

3rd Wednesday



2025 George Dila Memorial Fiction Contest
Winning and Honorable Mention Stories

Third Wednesday Magazine
Volume XVIII, Number 4
Fall, 2025

Third Wednesday is a quarterly journal of literary and visual arts. Though we manage the magazine from Michigan, we welcome submissions from all over the world. Digital issues of the magazine are completely free to anyone and print issues can be purchased at Amazon.com.

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George Dila Memorial Flash Fiction Contest

Judged by Colleen Alles

Colleen Alles is a writer, former librarian & teacher, and Michigan girl for life. She earned her bachelor's degree in English from Michigan State University (2005) and her MLIS from Wayne State University (2015). Her fiction and poetry have appeared in *Red Cedar Review*, *Tar River Poetry*, *The Write Michigan Anthology*, *The Michigan Poet*, and other places. Her fiction has been long-listed for The Fugere Book Prize for Finely Crafted Novellas in 2023 (Regal House Publishing). Colleen is co-editor for fiction with *Barren Magazine* and is currently pursuing her MFA at Spalding University. Her house is chaotic with young children and a hound, so don't be shocked to encounter poems about chaotic houses, small children, or hounds.

Over a span of 3 months, Colleen read more than a hundred stories, narrowing them down to just 3 prize winners and 4 honorable mentions. Here they are along with Colleen's comments.

These stories are presented in no particular order. The three winning stories are not ranked 1,2,3. They are equal co-winning stories.

Winning Stories

Dressed to Krill: by Sigrun Benjamin (Port Saint Lucie, Florida)

This tale, cleverly rendered in present-tense sections and expertly written sentences, unfolds in an inevitable but deliciously satisfying way.

Moirologist: by Colleen Addison (Bowen Island, British Columbia)

I was immediately sitting up straight reading this highly atmospheric, ghostly meditation. Well-written and compelling; all the details are the right ones.

I think the dialogue is particularly sweet, ***Blue Fever:*** by John Spudich (Berkeley, California) This straightforward story is quietly resonant, gently told, and resolves beautifully as are the images of constellations.

Honorable Mentions

Off the Menu: by JR Walsh (Oswego, New York). “Off the menu” alerts the reader to its humor early on and only gets funnier and more playful as it goes. I thought this was a treat, and clever to boot.

Reading Tea Leaves: by Elyse Ribbons (Lansing, Michigan). I love the premise of this story, and I love the twist! The details are evocative, the narrator quite inviting.

Hit Me With Your Best Shot: by Nan Jackson (East Lansing, Michigan). I was drawn into this second-person romp immediately. The uncertainty and clipped sentences help this story achieve its chilly success.

A Queen Anne Treasure: by Kimberly Hayes (Chicago, Illinois). This engaging story is so much fun to read! The story starts strong and goes to unexpected places; I think it lands just right.

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The boats go out at twilight, dressed in rust and hubris. We've long since traded nets for vacuum hoses sucking up the ocean's last flecks of silver. Krill: the new gold, the new god, the why not. We call it krilling, with that shrug we've perfected, the one that says, "What's a planet among friends?"

McDonald's still offers a krill burger, pink and chewy like a rubber glove. You can taste extinction in every bite. Feed the World, the flickering sign says, though the world is mostly water now, and the water is mostly hungry.

My mother krilled before me. Her boat was called The Last Laugh. Mine's The Bargain Bin. She taught me to name things ironically when the apocalypse gets chatty. She also taught me how to read the water's moods. "It remembers everything we did," she'd say. Her hands were calloused from hauling hoses slick with krill paste. She disappeared three years ago. The company called it an accident. I still have her captain's hat.

* * *

The whales remember.

That's what the riggers mutter under their salt and diesel breath. They say it's the blues, the humpbacks, the whales with their massive lungs taking the missing crews.

"They've developed a taste," Old Marlow says, spitting into his coffee.

"For what?" asks Denny, the new kid. First week on the water.

"For justice," Marlow replies.

We laugh, but not kindly. Laughter's a currency when the banks are all jellyfish.

* * *

The first blue I saw was a shadow beneath the boat, longer than sin.

"It's just a cloud," said Jax, my first mate, who always loved a good metaphor.

But clouds don't sing. Clouds don't have eyes that hold entire centuries of you did this.

Jax's hand found mine in the dark. We never spoke of it. Some terrors need to be private lest they become real.

* * *

We've turned the ocean into a soup kitchen. Salmon farms spread where forests once buzzed with cicadas. We feed the fish krill pellets, krill ash, and ash made of everything we've burned to power our world. The whales have to make do. So do we.

They used to teach kids that blues could swallow a car. Now they swallow trawlers.

No one believes it until their buddy's rig vanishes between swells. The company calls it "weather-related attrition." The paychecks still clear. The krill burgers still sizzle.

