnmower sits pathetically,
an embarrassed relic of a job unfinished.
Rake in hand, I sweep at the grass,
now clogged with thin water, and glance
to either side to check lights and curtains,
in case the neighbours, too, are awake at this time,
watching my half-naked display, stage-lit
by moonlight.

ANTON ROSE lives in Durham, U.K. He writes stories and poems while trying to finish a PhD in Theology. His work has appeared in a number of print and online journals, including *Structo*, *The Alarmist*, and *The English Chicago Review*.

Even

Fredric Sinclair

It will be written that there was blood and horrible gashes through the head. They will say that he kicked wildly, like a horse pricked in the side, that he let loose such a scream as to send shivers down the most hardened butcher's back. It will be said that tears ran down his face, that he sobbed such as a grown father sobs for the loss of a child to some unnatural breach of nature—just so they will say he wept, deep in the chest, with full, manly guttural groans.

They will say this and so much more. But they will be wrong. He was like a babe in my arms. Had I been his mother, he would have given suck. Who knew that reason could so overrule the old man? No sooner had he hardened to my touch did he soften, like a blister to balm. And as a blister needs a lance, in his very hands he clutched it, bright and shiny. I worked it out, his hold firm at first, but in time he gave willingly, like child releasing some forbidden token, hesitantly, until he knows he's lost it, till no more. I coddled the hand. It shook from the cold. Some will say it was fear. It will be written that he shook from fear.

I ask those who wish to embolden truth: why should he fear a boy from down the street who had come once a month since he was six and had never once in all that time given him but the slightest cause to frown, let alone tremble—tremble as a man might tremble if he saw his own shadow rise up and take form and lurk for days with sullen, abject insipidness? Why should the sight of a child, a local boy, one of his many usual customers, cause him to tremble

so? What does it matter that he didn't recognize me? It feels like yesterday, when I first swung up on his leather chair like a cowboy mounting a horse. Just so, I kicked and hollered and cried *Whoa, there, big fella!* How the old man would tremble then with laughter. Wasn't I the hero then, with my full, flaxen mane for his fingers to plumb?

Damn his whistling! Damn it to hell! He swept and swept. All that sweeping when the deed was done. The whistling and sweeping and how he winked at me when it was all over and said *Giddy-up, now, chap.* The bristles of the broom and the sweeping and all that scratching on linoleum, all that scratching, scratching, with those wonderful, thick bushels of blond and bronze catching in those bristles.

When he was finished, I'd give him my five dollars, and he'd bend down and pat me on the head and stick out a lollipop. *Even?* he'd always say with a wink. Out I'd go and the door would make its jolly jingle and not once would I think (as I think now, horribly, wakefully, tossing in the night, turning on the light to inspect the pillow cover and dab it with a piece of tape to count in the morning)—no, not once would I think of what he had taken. Stolen! Not once did I notice (but how I notice now, how I notice every day) how he, in his old age—when in the natural course of life one enters a perpetual drought and the fields go barren and the crops go lacking—not once did I notice how in need of lacking was he! Such a full, thick tassel. Downy waves of black. Lustrous strands of metallic sheen. So much overflowing at such an age, he still daubed it with greasy palms of Vitalis. Either he had not paid in full the taxes of a life long-lived or nature's great auditor, time, had been fooled, burgled, hoodwinked. While I—who has now but barely

reached my prime, who has only but timidly sampled the sweet nectar of youth, let alone thrown himself wantonly into the battering storm—show the visible scars and haggard visage of a thousand noisome inquiries.

