

# UNREQUITTED LOVE

*THE FOURTH ISSUE*

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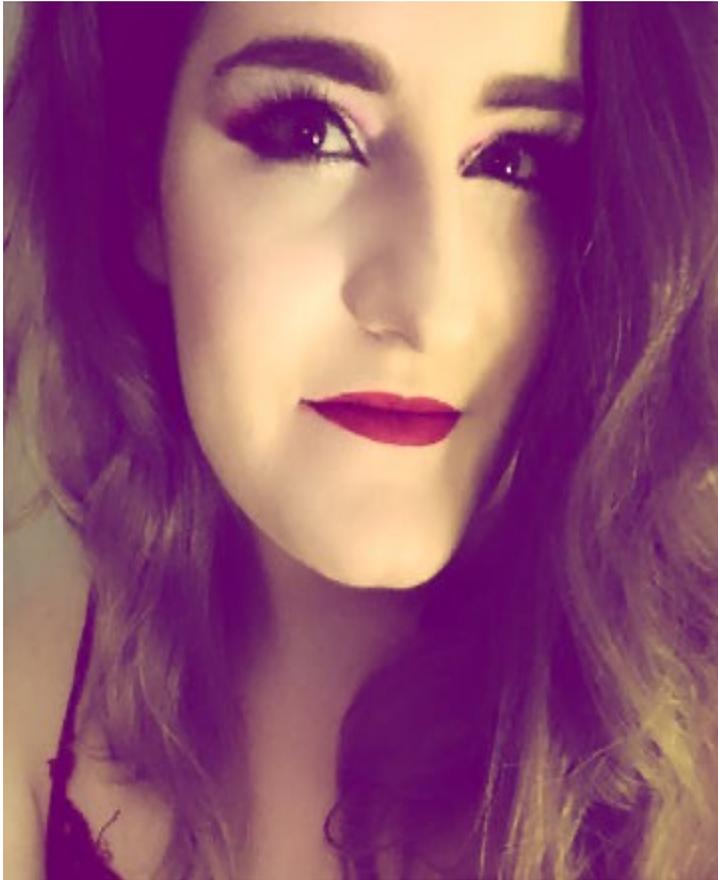
Not up for Ownership

To All the Demisexuals and Our

Long Lost Friends

Fourth Issue Contributors

Letter from the Editor



Elfie is a writer and poet, mainly of LGBTQ+ and mental health themed works, from Derbyshire, England.

She is a co-founder and former editor of Derby University's *Writer's Block* magazine and has a Master of Arts in publishing, as well as a first class Bachelor of Music with Honours from the University of Huddersfield.

Elfie is a writer for [The Poetry Question](#).

Her poetry has been published by Constellate Literary Journal and Royal Rose Magazine, among others, and her debut poetry chapbook *Will You Still Love Me if I Love Her?* was published in February 2019.

When she isn't consumed by words, she plays the piano and watches horror films with her grandparents.

**Your chapbook, *Will You Still Love Me if I Love Her*, debuted earlier this year. What was the most important lesson you learned in writing this book?**

It did and it is my pride and joy! Honestly, before writing and publishing that little chapbook, I was completely lost in who I was and what I was doing with my life. I was in a bad place and every moment felt foggy and unstable. I needed a direction, I needed something to work towards, I needed a purpose. I started writing songs, then upon realising my singing voice is the worst in the world, I turned to poetry (which sure pleased the neighbours!) I found myself through poetry, it gave me way to explore my identity in the safety of my journal. Composing the chapbook helped me understand my own journey and feel proud of how far I have come. That has to be the most important lesson I learnt: to be proud of myself.

**How did you make the decision to write *Will You Still Love Me if I Love Her*? How did writing about your queerness help you understand it?**

It started with my relationship with God. I remember struggling with whether my attraction to women was a sin or not and crying into my journal about it. Then I wrote the poem 'Ungodly' which is in my book and it-

was a turning point for me. I began exploring more of my memories and my true feelings that I had buried for some time, and thus *Will You Still Love Me if I Love Her* was born! It came about mainly out of my desperation to read it, to have a book I could relate to and find comfort. Throughout the book, I switch between labels, and I am still unsure how I would identify now, but writing it helped me realise that sexuality is fluid and I don't have to lock myself into one box and throw the key.