"They're getting smarter," Jax whispered one night, his face blue in the radar light. "They're hunting in formations now."

I told him to shut up and check the hoses.

* * *

Here's how it happens:

As you're pulling in a swarm, the hose starts shaking erratically until water flow ceases. The birds scatter first, because birds have the decency to panic. Then the deck tilts as if the ocean is inhaling. You see the mouth last. It's not a mouth, really. It's a cavernous maw tunnel lined with baleen, those keratinous curtains that once filtered unsuspecting prey. Now they filter you.

Whales don't chew. We're bite-sized to them, we're shrimp cocktail, we're krill in boots.

Three boats went missing last month. The company doubled our hazard pay. Nobody quit.

* * *

Jax disappeared on a Tuesday. One minute he was humming "Yellow Submarine," the next he was a dent in the fog. I called his name until my throat bled. The water swallowed the sound.

The company sent a card with a cartoon whale on it. Was it smiling? Sympathies for your loss! Beneath the exclamation point, someone had scribbled Apply for crew-replacement loans at...

I didn't cry. Crying's for when you still think the story's about you.

That night in my dream, Jax and my mother were playing cards inside a whale. "You're late," she said, dealing him in. I woke up laughing. Some jokes only make sense at the end of the world.

* * *

The whales are methodical. They've learned from us, see. They strike at shift changes, going for the engines first, because they know engines make us feel we're in charge.

At the docks, they've started selling whale insurance. Act now, get 10% off if you've been swallowed twice! The premiums are a joke. So's the deductible.

I've started to hear them at night. Breathing. Long, patient breaths under my ship's hull. Waiting.

* * *

My mother once told me that blues sing in dialects. Their songs delve into profound concepts that our simple minds cannot grasp. I wonder what they're singing now. A dirge? A dinner bell?

Last week, a rigger swore he heard them harmonizing with the krill pumps. "They're mocking us," he said, eyes wild.

"They're not," I told him. "Mocking requires malice. This is just ecology."

He quit the next day. Smart man.

* * *

Here's the secret they don't put on the krill-burger wrappers: We're the krill now.

Small. Swarming. Desperately trying to feed something that can't be fed.

The whales don't hate us. Hate is too specific. They're just... realigning the food chain. You don't need opposable thumbs to hold a grudge. Just time, teeth, and a memory longer than your own shadow.

I keep Jax's lighter in my pocket. Sometimes I flick it open just to see something that isn't blue or endless. The flame looks like hope, if you squint.

* * *

This morning, the water went quiet during my shift. Not a bird in sight. The hoses stopped shuddering.

I'm writing this in the belly of a boat that's not mine anymore. The hull groans like it's being crushed. The water is singing the familiar hymn, "Come home, come home."

They say blues can't digest steel. But they can digest the meat inside it.

When the mouth opens, I'll step into the baleen. Not brave. Not resigned. Just dressed to krill. I'll look for Jax. For my mother. For all of us who thought the ocean would keep giving forever.

Sigrun Benjamin / Port Saint Lucie, Florida

She just didn't want to do it anymore. No more. No getting up in the sleepy blue coldness to milk the cow that lows and yearns. No sweeping up the long floorboards and beating at the rugs. No more sewing the rips in the overalls and the long johns stained with sweat. She didn't even enjoy now what she'd loved so recently, plucking the warm eggs from under the hens to hold them bright with life, there by the chicken coop where the sunflowers ravel.

He thought it was just a day or two, a minor bug she had caught or a poor night of sleep. But he began to grow worried as it dragged on and on. He would catch her looking off at nowhere, at the edge of the stiff green corn. He found her standing stock still at the butter churn, letting the cream sit cold and pearly like desert bones.

So he called in Doctor Langan who took some vitals at the wrist and temple, then listened to the dry rattle of her leaf-blown voice with the cold circle of his stethoscope. The doctor frowned with his great fleshy lugubrious jowls and pronounced that it was the Blue Fever. That's what people get in the big cities, Horace said, but the doctor told him no. It's an epidemic, eating everybody up, in the cities, in the country, in the one-horse towns. And it was unfortunately not a disease that responds to the tools at his disposal.

So Horace took Lottie in for a private meeting with Pastor Gentle. And after listening just a little bit, the Pastor spoke about the billowing smoke of the devil that blinds and the angels that spin down with charity and clarity to lay upon us their white-hot diamond hands. And many other soaring things from his fervent lips and his swelling chest. But Lottie, she looked through him, her eyes the color of the rusty blight that crawls up the husk of the corn. And later as she sat in the service, decked out fine in her Sunday yellow, there was no round sound in her hymnal, and her prayer dropped from the working of her lips as cold as river stones.

