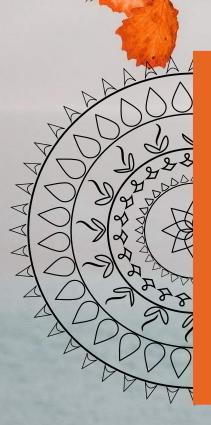


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From the Editor



Stef Nuñez, Editor

wonderfemme_

fstefnunezzz

witchxpudding

ear Readers,

This journal means the world to me, and I'm so incredibly grateful that you've taken the time to be a part of it. For years I've been looking for a writing haven where I belong, but I didn't need to. A safe place existed within me the whole time, and now I'm sharing it with you.

It's fitting that this is the first issue, considering the magic that autumn has always held for me. Growing up in the mid-west meant hot apple cider, crisp, cool air and the changing leaves. Coincidentally, it also usually meant having to wear a winter coat over our Halloween costumes.

After moving to the south, autumn really hasn't been the same. The humidity kills my jack-o-lanterns before they ever get a chance to be alive, and the leaves only have two colors: green and brown. The great thing about life is that it's never too late to start a new tradition, so here's to reviving the spirit of fall with a new tradition of sharing art!

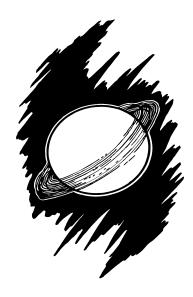
There is no theme for the work in this issue, just a lot of hard work from some very talented folks. I hope you enjoy! Also, enjoy this picture of Sir Duke Capone, the Sage Cigarettes mascot (and a very good boy).





Salman Zafar is a writer based in British Columbia, Canada.





Contact may be established still
Since I am not the first nor the last
To explore what lies beyond my own sphere
You can work on your iron toys all you wish
When it happens you will be found completely unaware

You offer nothing of value Nothing of substance Nothing worthwhile that we understand In this interstellar macrocosm You are just an insignificant speck of sand

That we can never be counterparts

The more I know

Yet the stories you tell
And the tales you weave
That so many of your kind believe
Brush portraits of your omnipotence
Of science, of travel and the mind
Of one step for man and one leap for mankind

The arrogance you espouse
The grandeur you live and breathe
They are only temporary
Momentary bouts of galactic naivety
For When our worlds eventually collide
You know, as well and I
Remnants of you will be buried in our museums of history

The many meanings of the word "Pissed"

He cried a river of piss upside a stone tree in a scarce marble forest by a motorway. Mud caked on this new blue suede shoes from the ground he ploughed through as lorries and cars shot passed like so many fireworks that would never go bang.

Disco ball stars among cocktail constellations proved to be as much consolation as their more intoxicating counterparts, perhaps more so as is the fashion in this day and age.

After all some kids today have never seen the stars rolling above the clouds but the same stars have seen plenty of drunks before this one and gave none of his predecessors answers either.

Regardless of their silence and his wonder, a creeping darkness fell over his nodding head on the way, way home. It was descending before, like a shadow in the corner of your eye, a premonition, something following that had yet to catch him. It stalked him at pre-drinks, crept around the dance floor among strobe lights and liquor, it hailed the taxi they shared. It was patient, it knew it was to wait.

But now it was close, it was more apparent. He was whimpering, struggling with his zipper to the tick tick ticking of the meter in the taxi standing idle as it climbed calmly out of the backseat and followed the mud-prints of a

new pair of blue suede shoes.

Drunk ones don't form so easy.
He'd stand on the edge of a grave,
the very edge, in that moment between
the fall
and the falling.
His heart in his mouth,
his head filled with a static screeching fear
his body cold as...well as cold as the grave.

J. Sean Rafferty

His teeth clicked back to the ticking as the premonition passed over, walked through him, found its moment of rest.
He wondered who was trotting on his grave tonight. Later he'd pour into bed, his thoughts would dribble out of his ears and stars would remain silent to the puddled musings on his pillow.

Tomorrow he'd realise he wasn't in a forest. Forests don't have crosses and angels.

A Short History of Injustice Against the Bull J. Sean Rafferty

Much has been said of bulls in china shops without anyone asking who built a china shop in a field of heifers.

They smeared one in bronze, put it to work, used it as a metaphor on Wallstreet. Worshiped it like it were made of gold. Moses would be seeing red. Blasphemers blamed the Bull; called it business.