**In writing *Will You Still Love Me if I Love Her* what did you find most challenging and painful? Most rewarding and cathartic? Were these ever the same?**

All of it was challenging! I was exploring an entirely new medium and learning how to express myself in poetry as well as exploring my identity and learning who I am. It was a life changing experience that I desperately needed. I think the hardest part was writing about family and friends who have been homophobic around me and trying to navigate that dumpster fire. After writing the chapbook, I felt this beautiful sense of freedom, as if I was announcing to the world that this is me and I will no longer be ashamed.

**What is your involvement with the literary community?  
How does community impact you and your work?**

I am a writer for the Poetry Question which has been an invaluable experience. I get to read and review truly amazing books among a team of excellent reviewers. Each collection has been so impactful and challenged my perception of the world and of poetry, and I adore being able to support and encourage writers. Also, being part of the poetry community on Twitter has been so inspiring and supportive. I have become friends with truly beautiful people with whom I share the passion for writing and creating art. Seeing others succeed makes me so happy and inspires me to achieve my own goals.

**What does your editing and revision process look like?  
How do you make difficult decisions about reworking  
and revising your writing?**

I go back and forth so much on how I feel about my poems, both unpublished and published. I think that is natural with growth — looking back and thinking ‘wow, this needs work!’ However some poems I just have a gut feeling that this is how it is meant to be, this is exactly what I am trying to say and how the reader should receive it. If that gut feeling isn’t there then I usually leave the poem and return to it later with fresh eyes. I have been working with an editor lately, the wonderful Juliette Sebock, on my upcoming chapbook and it has been such a valuable experience. Sometimes you really do need a new set of eyes to see what isn’t working.

**You currently are living in England. Does your physical location impact your writing?**

There is nothing I would love more than to travel the world with my journal. I think being in different places definitely has an impact on my headspace and sparks new inspiration, but I don’t think the physical location has a presence in my poetry. Though I would like to explore writing about specific places, most of my work comes from emotional experiences. In all honesty, most of my poetry is conceived and formed in the isolation of my bedroom!

**You have done a lot of work as an editor with journals  
and magazines. What have you learned about your own  
writing while editing?**

Founding and editing a magazine during my postgraduate year has given me so much respect for editors of literary magazines and journals. I am in awe of how their issues are constructed to specific themes and cohesion is created throughout despite the pieces being from individual writers and artists. It is a lot of work, and often done around the hours of full time work, which amazes me. I think the most important thing I learnt is to understand rejections. Sometimes your piece just isn’t right for that publication or that specific issue, and it can be hard to acknowledge that without the brain deviating to ‘I’m just not good enough.’ That isn’t true! Believe in yourself!

**What attracts you to writing, and particularly poetry? What do you feel poetry can capture that other mediums cannot?**

Poetry just feels right. I have tried many other mediums and while I adore most, poetry seems to be perfect for expressing myself. I can take a thought and twist it into something beautiful. I can play with words in the most wonderful ways. Writing poetry is so intimate and personal and with it, I have found my voice.

**You often write about the bodily – the feeling of loneliness, of grief, of healing. What inspires you to write about these topics?**

All of my writing comes from my own experiences and I am so grateful to include healing as one of them. It has been part of my healing journey to write about the temptations of downward spirals and keeping myself afloat. I can look back at my old journals and see just how much despair I was in and be so relieved that I am not there anymore, but if I ever fell back into that place, I

know I can get back out. I've done it before. And the proof is in the poetry.

**What are you currently working on and drafting? What can we expect next from you?**

My second chapbook is on its way! It has taken a long time to write as it handles the vulnerability of trauma and contains experiences I have never truly talked about before. The book explores an inability to talk after suffering sexual assault, with the title *How Will I Sound When my Voice Returns?* deriving from my poem of the same name first published by Mariás at Sampaguitas. I believe it is my best work to date and I am extremely nervous but excited to share it with the world. It will be released later this year!