Stop your prying. Will you stop? It was time. He was overdue. I tried to explain it to him, but he didn't understand. He only shook his head. Shook it and kept on shaking it. So I took it in my hands, only to stop the shaking. But then I had it in my hands. That head. That hair. I took a handful. Oh, that hair. I tugged it. And tugged some more. And even more still till I heard the slightest rip. Then I eased my hold and steadied his head between my knees before I grasped again with renewed resolve. I got a handful, roots and all, though by now I was getting a taste of how much spunk the old man still had in him. He kicked like a stallion and wailed like a babe in the crib, but I kept him down and assured him that the steadier he stayed, the quicker and easier it would be for the both of us, for now I took out those glittering beauties he'd surrendered when I'd grasped him by the hands and stared into those wide, dark eyes that quivered like polished stones in a riverbed. Now they rolled . . . and rolled, and when I thought they would roll right out of his head, I set the blade flush to his scalp, lowered my mouth to his ear and whispered—*Even*.

FREDRIC SINCLAIR is a New York-based author. His plays have been produced at The Players, The Director's Studio, Richmond Shepard Theatre, Manhattan Repertory Theatre, and the Midtown International Theatre Festival. His writing and co-production credits include *Provincetown*, *Bluff Head*, *Lethe*, *The Friend*, and *Aiken in Cyberspace*. He also has written two novels, *Preemption* and *American Sampler*, and numerous poems. www.fredricsinclair.com

Question Mark —

Sally Houtman

Little fish hook
dangling

waiting for
a truth.

SALLY HOUTMAN is an ex-pat American who relocated to New Zealand in 2005. She is the author of a non-fiction book, branching into fiction and poetry in 2007. Since that time, her work has appeared in more than thirty print and online publications, earned four New Zealand writing awards, and been nominated for a 2012 Pushcart Prize.

Wrong Dream

Annesha Sengupta

I was walking home from work on a crisp day when out of the corner of my eye, I saw an alley I had never seen before. I knew that the alley hadn't been there yesterday, because yesterday I had specifically remarked to a co-worker that there was absolutely no mystery in this city. Everything was unwrapped and displayed, spread out against the concrete streets like butter on bread. My co-worker, sullen with her hair in a bun, had dug pointedly in her purse for a pair of earbuds.

But there it was, the alley I had wished for. An alley to satisfy the most demanding of dreamers. Thin and purple, brief pockets of smog obscured any eventual ending. My fancy tickled, I squeezed into it, thinking briefly of muggers, but deciding that the mysterious alley didn't appear between two previously touching buildings for me to get mugged. As I proceeded down the alley, I felt the strange moistness of the brick against my fingertips. It was the kind of gristly rock found in steamy temples (like in *Indiana Jones*). I was in the pulse of the city: follow the vein and enter the heart.

After about ten minutes of walking, I came across an open door. Its sign was written in French (I spoke Spanish), but I could tell it belonged to some kind of store, a shop (the kind spelled S-H-O-P-P-E). That a store would be stuffed this far into an alley, magic or not, surprised me, and I wondered briefly about monetary flow and customer counts. With some hesitation, I entered.

Arranged around the shop, which was more spacious than I expected, were hundreds and hundreds of violins. They were painted the deep red of dried blood and ancient things. Some of them were simple and unadorned, some of them were covered with intricate carvings depicting scenes from nature or mythology. Their thin strings glowed faintly, the way light glows against closed eyes. Splayed around the room were sheets of music, all drawn by hand. I could tell, by the way each note was drawn, so perfectly and lovely, that it was the most beautiful music in the world. Two small cats, one black, and one white, were entwined together on the floor. A scroll lay on the counter, ancient with mildew and sealed with wax. Behind this counter there was a very old man, probably Russian, with his white hair high in a widow's peak. This, this had the makings of glory. I rocked back and forth on my heels, caught up in the magic, not knowing what to say.

"Young man," the Russian spoke, imperiously. He had a voice like leaves rustling. "Young man, do you by any chance play the violin?"

"No," I told him, frowning. "But I play the piano."

The old man cocked his head. "Oh?"