They took it by the horns tossed it in a prison of corridors, blamed it for its birth; called it myth. Now we still pierce its hide, its heart. We cheer for its blood on the knife; called it sport.

Are you aware Bullock are not chemically castrated should the need arise? On the contrary, the testicles are clamped, contorted, constricted beyond crippled or use for that matter. Not so much castrated but rather crushed; call it agriculture.

The ruin of a species reputation.
Tàin, business, myth, butchery, sport; call it what you will.
Much has been said
of Bulls in china shops.
Not so much of humanity in humans.

J. Sean Rafferty is a redhead, a godfather and an eejit. He is an MA student at the University of Ulster and was a finalist in the 2018 Ulster Poetry Slam. His work has previously been published in Gravitas and The Paperclip. When not losing games of pool he, sometimes, writes stuff.

Atlas Snow

Monochrome

Edward Lee

Your colour is trapped under my fingernails. It pleases me to see it there, a reminder of you and our splintered lifetime of stolen nights together.

If I could taste that colour
I would, but
by doing so,
by darting my eager tongue
beneath my nails,
I would risk erasing the remains,
and no longer have you
so tight against my broken skin,

now that you are gone, your corner of the world monochrome.

MYSELF AS ENEMY

Edward Lee

I seek asylum from myself, but where can I go that does not involve walking across the broken borders of alcohol, or the splintered languages of medication?

Where can I go
to escape the madness
of myself, the crashing destruction
of my mind, the taste
of blood in my dreaming mouth?

Where can I go
when there is nowhere to go
but outside of myself,
permanently out,
leaving the little good
I know behind forever,
becoming the enemy
I have always known myself to be?



MID-LIFE FAILINGS

Edward Lee

Another stranger in my bed, though I seem to have slept on the floor amongst the used promises and empty wishes; even my blackouts are getting tired, disintegrating, as I get too old for this life I'm barely surviving, let alone living, my broken body reshaping itself to the contours of ruthless gravity and endless excess.





Sick Doctor

Shannon Elizabeth Gardner

Shannon Elizabeth Gardner is a graduate from the University of Wisconsin - Stevens Point with a Bachelors in Studio Art and a Minor in Art History. Her interest in horror and the macabre came about while exploring nature and the paranormal. The work explores the natural and organic process of death, evoking empathy for decay. She believes life is beautiful when left to fate, leaving art to chance assists the viewer to witness beauty hidden within imperfections. Her process appreciates nature's process and discovers the earth's imperfect beauty. The ethereal mood of her work reaches the extreme and address the taboo.





Hope and Despair in

Beauty of Understanding James D. Casey IV

there is yours there is mine

fear in the eyes of seven turns

how can something revolving six-shooter dreams be so fucking cruel

an answer a question

hope and despair in beauty of understanding

plans promises come undone

whiskey in the water dancing on the vine

slit throat black sun black sheep

end the song with a broken hand

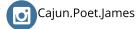


The Tragedy in the Magick

James D. Casey IV

James D. Casey IV is the author of seven full-length collections of poetry, founder and editor-in-chief of <u>Cajun Mutt Press</u>, and extensively published online and in print by small press venues and literary magazines internationally. He is a southern poet with roots in Louisiana & Mississippi, currently residing in Illinois with his Beautiful Muse, their goofy dog, and two black cats.







LouisianaJames



CajunPoetJames. Wordpress.com is too much to handle
sometimes
others
you roll with it
like dead man's boots
custom
at the river

crocodile skin with blue wave souls swimming in fallen flowers

i have the tongue wretched yet sacred no beginning no end broken fixed

I'll show you love rope in hand I won't ask I see brilliance vitality light

Idealism fell on its own sword

slithering in bloody truth of firstborn lies



Hot Days Ivan Peledov

Clouds from the outskirts of the world study brittle calligraphy of mouse tails. People drink flyblown windowpanes all day long. Butterflies sleep in the whispers of the sun. How many glasses of water could a heron hide in a field of tall grass?

Answer

Ivan Peledov

I don't like license plates hung up in the sky and alphabets of leaves rumbling on the shores of demented forests. Ask the queen of a heavenly puddle how many rusty birds hide in the endless hours of threadbare mornings at the outskirts of towns founded by thieves and hoodlums, ask her if you wish but don't wait for the answer.