## restraining order by Léna Sant'Anna

the truth is i desire you like a dog; needy and desperate  
i'm an animal for you

put my tongue to your ear, my mouth to your belly,  
let me devour you, sleep in your carcass

i wanna be your hunter, prey, lay you down on my kitchen floor and have you breathless, boneless, strung out, reduced,  
to a skin that warms me

you're unbearable june heatwave and i hit ninety-six degrees waiting for the bus,  
no shade, empty bottles.

i miss your hands; i wanna be canonized.

i have taken to learning your grammar: i dissect,  
on my knees for you,  
fourty nights and days crawling in between the dunes,  
oxydizing at night without your gaze

*sorry i haven't answered your texts! i've been so busy...*

daydreaming about tearing your rib down to see how that body moves from the inside, what water flows, consuming you, living your life, in your skin  
and i got delirious thinking *tonight it's either me or you or god and it's not gonna be me and i need something tangible to teeth on*

should i block you?

i think *you should block me. i think you should get a restraining order.*

*please call me?*

tell me you wanna see me naked and good  
tell me you want me - i've never wanted to be good before  
say you wanna take what i'm giving you, what i've been giving to you, say you're mine  
say you cry at night thinking of my thighs, my tits in that thin white shirt, my hands

*please*

i wanna give up all pretense of free will, all my power, surrender  
wanna wash you, wanna grow my hair to swipe your feet with, wanna be your crucifree, your consolation prize,  
your disciple and your traitor

i would do anything for you, apostasy, in the dark, and i,  
i-  
have done terrible things to myself.

and i know my mother only approves of icons carved into wood  
but there is a dagger i polish while chanting your gospel  
and i'll let you cut into me

## I Tremble Like Dying Flowers by David L. O’Nan

I wrote you this ballad this morning  
As your brown eyes slept away yesterday’s stress  
Can I present you rich daisies and oils?  
When our minds can never really rest,  
Of course, I can write of the past  
And all the crumbling rocks that cut like a good-  
bye.  
But, I want to be your strength  
Instead of your fog in peril build,  
A trembling dying daffodil  
I want to wipe away a tear with confidence  
Bring you the hands of Jesus through this fence.  
We must break through  
To touch the skins of heaven.  
I want to swim, I want to wipe these oceans over  
This sadness, this anger.  
Drown those greedy seeds of cities.

They continue to grow that oppressive dirt,  
And I whisper words of I love you  
As you continue to sleep like a peaceful baby bird  
And no winter withering, of flowers  
Impervious to the narcotic chills.  
And flowers dress out of its manic swaying,  
All my crutches and bandages hold them up like a  
miracle for you.  
The best I am, and can ever be  
is your damaged masterpiece.  
Don’t throw this one out.

## Just My Imagination by Juliette Sebock

I don't know how to tell you that I  
daydream of our hands intertwined.  
My fantasies consist of lying beside  
you and talking, of listening to you  
breathe. What I want most is  
someone to wake me, to be there  
when the dreams feel too real. I want  
to feel. I want to be safe knowing that  
you're here through the night. I want  
to know that when I'm awake, you'll  
be there. I want to know when I fall,  
as I so often do when it comes to you,  
you'll meet the ground too.

## PASSIONATE by Jessica Minyard

your name was once again on my phone  
and i answered  
and we talked  
like nothing happened

and i couldn't breathe

every time we were alone together, i ached  
for you to touch me, anything  
any sign you wanted me as fiercely  
as i wanted you

nerve ends buzzed, tense and coiled

for a blow that never came

maybe i don't have a right to feel like i lost something  
i never had

## A copywritten romance by Meg Mulcahy

I had a dream  
you asked me for the name of my perfume  
so you could get it for your girlfriend, Bernice.  
Imagine, all the pros of me  
without having to deal with me –  
Bliss.

Ours is a friendship with rules  
rhyme, reason, best practice  
There should be a word for all the things we cannot say  
for the weeds that hang in the air, tender, tangled  
dancing of ice in our glasses, the chink of a cheers we don't believe in  
But for now, a sticky note will have to do.