"Yeah, sorry." I felt foolish. The atmosphere suddenly became very heavy, and I felt like I wasn't meant to be there after all. The walls of the shop turned burgundy and squeezed. I stared at the cats, realizing that I was a dog person. All the parts to fantasy were set in motion, and I kept guessing the trigger wrong.

The Russian didn't tell me to leave, but I could see the suggestion in his bleary eyes. He looked at me with a hollow pity, but I didn't ask why. A few dull moments passed, and the violins

began to swim before my eyes, smooth curves blending into harsh ones.

I was saved by the entrance of a girl. Her hair was dyed gray with purple streaks, and slung across her back was a violin case. There was a magic in the way she looked around the shop. There was even magic in her goddamn shoes (five laces, three knots). The Russian smiled at her fondly, as if welcoming a daughter. He held up the moldy scroll and she walked towards it, entranced.

I coughed.

The spell was broken, and all eyes were on me. The cats began to hiss, the girl screamed something in French, something I could understand even though I had never taken a word of French in my long, tedious life. I ran. I ran fast. The alley seemed to widen, eager to be rid of its foreign invader. Her words echoed endlessly in my ears.

“What are you doing in my adventure?”

ANNESHA SENGUPTA is a full-time undergraduate student at New York University, though she hails from Richmond, Virginia. In her writing, she tries to find the thin line between hard and soft, beauty and obscenity. Her science fiction has received a National silver medal in the Scholastic Art and Writing Contest. Life scares the hell out of her, but she loves it anyway.

Two Poems

Amanda Chiado

Circus Flies

are most interested
in our dares.
A bare bone horse,
the starved city,
he and I
blind to the drop.
Cool wind
of oblivion
wire waiting,
dash the love line.
Before the flies welcome
the shatter they gather
where we'll crash.
We see
their hallelujah,
swarm.
All our bodily confetti
prepares to bloom, blood
on parade.
We tiptoe on,
wind our reckless halo,
flies buzzing
succulent hymns.

Choosing Thieves

The dare begins in the dark at the gate of the farm
where the slightest move may jostle the rooster into doodle-dos.
Boys grunt and shove, doing what they do best. Upon the mud,
the pink pig's tracks dug like suicidal slices for attention.
Being the only girl is like swimming upstream, watching the faces
of the crowd slide by raucous in their downpour.
Of course I must have thought, thought something useful:
someone will get hurt. Be careful. Make smart choices.
My hands told of my heart, shimmying and damp.
My heart told of my guts, bubbling and unsure,
but girls go into the dark night after night, fraying the deep.
My feet whispered mouse, tip-toed through shadow's throat.
In my arms like an armful of bony snow, I gathered the leggy
goat that bleated, and tore its eyes at me in worry.
A dream is like this, spontaneous abduction into a stranger's arms.
I dashed with my animal, swooshing through the darkened field
like a torrent of teenage war. My breath stuttered, like an engine hum,
Warm under my back like when I first kissed the body kiss.
The men took the confused animal, slapped me on the back
in masculine regard. *You did it*, they whispered cheerfully.
I was breathlessly accomplished until the soft eyelashes
of the goat amended the light and she looked into me,
all questionable fate. She was choosing one thief over the next.

AMANDA CHIADO is still chasing those fancy sleep demons. Her poems keep sprouting up, like delicious little weeds. Her other work is forthcoming or appears in places like *Cimarron Review*, *Casserole*, *Best New Poets*, *Fence*, and *Forklift, Ohio*. She works for your golden smile, your tender hello and does it while chasing a baby!

On the cover:

"WALVIS"

Telmo Pieper

Born June 1989 and raised in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, **TELMO PIEPER** is a creator, imagemaker, drinker, contemporary spraypainter and half of the artistic duo "TELMO MIEL" with Miel Krutzmann.

"Walvis" is from his "Kiddie Arts" series, in which he created photorealistic digital representations of his own childhood drawings. His work is available online at telmopieper.com and telmomiel.com. He is also on Facebook at facebook.com/telmomiel.