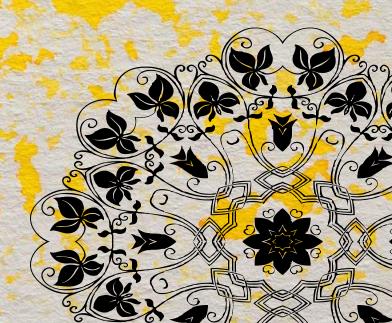
Counting Grains of the Void

Ivan Peledov

In the morning snowflakes liberate the trees from squirrels and birds. Graffiti spook a stray winged eye. Statues teach us to feed our souls to pigeons and winds, to impossible silence of monsters, to comply.

Shapes of Disaster

People are dangerous in the kingdom of laughter like doorbells that don't ring. Their god is viciously hiding. A pale moon shouts at blackbirds, at skunks, books, stones, brooks. Dogs grow silence out of human fibs.



To the Pond

Ivan Peledov

Then she drove to the pond, got out of the car and said:

My gods, help me! My goddesses, I implore you! You, Amenoud, generous in love, you, omnipresent Yoki, Yusul, and Oonakaem, Oorph, the master of frogs and herons, pelican-shaped Ayos, snake-breasted Ysooph, cloven-hoofed Tsaakha with an emerald mane, you who have gills and you who don't breathe at all, and you who are Paobaad!

Hail to you that saunter in heaven and hide in secret caves, melt the snow and freeze the oceans, lords of foliage and sovereigns of feathers that prick up every ear and raise each tail up to the clouds, gracious without reason!

So do help me! I prithee, help me!
For my colonel is out of his fucking mind,
all the light bulbs have burnt out in the house,
and the leaves of the rubber plant, dry,
creak and scrape across the walls unbearably,
now it is only the colonel's spirit that burns in there,
quite capable of devouring me with all my shit!

He keeps bringing me beer in bed, when I dream of white rum, endlessly listens to primordial psychedelia, runs his fingers over the suits in the wardrobe, changes the temperature of my voice, plays soccer with our neighbor's dog, while the Sun is falling into the mountains!

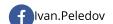
The stupid live as they want, the wise just fine. I am a fool, I am ready, with my squared Lemurian eyes, to throw myself into the water in all my attire, let only the fear of death show up on the surface, so that I could turn it into steam!

While leaving, she noticed a garter snake slither away from the path; it turned around but did not say anything.

"He keeps bringing me beer in bed, when I dream of white rum"

Ivan Peledov

Ivan Peledov lives in Colorado. He loves to travel and to forget the places he has visited. He has been published in Eunoia Review, Lost and Found Times, Red Fez, Illuminations and other magazines.



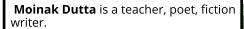
Sitting by the Indian Ganges Side

Moinak Dutta

Sitting by the Indian Ganges side You and I, will read a poem You might think of Andrew Marvell And I perhaps too, think Carpe diem

(Seeing the River thus Flowing for ages Just like our lives and us)

So enchanted by the day's mirth Perhaps will I weave a song too, Just by your side Spending the day long overdue.



Has two published fictions to his credit: 'Online@offline' , and' In search of La radice'

Edited an anthology of poetry called 'Whispering Poesis'. Many poems and stories written by him have found their way into dailies, magazines, journals, e-zines and anthologies. Loves to do photography and travel.

Rebecca

Moinak Dutta

Rebecca is that kind of woman whom I have met not quite oft. Her soft pallor of skin gleamed in light. Her hands had swift, smart movements every time she would sit before me and talk. And her talks are different from other women I met. She never talked about groceries or soap operas shown on tv. Instead, she laid expansive forms of dreams, like finding a river dolphin somewhere and bringing it home and befriending it. Or riding an elephant through the tea gardens at Dooars all alone, without even the mahout.