## i just don't know by Linda Crate

maybe i should let you go  
it is apparent you care,  
but not enough;  
and all i do is break my heart  
loving you with a love  
you'll never reciprocate—  
friendships should not be so difficult,  
shouldn't have to pull teeth  
before you'll speak;  
my anxiety shouldn't play up so badly  
when i try to converse with you yet it does—  
unrequited friendships are almost worse  
than unrequited love,  
because is there any potential to grow  
into something more or should we just walk  
our different ways?  
i'll never know or be able to decide.  
so here i stand,  
wishing you would talk to me  
like we once did;  
missing that roleplay we spoke about  
and were so hyped about yet somehow fell through—  
i just miss you and the conversations  
we used to have  
every day  
some weren't long, some weren't meaningful,  
and yet there were things that were said that i thought  
would be the glue to holding together our friendship  
that now i just don't know.

## Leftovers by Emma Schultz

I was  
too desperate  
for love  
to notice  
the way  
you  
baited me  
in your loneliness,  
so I could  
hang  
out to dry  
in case  
you  
grew hungry.

## My Friend by Rickey Rivers Jr.

Nine times out of ten we don't blend.  
We just pretend to still be friends.

I don't want this present or that past.  
Let's make the future brighter together.  
No. What I want doesn't matter.  
What you want matters more.

Tell me what I can do to fix what was broken.  
I hope for answers.  
I hope you answer.

Are you there my friend?  
Will we ever meet again?

## Hope by Jonathan Garcia

“I think I love you.” I said.  
You tell me the same, I’m glad.  
You say you really like the way I speak.  
I dig the way we connect  
We even like the same music  
You write, I write, we both read, and hate slam poetry.

She is like the sunrise in the sea.  
I’m more like a boat that sails to make history.  
Her marina is my keep.  
She’s obsessed with the way she will die.  
I live for each day.  
We share sad stories to relate.  
Her father passed away when she was young.  
My mother abandoned me when I was just a kid.  
I trust you with all of my deepest secrets.  
You trust me with your darkest lies.

You’re drunk. I’m yours, you’re mine.  
I’m getting used to these long nights  
As we sneak through the iridescent city lights  
We enjoy the time we have  
Emotions are in deeper now.  
I put rose petals on the floor.  
I watch you undress.  
I love the curves on your chest.  
I want your whiskey kisses.  
We make art and put our lives on hold.  
Spring is just a reason to exist  
Love is summer warmth and winter cold  
The fall is something we ignore

It’s been a couple of months.  
No texts or calls.  
You never told me where you lived  
I wonder where you have been.  
You tell me that you got diagnosed.  
Death is knocking at your door.  
I’m furious. This isn’t fair.  
I’m starting to see red.  
You’re quiet for a moment.  
I don’t understand.  
Something more has changed.  
You’re way too calm about this.

I don’t want to watch you die!  
I want to be there when you cry!  
Let me hold your hand through this dread.  
I don’t want you alone sick in bed.  
I don’t care if you lose all your hair.  
I just want you to know I’m there.  
For some reason all you do is stare.  
This can’t be happening.  
There is a hole in my heart that feels more like a bullet in my head.  
You’re a sunset and I feel lost at sea.  
I say fuck it let’s just be together for the rest of every day.  
You tell me to stay calm because you have a confession to make-

“You’re too young for me.  
I have a family.”

## Teacher by Rickey Rivers Jr.

I am attracted to my teacher. I'm not sure if she's attracted to me. Some teachers have dated students, but I'm not sure she's the type. I sit in class and watch her. She's the most elegant woman I've ever seen in person. She walks with authoritative purpose. Years from now she could be a queen if she wanted to be. I'm not sure what she wants though. She seems like such a royal already. Her clothes seem to hug her as tight as I wish to. She seems as though she's never been dirty a day in her life, but she cleans herself only because it's proper to do so. I'm musing. It is difficult not to. Amazingly, the other students don't seem to fawn, as if they could possibly do better. No surprise, they are unworthy of her gaze. I'd like to think I'm her favorite but you never really know, you know? I'm not sure if she'd accept my advances or not, but tomorrow I shall make a move. Wish me luck?

## Rose Petals by Lysz Flo

Do you know  
what it's like to live inside a rose?

