

# POETRY *for the* MASSES

Volume 2, Issue III

"Poetry cannot be defined, only experienced." - Christopher Logue

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## Save the Date

Five of my friends  
are tying the knot:  
playmates, roommates—  
pretty soon, the whole lot.  
Girls with whom I played  
dress-up, truth or dare,  
swapped secrets,  
talked make-up, hair.

Now they mail magnets,  
pictures of their beaus.  
Embossed below the wedding dates,  
Formal Invitation to Follow.  
Even the boy  
whose heart I used to break  
wants me to witness happiness:  
his perfect, white cake.

I've slept with the same man  
for more than a year.  
We've come close—  
so close—yet nowhere near.  
With our coin-op laundry  
and take-out Chinese,  
there's only one thing we do  
on bended knee.

*Anna Harris*  
*Augusta, GA*

## Preparing the Unborn Child

Copperheads, fanatics, power tools  
in disrepair, the one who tortures  
bugs (though you might try it  
once, a small stab at easy cruelty,  
and for that I'll wish on you  
a minor emotional trauma) all easy  
to avoid. Check for patterns, twitches,  
rust, glints. Worth your dread  
are the tricky evils, the devil's small  
scratches along a spine, provoking  
an itch impossible to pinpoint,  
more difficult to name. Even symptoms  
are misleading, often mistaken  
for vision or defense. I can only warn  
you that faith won't save you,  
nor a finely-wired intellect, nor  
the broad, enlightened upbringing  
we have planned. This family has a mediocre  
relationship with chance, but good  
enough. You'll be that blessed.

*Michele Battise*  
*Boulder, Colo.*

## Evening Comes

You are a tigress lapping from a pool in pale light.  
I am smoke from the burnt-lemon hills. And through us  
roar the secret wave-particles of union. From the stars  
and every summer sound come their tapestries  
like prisms of setting sun in a spider's web—  
patterns within patterns waving in the wind.  
So sparkle darkly and darker growl.  
So rise like an angel untied. . . .  
So come.

*Robert Christopher Graves*  
*Emporia, KS*

## Monroeville Mall

"I love the smell of the proletariat in the morning," she says,  
and she stretches her arms out as if  
splayed fingers can catch the wake of their passing,  
the wake of these derelict ships in this crowded bay.

*Kurt Sawyer*  
*Toledo, Ohio*

## Playing Dead

*for my brother*

August, and we are barefoot.  
I, barely five. Him, almost six.  
He teaches me to spit watermelon seeds,

and we conjure up plans to bring  
our parents back together. Kidnappings,  
alien abductions, broken washing machines—

anything that will allow us to live,  
the four of us, under the same roof.  
But now I am in yellow, the October flower girl

for my father's new life. Now in red December,  
our mother divorces another man,  
but it is still August for us. We are out of seeds,

so we lay on the sidewalk, my brother  
and I, and we play dead till almost  
nightfall. We play dead because we believe

if we are dead, our mother and father  
will stand above our bodies and hold  
each other till morning, and at sunrise,

a great hand will pull our Lazarus strings,  
and we will rise, my brother and I  
will rise, and our parents will breathe

and smile knowingly at each other,  
and dad will say, How 'bout a little IHOP?  
The four of us will pile into the car

and drive across town till we get to  
the International House of Pancakes  
where the syrup flows like magic

and the waitress brings extra whipped cream,  
and our parents will love each other and thank us,  
over and over, for playing dead so well.

*Nicole Callihan*  
*Brooklyn, NY*

## Subway Prose Poem #2: Passengers

Train doors glide open for a Nepalese boy with eyes like polished onyxes. He keeps his rice hat on, framing his strange beauty. It is past midnight, New York City. We are all visitors here, passing through terminals. An African family sits wearing their Sunday best. A leopard head-wrapped woman falls asleep on her lover's stiff shoulder, his shirt buttoned tightly up to his neck. A man wears a bloody gauze eye-patch while rolling silver balls on his right hand. People are passing through our lives like refracted light or shadows. A homeless man announces every fleeting station. What is train but transport to other lives? What travels beneath the secret faces? A nun of Mother Theresa's order shepherds a young sister, tight-fisted, holding her rosary. In my messenger bag I carry books, scissors and pieces of raw chicken.

*Joseph O. Legaspi*  
*New York, NY*