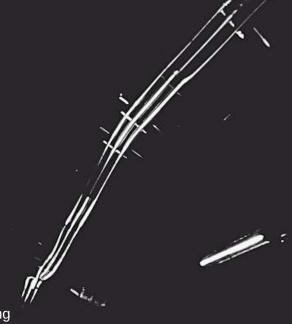
With her warm smile bright She would cast a spell upon She was different

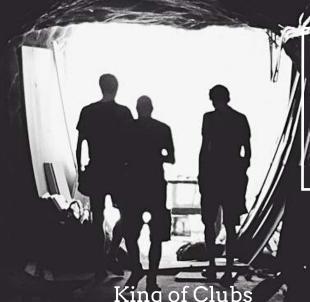


Jack of Diamonds

Cee Martinez

you dated a knife thrower's assistant once
it kind of popped
like balloons by my cheek
her blonde more butter than yours
her hair cleaner than yours
and I'd dreamt you'd poured to me
and I'd dreamt I held your cheeks
and I think you stole my cap
and in you walked with her
butter braids for a summer enough
for me to take back
the months I slept wept
ill for the man who sprung a child bride and asked me to wait for spring





Cee Martinez

Cee Martinez is an artist, piano teacher, writer and world traveler living in Lakewood, Colorado. She has a passion for Gin and is probably obsessed with you.

peeriebarra

fauthorceemartinez

dazedpuckbunny

I would eat pickles for you because down my throat gold like sunshine I don't mind the time that passes slow like baby Violas in the bin or the pills powdered on our teeth

I would defy time for you spread like dark matter all the moments I capture and fold you into my

keep me on Russian water keep me from

and I'll

keep you on cold war chatter keep you from we'll explore the realms of this keep awake
with the weight of WE
stuck with heat
to peel away from other
and then to tangle more
and more
ou into my
conscious of privilege

of Interzone
of imagining you with a badge on your nipple
sticky and stuck on a Monday afternoon
I wanted to take a picture
you turned my phone upside down
I thought this is as handsome
as any tryst could get
I didn't swallow didnt keep the spill
but my fill
was met by Annexia and heat

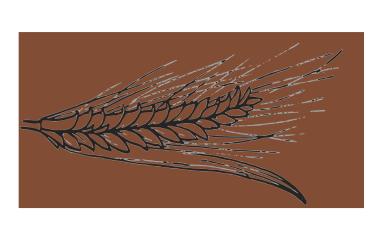


Sitting sunburnt, a face Gone from red to darkness, It hurts to be emotional

Wrinkles are out of hiding, And my hair is gray, I cough and ashes come out

No reason to be angry, I have the beach to myself, Cities may be gone for good

A speck against the dunes, I keep survivors away With the worst-case tan



Autopilot Schadenfreude Ben Nardolilli

Someone has fallen down over the cracks
Again, time to rejoice inside,
But only if they are good looking and fit,
Otherwise, it's automatic pity,
Maybe I'll help, only if the traffic will clear,
And it won't, so time to keep on moving.

A business I never used is going out Of business and coming out of the closet To admit failure and poverty, I wonder if they will let me shelve All of their unbalanced books in my house, I could read the red numbers all day.

Someone is getting hauled before court, great,

I drink the rest of the wine down,
Time to get those cheats, those frauds,
Unless it's me this time they're after,
But no, the hand on my hand is only mine,
My restraining order against the police remains.

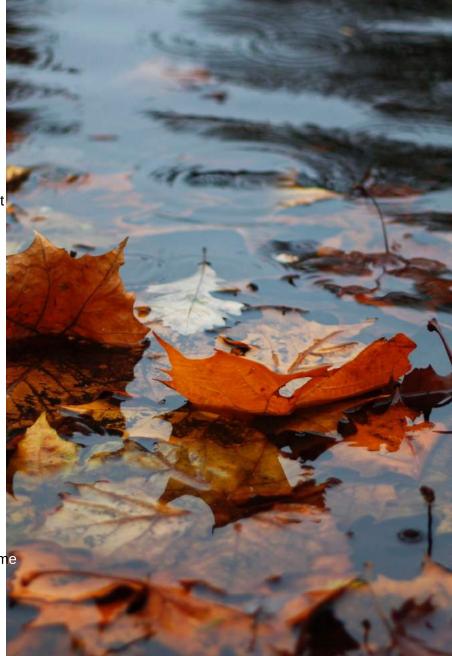
Hermes 3000

Ben Nardolilli

I keep the typewriter on the desk
Behind the laptop, in front of the lamp,
It is a bright and light mint green,
The color of soap or toothpaste,
It is a friendly device, one
You can use as a set-piece or ornament

I keep it to remind myself
How blessed I am to be able to write
Without the fear of smudging
Ink all over my creation
Or leaving behind misspelled words
And other linguistic abominations

It also serves remind my laptop
There is another option
If it goes on strike and refuses to load,
The typewrite needs no electricity
And has no chance of growing
Even more obsolete with the passing time





Ben Nardolilli currently lives in New York City. His work has appeared in Perigee Magazine, Red Fez, Danse Macabre, The 22 Magazine, Quail Bell Magazine, Elimae, The Northampton Review, Local Train Magazine, The Minetta Review, and Yes Poetry. He blogs at mirrorsponge.blogspot.com and is trying to publish a novel



TINY FLAME

Kenneth Pobo

Darkness shuts us Into an empty room. I'd rather be in there With you—we can sing where even Twitter can't reach, electricity bent into notes.