Where the petals of  
Possibility are now  
A lost void

Let their nectar be the living poison  
I lie my head in  
/glorious finality

Aching for these petals to  
grant wishes  
For *he love me's, skip the not*  
Just so I can live in this dream again

Unable to sleep  
With you beside me  
Mind wanders about the pile of notes  
As *that is reality*

Tell me:  
How do I  
let go of a Love  
that is so tightly wrapped in a thorn  
that I cannot bloom expansively with you

I grip onto it, pricking my fingers  
until the season changes  
And my world ends

With roses  
Passionate addiction translates  
into the strangle love  
that makes petals fall  
into broken promises  
unkempt/unsaid

Unintended intentions  
fall away into the wind of memories  
of what never could be  
Yet always will be

A bloom  
Never really meant to be so beautifully tainted

How I love him  
He loves me not

## Sleeping Alone by Melliana Mulugeta

Afraid for our lips to touch  
While we lie face to face  
Petrified that when I open my eyes  
You aren't mine  
I wish my kisses were strong enough to change your mind  
If that were the case I'd kiss you until the end of time  
When I pack up my things today  
I make sure to leave a note on your pillow  
So you don't forget who's love you're sleeping on

For a moment I feel lost in space  
My bones frozen from the thought I'd never lie in your bed again  
Or that I'd never walk up those stairs on a rainy morning just like today  
I balance two cups of coffee and burst through the door  
Greeted by a sleepy lover with a warm embrace  
I don't want to sleep alone,  
Not ever, but especially not tonight

## Love is not fast: A culmination of pining by Venus Davis

I've been working at a fast food place for over a year now. I like to keep my time at minimum wage jobs like I keep my relationships - short. The choice is inevitable for jobs - and accidental for relationships - but probably for the best. I just can't stand the smell of food that I am not allowed to eat. The eight hours of standing makes my calves strong, but my knees lock. My feet always ache after work. If I run around enough during the shift, they just go happily numb. Isn't that something? If I find ways to distract myself, I often don't feel the dull pain of working nine to five. The doubles don't even faze me if I distract my sleep-deprived brain with coffee and lovely daydreams.

With every passing handsome face and cute smile, I wonder if someone will ask for my number. Every small interaction I have really fuels the hopeless romantic in me. I always work in the drive-thru, taking orders or handing out food. Maybe around six months ago, there was a customer in the drive-thru who was a semi-regular. He'd stop by sometimes during the week and I somehow managed to be the one handing out his food every single time. It's hard to think back on his looks, but I think he might've had light brown or dark blonde hair. He looked like he could've been a track runner. He was lean and seemed to be lanky. Though, with him being in a car and all, how could I have really known for sure? I remember opening up the window and handing this guy his cup full soda... but without ice.

Yuck. Lukewarm, I bet.

He took the drink from me as I mumbled some kind of dry

*greeting. I tried to hand him a straw, but he stopped me. "For a brief moment, I really didn't understand because it all happened so fast. I had no time to react. Then he said, "Oh, I don't need a straw." He then said something eloquent about how he wants to save the planet. I am so big on people being serious about social issues. So, you can imagine the shock to my system. Someone at this horrible place cares about the environment? Anyone have a ring? I want to propose to this man! He did the bare minimum and, in my book, because customers are so shitty and minimum wage jobs stink like shit he was the subject of my infatuation that day. I believe he came back another time and we had the same interaction. I remember swooning. "Environment boy came back today." My coworkers didn't remember what was such a crush worthy moment for me. So, I had to tell them, half jokingly, the aforementioned story.*

And that's how work goes for the most part. I tell my coworkers the story of a cute boy in drive-thru that briefly filled my eyes with hearts and my mind with an escape. They are amused and think that I am interesting for being interested in someone. Once, I spoke over the headset about being so nervous by the sight of a cute man smiling at me that I almost yeeted a twenty dollar bill into the trash. My manager asked why with a stern tone, upset at the idea of the loss of money. My brief infatuations transcend all monetary compensation and many other human necessities. Loss is something I've never felt scared of. In fact, I've only been scared to gain. To gain something, like another person's love, is to wait. To wait, is to be okay with the possibility of something never happening.

