

POETRY FOR THE MASSES

“Poetry cannot be defined, only experienced.”—Christopher Logue

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WHY THE SHORE

Sand dollars, seabirds, sandpipers,
the oleander blooming
below my window;
windy reeds ribbon along the trail
seaweed quilted
along the waterline.

Phosphorescence illuminating
limpeted pools,
Feathers and crab carapaces
in the sand, foam which marks
ebb and flow.

Moon paths and sea thistle,
the shell, pink and turning as a cochlea
that sits on the mantle.
The stippled gulls, the brindled dog
that barks at the swelling tide.

You in my bed, and a red
tailed kite sailing
the morning.

Kristin Roedell
Lakewood, Washington

HOW TO FEEL A POEM

scrawl it on a post-it
and stick it to the mirror.
make a face at it when you stop by.
catch it when it flutters off,
and put it in your pocket
to surprise you later.

dust the furniture while
you listen to a poem.
ignore it
and see if it
makes your eyes well up
anyway.

if you think you could read it better
than the person you are listening to,
give it a try.

have someone else sing a poem down a well,
and come in time to listen to its echo
echo echo.

Tabatha Yeatts
Rockville, Maryland

AUNT LOUISE AND SPACE SHUTTLE CHALLENGER

No matter how much faith she has in her,
she’s scared of strong wind, but when weather’s fair,
she rocks on her porch, sipping some sweet tea,
Old dreamer’s drink, she says, Spirit water,
where she once visions a clock spinning on
the nose of a space shuttle rising like
cornbread in a hot, iron skillet, smoke
billowing to the ground where people stand
in shock, their heads upward, and she’s there too,
her hands raised in prayer, as now in church,
on the front pew where she prophesizes,
then a voice fancier than her own: *time introduces us to dust.*

Scott Bailey
Tallahassee, Florida

MOUTH-GUARD

I grind my teeth at night, the
dentists tell me. I can taste
it in the morning like spurts
of sawdust. They’ve told me
to stop. How can I control
a problem while I sleep? I
look in the mirror at the
sharp shields of my two front teeth.
Not bleached, but off-white, thinning,
and lined. A lack of flossing
so that pieces of food stay
between gaps. But I don’t
wear the plastic mouth-guard at
night like the one they gave me
as a child. The band was tight,
neon pink and wrapped around
my head with a metallic
spider forcing it’s way in
to my mouth. So that I could
not roll over at night, bend
my knees toward my stomach, and
wedge my hands under my face.

Meagan Sutherland
Alpharetta, Georgia

BIRTH

He loved her but she married another man
and moved to another island. He often drove
to the cliffs and stared out at the hump
across the channel. He ran into her on her
island. She’d been married two months and
worked at the car rental. When she passed
him his keys, their hands touched and
there was a moment where anything was
possible. Then she told him she was ex-
pecting a baby. He asked for directions to
his hotel. The highway skirted a pineapple
field that stretched to the horizon. He was
tempted to stop but the fruit was too small
and green. As he drove east, he prayed the
baby would never be born.

Kirby Wright
Honolulu, Hawaii

SATURDAY

The summer of days, the earned vacation from do-all,
a day of coolers, Frisbees, film festivals, kites, nothing.

See the listless man sunk in the sand of his couch,
bare legs tented with news, good dog fed with pretzels.

Later, when he chooses, there will be mowing or waxing,
work washed down with suds beneath the freest skies.

His wife will return from the garages of strangers,
unload a milktruck pedal car she knows worth oodles.

Then they and the kids will descend on the lakeside park
where artists have installed downtown Chicago in cardboard.

For a change they’ll wind back along the hillside route,
try their spotting luck with roadrunners and armadillos.

The daughter will announce her latest balance-beam skill
while her brother sets the sun on a radio tower.

Dinner by last light is ambitious, Mediterranean,
involves gourmet pans, allows sips of ouzo all around.

The pagan half of the weekend nearly exhausted,
the kids’ sleep ringed by the imperfectly erased,

The man and woman let the dishes soak till morning,
slow dance to Billie Holiday singing “Ephemeral Me.”

James Fowler
Conway, Arkansas