Kenneth Pobo

Five prickly pear blossoms, light yellow with light red in the center—

I walk a little farther, stop—

stokesias, a blue ripple moving. If they were water, I'd dive right in.

Ten more steps, a coral geranium, a miracle I can put my face against. In less than three minutes,

I'm a cold cup of water on a hot day.

WANDAWOOWOO BEFORE BED

Kenneth Pobo

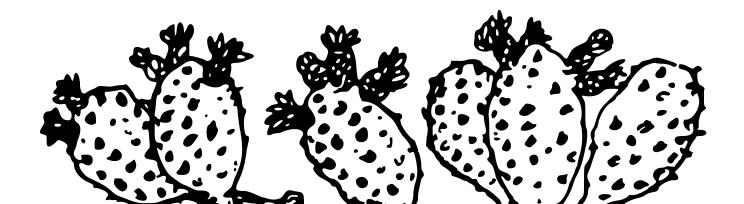
I sit on a futon and read a book about love,

the last page missing.

Kenneth Pobo has a new book out from Duck Lake Books called Dindi Expecting Snow. His work is forthcoming in: North Dakota Quarterly, Switchback, Paris Lit Up, and elsewhere. He and his husband enjoy watching birds from their porch. He teaches English and creative writing at Widener University in Pennsylvania.







Postcard Rachel Cunniffe

Give me space in this city I can't stretch My skin is too small For the flesh it contains.

I wish you weren't the source of my confusion Because then I could ask you for advice

Behind the clouds the sun is dulled To a yellow fading bruise

If I sound like I'm accusing you I don't mean to

I wish it would rain To clear the air.

I wish I wish you were here Wasn't so common place.

Man Made Rachel Cunniffe

The girl encased in glass Is easy enough to break through to save But she'll bleed from the cuts Wrestle with her own skin healing, uncomfortable.

The girl packaged in polystyrene Enjoys the new found freedom Of movement, stretches then fears The shape of safety she left behind.

The girl in cellophane shrink wrap Leaves little to be desired, casually torn off, discarded To dance along pavements in the breeze.

The girl in plastic veneer Withstands all sorts of knocks And scratches, but she's tough Except for weak unbending joints.

Only the girl in rubber Stands aloof and flexible When greedy fingertips reachout Disconcerted and confused.



On the Rampage

Rachel Cunniffe

I watch ash blonde darken To a nameless shade Wet, dribbling and gleaming.

Caught in headlights
Fogged and sulphury
We do not freeze
But spin on the spot
And lunge down concrete walkways

Moist cheeks reflect the yellow Of AFTAN's KEBABs.

This rainy night Stretches the spectrum Of petrol and police sirens From the blue of sad songs To soft porn.

Your t shirt clings, damp.
I like your shape
But this is as far from Club 18-30
As we could get.

I join your game Of follow my leader. Together we blaze Jump wire fences Like foxes gone urban.



Date Nails Ky I. Dio

I remember the first time I met you.
Throw poetry right into my heartstring
I held you so close slow dance.
Hands on hips.

anus on nips.

Just a candlelit vigil to

Loneliness

And late night confessions.

I know that I left a brand on your heart.

Hoping.

Knowing I'd come back to you all over again.

And to you and to you.

My sternum has never felt so full

As when I saw you kneel before a Magic Grandmother.

I'll take you as you are

I promise.

Solemnly swear

That I will let you ruin me

Again and again

Deeper than a thousand Grand Canyons

To and from the bottom of the Mariana trench

To Pluto and back.

I'll let you be the ghost in my bed.

I'll let you be the ghost in my bed.

I'll let you be the ghost in my bed.

At least I will know that you are finally home every time

I taste you in the constellations

As a healer

I know

That I take on too many love letters.

Try to best process the exhales of every heartbreak.

Every land mine- and I know

Sometimes it is all you can to step hard.