My relationships have been intense and fast and absolutely pulverizing-doomsday-lobotomy terrifying. There is no way to describe the pain I put myself through for a quick kiss on the lips. For a tender glimpse into how I fit into someone's arms. Each drive thru interaction lasts about one to two minutes. So, chances are I've seen each of the people I've been briefly infatuated with for a total of three minutes, maybe six if they come back a second time. So, that infatuation is a quick desperate grasp at the attention I wish I could get on tinder-or better yet - in the real world. It is not real because even for infatuation, that is too fast. Each of my real life relationships lasts about two to four months. That means I see the people I date tens of times before I see them for the last time, maybe hundreds if we decide to get back together eventually or if we run into each other on the streets.

So, that infatuation is not love because love is not that fast.

## Seven Edits (after Panini– Lil Nas X) by Sam Rose

Just say to me what you want from me

~~Just say to~~ Tell me what you want from me

Tell me what you want from me, **for me**

Tell me what you want from me, ~~for me~~ **first**

Tell me what you want ~~from~~ me ~~first~~ **to do**

Tell me what you want me ~~to do~~

Tell me what you want **is** me

Tell me ~~what~~ **that** you want is **me**

Tell me that you want me

## monsters like you by Linda Crate

you couldn't quite love me,  
and i fell before i realized;  
you said you did but it was  
just a lust that would  
tore me apart—  
when you told everyone,  
"it seems like linda was always here.  
she belongs"  
then turned around to tell me that  
you didn't love me;  
i don't think it is the unrequited love  
that i cannot forgive  
but rather you—  
there are some days where you barely  
register on my mind,  
others i forgive you easily,  
but there are days like today where i want  
to paint every beautiful day with the black haze  
of all the pain you give me so you can no  
longer feel the warmth of sunny days  
because monsters like you don't deserve happily ever afters.

# you used to call me angel (another poem about a boy I almost loved)

by Haley Mckinnon

i have not produced anything new in months  
and when i woke at 4am  
and found myself looking at your picture again  
this is the only thing i wanted to write  
will i dare to write about you again, i don't know what else  
there is to say  
everything that could be said between us is eclipsed  
in the way you look at her  
it is so loud, your love for her  
i can't pretend to ignore it, it is like  
the static of the universe echoing into everything  
you said it once and it repeats forever  
i didn't think anything could be louder than the almost,  
louder  
than the sound of my breath in the spaces between seconds  
but you can't grow something from nothing and  
there was nothing  
the words were never said and now they are forever caught  
in the back of my throat, can you hear them when we talk?  
did you turn them over and over in your mouth before  
you recovered them?  
will you admit that they were meant for me?  
could she hear the interference as they re-wrote themselves  
for use on someone else?  
maybe it's not fair of me to say this

i suppose i should apologize  
for thinking that you owe me something, but  
you put the gun onstage and left it  
and everyone knows that's just bad practice  
you used to tell me how much you wanted me  
in our theatre days, do you remember  
the feeling of your mouth on mine for the first time because  
i do  
it's documented somewhere in the archives  
and the last time i saw you before i moved across the country  
do you remember how we captured each other then, too  
if you put the photos next to each other three years apart  
would what's between us look any different?  
i shouldn't be writing poems about you still  
it will get me nowhere  
i can't write you back into my bed and as much as i want to  
feel that again this is is not real  
we were never real and there is nothing keeping us tethered  
anymore but my own imagination  
forgive me, i am not a person to let things go so easily  
forgive me, i am not a person who does well in silence

## The Infinite Chasm by Emma Schultz

My ocean  
is your river.

My sky  
is your star.

We are  
worlds apart.

A modern day  
tragedy of the heart.

## Getting over you, in the rain by Ellora Sutton

It was the rain that shushed me.

It was the rain that told me

*there will be other loves.*

It was the rain that bit my shoulder

and whispered

*you are new you are new you are new.*

I offer my skin to the downpour,

let it devour my clothes

until I am a veiled marble naiad

shivering with passion,

alone.

## To the Boy Who Doesn't Own Jeans by Aashika Suresh

Most mornings, I wake up with thoughts of you  
tucked between the continuum  
of slumber and consciousness;

you linger, like the aftertaste  
of caffeine, skulk at the tip of my tongue  
long after I have roused.

You  
are the muscle memory  
I'd never wished to acquire –

squeezed through years of other ruminations.  
This is both,  
my distress, and my comfort.

The next time I speak with you  
will, perhaps, entail formal acknowledgements,  
a handshake, maybe a hug. When I say,

'Good luck, until next time!'  
know that I wish you not just  
the banalities of socially-constructed success.

For you, I will always wish early mountain mornings  
shrouded in snow  
and snow boots and piping hot chai

(For I know, coffee isn't your favourite,  
reserved for all-nighters  
before an exam).

I will wish you a gramophone  
and Moonlight Sonata, and maybe  
war fiction next to a fire place. You,

with your brighter-than-the-city eyes  
and bread-dough smile and iron calf muscles  
are made for seven continents.

I wish I could tell you,  
Darling, *you*  
are an explorer,

born to indulge in muddy toes  
and pebbly paths, to run amok among  
thistles and brambles,

for I know you will not mind  
bleeding into the sweet  
sweet earth.

You are not made for  
four-by-four cubicles, plastic files,  
or swiveling chair handcuffs.

You are made to get high  
on adrenaline, live among the wolves  
and nourish the raw and the wild.

Success is way too conventional.  
For you, I will always wish a life of  
Authenticity.

## Seasonal Illusion by Sarah Marquez

It is always October  
& my soul bends outward  
to touch the cozy season  
wrapped like a curtain  
around every tree.

A field lays open before me  
& I hear its call,  
like the howl of a werewolf,  
shifting into its human shadow.

There is always October  
& I meet you in the center  
of its circle— a pecan pie cut open.  
We are served one slice each,  
switch the plates.  
You eat mine whole.  
I take half of yours home.

This time, again October  
& you teach me the meaning  
of a hug that ends with— *what?*  
You did not expect love  
to find me, silly girl

stuck inside a dark room,  
unspooling a roll of film  
from a point & shoot camera.  
You leave it & me behind.

It is still dear October  
& pictures of the sea hold  
the adventure you give me.  
Your sturdy arms around my bones,  
wet sand tucked between our toes.  
Autumn rain falls from a sky  
stretching beyond the frame—

a window to a lucid dream  
where ocean spray is warm,  
shells shimmer on sandcastle walls,  
red seaweed streams down the beach,  
& free-floating ships meet  
only to be swept away by the tide.

## Flowers and Fire by Rickey Rivers Jr.

So many possessive poems;  
we don't own each other  
and yet we write like "You are mine"  
and "You belong to me."  
Love affects every facet of life.  
Healthy relationships flourish.  
Toxic relationships kill.  
If anything, you should take ownership of your role.  
Do you help or hurt?  
Do you love or kill?  
Some plants grow in dark, but many need the light.

Do you take and strangle like the weed?  
Or are you the rain, the sun and the bee?  
Look outside yourself, which do you seem?  
Do you help or hurt the two-person team?

You can change. You can be as the bee.  
You can grow that trust into a tree.  
Or you can promise to do so; then set it ablaze.  
Turn that trust into a haze.

Your life, your choice; your voice can kill.  
Relationships become a thrill.  
Fire starter, you burn with glee.  
Scorch the land and kill the trees.

Now you have ash, fleeting memories.  
They are all you own, bitter bits of history.

## something i could never give you by Linda Crate

i never loved you,  
but you cannot stop chasing me;  
i wish i could give you a cure

but i don't even want your  
friendship  
you make me feel so uncomfortable—

i am sorry you couldn't quite  
get over your crush on me,  
but i feel nothing for you;

i don't want either of us to waste our time  
so i wish you'd stop chasing after me  
i'm not your cinderella and you're not my prince—

my father was a monster,  
and there are days where i am his daughter;  
full of rage and claws and fangs

i am the dhampyr who sometimes  
lets her mask of humanity slip, then lets the monster,  
with her white fangs and red eyes, show through.

you deserve someone who loves you  
wholly and completely for who and what  
you are, and that is something i could never give you.