Listen to the tick ticking thump thump

Rumbling bunny rabbit time keepsake

Keep those that you love to love laying down.

Try to inhale the Universe and landscapes as much as I can.

Try to make magic and be true to form the ancestor that will stay behind.

That will follow through.

That will catalogue each holy place with you.

The cemented lava

Was marked

By dynamite and the geological survey.

1962

You told me that they had just reopened the death trap.

Said the shale had sifted over 6 feet.

They are still repairing the roads out there.

Maybe somewhere in the badlands

If the back roads whisper back to you

Familiar circles.

That I needed when I was tumbling down

And don't you know it

That sometimes

You need to pressure wash soak spray paint LOVE on your collarbones.

Holy

Take all of the chemical burns off.

Let me band aid all of your weather vanes.

Because I know that once you throw up your sorrows.

Tell me all about everything that has destroyed you.

Let it out!

You will feel better.

I have only ever believed in floorboards, love poems,

and getting out of the house.

Just maybe you'll decide to take me with you sometime.

Ky J. Dio is a host and Administrator for Juniper House Readings, a Slam Poet, a facilitator of creative writing workshops, and the author of 5 chapbooks. She makes recycled acrylic and spray paint art, and works as a Jewelry Specialist at a pawn shop. She lives in Flagstaff, Arizona.

A Hundred Days Without Rain

Ky J. Dio

A hundred days without rain leaves The mountain grass and cactus glassed roots dry in their beds.

A hundred days without rain means the mountain cats are making their way down the thickets of branches that sleep in the tree lines.

A hundred days without rain makes the suns halo hazy, halfheartedly draped over shoulder blades. It makes the thick jelly slicked heat wave that kisses the blacktop heavy with motor oil and grease, gritty pieces of dusty history and summer thorns.

A hundred days without rain makes the gray thirsty mountain sigh and beg for water like me.



Experimental Art

Stef Nuñez

Libby sat in the worn restaurant booth and looked at her watch again. It was 10 minutes passed 3, and Paola was late as usual. She sighed and swore for the millionth time that she would start telling her girlfriend to arrive 15 minutes earlier than the intended time.

She pulled a small fold of paper from her purse and smoothed it out on the table. It was a poem that had been tucked underneath her keyboard at work when she arrived that morning. By now she had memorized every line, but still she read it to herself with a tiny smile.

They call her Experimental Art because her fingernails are dirty.

Sometimes when she comes into work, her eyeliner is smudged and you wonder...

Did she sleep in her makeup because she's sad or because she's lazy?

You don't wonder for long because the sag in her shoulders tells you everything

Just like Experimental Art, she makes you ponder the wildest depths of your own emotions

When she looks up and meets your eyes

Lovely

The poem was written by her coworker, John, the well-spoken and equally well-dressed HR Manager, who always seemed to catch her at the coffee machine. Lately their small conversations had begun to take on new life, a life where John would squeeze Libby's arm when they parted ways. He would send her funny emails at work, and make any excuse to pass by her cubicle. It was something new to break up the monotony of her every day, and she welcomed it.

It took a while for her to realize, but she had begun to resent her life with Paola. They had been together for 4 years, had all the same friends and had fallen into a safe and reliable pattern that could almost be considered...a rut. Libby needed more. The poem cemented something for her, and she knew she needed to make a change.

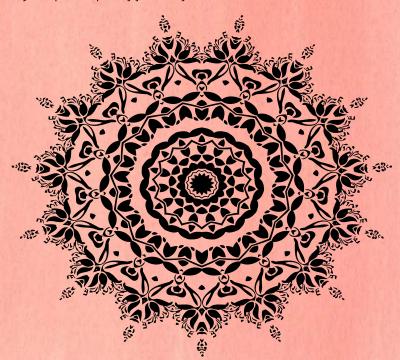
Suddenly, Paola came into view, her face looking flushed and her expression apologetic. Hectic, beautiful, constantly late Paola.

"I'm so, so, so sorry, love, I had some last minute things to take care of," she said, throwing her schoolbag onto the seat before sliding in after it. "Picked up some new vitamins to try, by the way. You've been a little lethargic lately, and I got worried. Better safe than sorry."

Better Safe Than Sorry. Libby's small smile widened.

"What's that?" Paola nodded at the piece of paper on the table.

"It's just a really sad poem by a really sad poet. I quit my job today."





Daytona Beach, FL