## Admission by Emma Easy

Years have passed, but sometimes  
the wrong foot slips on a taxed pedal and  
when this happens I imagine  
your reaction when you learned we'd severed,  
your single facial shrug—  
the mild relief of it all opened a window  
relaxed its way under your epidermis  
while the screen's blue light  
cleansed up and over it. A shrug  
too measured to slip a ricochet  
along the unmoving outline of you  
slouched as you were on a rented bed.  
With these slips I catch my knuckles  
on the hope that miles away and overseas,  
pristine in your old wardrobe  
there might still hang  
that white, navy and azure zip-up  
the one you chose for your seventeen-year-old  
skin, the one that never lost its shape, your shape  
the one you wore that last day we were truly  
friends, touching, smiling  
and splitting like the tacked seam we were  
across the street.

And so I admit that if ever I were to come across  
one like it in a charity shop, say,  
I'd say  
yes  
and with solemn, affecting precision  
glide a hanger under its shoulders.  
I'd know better than to wear it but  
might with washed hands take a sleeve  
between my fingers  
allow them to steal down  
the polyester blend  
an overdue joyride—  
a ride  
right down  
to the cuff

## Not up For Ownership by Carla Durbach

you came reigning down like  
Titus Andronicus in full Roman  
armor, seeking to conquer my flames  
in glory, my battles deflated,  
my sword left numbly embedded  
in rock, and every Goth lamenting  
  
the clay-footed warrior  
taking up so much space,  
aspiring my every grain of sand,  
my breath, dropping crumbs like  
globular clusters when I'm needing stones  
on my expedition— in true Hansel and  
Gretel style— to the witch's cauldron  
of mutilated hands and tongue  
  
the nerve, the confidence,

my defeat you're not  
understanding, your victory withering,  
turning to dust and as I'm walking away,  
leaving you in the throes of  
dejection, I'm wondering—  
who knew that love could be  
re-fashioned as an instrument  
of unrelenting torture?

## To All the Demisexuals and Our Long Lost Friends by Margaret K.

And so, at this point it looks like I'll have to wait  
Until we're both in heaven to speak to you again  
But what would that look like?  
A quiet room, just the two of us  
Filled with books and globes  
All our thoughts and all our strategizing  
All our dreams and all our songs  
Cataloged in a box of iridescent bubbles  
Maybe at long last  
You'll see me cry  
For you  
For us  
They'll be tears for what was found  
When we found each other  
And what we lost  
When we lost each other  
And then what we found  
In all the years since  
And they'll be tears of gratitude  
And love and joy  
At least, this is my hope  
Another shining bubble for the box

I said I loved you  
And you maybe don't believe it  
You never denied loving me  
But never admitted it, either  
The farthest you'd go was to say  
You didn't wish me for me to love you  
And I maybe don't believe it  
I guess at this point  
It looks like we'll have to wait  
Until we're both in heaven  
In that room  
To finally hear the truth.

## ISSUE FOUR CONTRIBUTORS

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Emma Easy

Carla Durbach

Margaret K.

## From the Desk of the Editor.....

Every issue, I am continually amazed and honored by the support our magazine receives. Almost a year in, and I'm still pinching myself. All of the themes for the Issues are a personal reflection of things I've been through and every Issue, you contributors find a way to say exactly how I'm feeling. I am so very humbled you trusted me and our magazine to showcase your work. Sarah, just two issues ago, I was just discovering who you were, and now you're an important part of the team and Issue Four's success. Having you as my assistant editor has made my life that much easier. Thank you Annabel for putting up with my procrastination and my wild ideas. You have the patience of a saint. Kate, yet again you nailed it with another insightful interview and I don't know what I would do without you. Elfie, thank you for letting us in your head for a bit and discovering more about your creative process and talking about unrequited love. Everyone that follows us, thank you, thank you, thank you. It's so unreal you took a chance on little old me just eleven months ago and it's crazy to see what Royal Rose has grown into in that time. Your unwavering support is why we were able to publish yet another amazing issue. As an editor, I couldn't be more proud about the team I have behind me and the amazing contributors part of this Issue. Issue Five, here we come!