The tree witch was a little ride from town, living out there in an old cottage clotted with moss. She didn't react much to the diagnosis of Blue Fever, grunting lightly, then snapping her broad fingers for the cat to jump down, silky and long, from the examination table. She took Lottie's pulse in the neck, then in the wrist, listening head

cocked sideways to the slightest warble of the hot beat. The witch looked at the lustrous whites of Lottie's eyes, and said to Horace that her health was sound. But then she told him: you must lie down with her this evening and look up at the ceiling together. Horace thanked her and gave her coin. He thought to ask some further question at the door, but when he turned to speak, the intensity of her black unblinking eyes arrested him, and soundlessly she looked up.

And so later that night Horace tried it. He lay with Lottie in the bed side by side. He looked up at the ceiling and so did she, and time passed for them. In the boredom and in the gloaming, he began to drift off, and he saw it open up above him, a night filled with stars. These were strange constellations, though, not the familiar shapes from his many nights on Earth. Lottie began to talk. It seemed she saw them too. He said to her, isn't that one strange, with the long tail? And she told him it was the Cockatrice, giver of birdsong, cereal, and plenitude. And then he asked about another, and she told him it was the Great Scalene, where justice and injustice are held in a perfectly unequal balance. Right next to the Apricot, and the Whistle just a little ways down. Though the brightest shape in the firmament was the Carriage House. And she unwound myths that spun from each, this one was lucky, that one spoke of the creation of haberdashery, while there was the image of the patron saint of deep sea divers and red-faced foxes. And the Wild Mulligan warned against the sins of impudence and condescension.

When they woke in the dim pre-dawn, they heard the heavy sound of the cow, with a moan like a moan of birthing. There was a strident urge to life within it that cared not for the hardy barreled tissue of its being. Horace said to her, last night was very interesting. And she said, thank you for coming to my night sky. And then Lottie swung out of bed with a light grunt and went to do her duty in the cold blue morning.

John Spudich / Berkeley, California

During the recession I dyed my favorite cloak ebony, grew my hair long enough to rend, and hired out as a mourner. An only child with an absent father and long dead mother I had few other ways to make a living, and moirology seemed a good if temporary choice.

Paid to sob and dig my fingernails into half-circles on my palms, I watched choking on incense as coffin after coffin was lowered into the dirt underneath cemetery grass. I had missed my mother's rites so it was interesting at first, what with the dirges and the black cloths laid under candlesticks. Soon though I found paid mourning an art as nothing else.

I learned to wail harder when a eulogy struck an unrealistically too-kind note; to threaten a dive into the grave when after the service a lawyer announced a will-reading. I learned to recognize the reactions: the half-smothered relief, the shock, the way the bereaved walked across the floor as if expecting at any moment the tiles would crumble into insubstantiality. My fists were held up hopelessly to the sky when causes of death were mentioned, car accidents, cancer. I shook my cloak's fringes when family members appeared, faces frozen in a blank stare of grief.

The last funeral I attended was that of a woman. She had no lovers, few friends. She did have a child, who had been contacted but had been unable to come. I'd thought it would be easy, a final hurrah. Then the priest spoke. In the woman's house had been found poems, the pure beauty of them like sparkles over a dreary landscape. There were photos too: a garden tree, bare with winter; a brown bird feeding, small things but wonderful. A stray dog who had been fed howled and wouldn't stop howling.

The few neighbors blinked guilt-ridden and stunned at this eulogy. One began to cry, not prettily, great gulps rising out of the chest. I the absent child spread my cloak like wings trying to encompass all the sorrow. I widened my fingers.

Colleen Addison / Bowen Island, British Columbia

She asked if it was a good name. I didn't answer. We weren't talking about a dog or a cat. Or some shifty-eyed chameleon. This was the ongoing discussion. We'd been weighing every possible baby name for the past thirty-five months or years or so. Occasionally, we dabbled in months, days or flowers, but never fruit, and certainly not bakery items. Yet here she was, slapping two nouns together after the arrival of our newborn baby. Was she joking with me?

She doubled down. Asked if it was a good good one. Not if I liked the name, but if it were inherently good. Her forehead was active with worry, even though her entire body was exhausted from labor.

We'd made a definitive list of names that would gel with one or both of our last names should we choose to hyphenate. To my ear, this combo wouldn't harmonize with any surname on earth.

"What gives, hon?" I asked.

Various hospitals, invasive procedures, blood and more blood, miscarriages, rites of letting go, some giving up. She'd been through so much and this baby had too. She'd super-deep breathed her way through natural childbirth with only minimal scarification to my right palm and a quart or two of blood drawn from bite marks on my left shoulder.

"Don't hate me that I have to do this."

"Hate is a strong word and again, what gives?"

"Either I made a deal with the devil or with God," she said. "That if I survived, if she survived, we'd name her whatever they wanted."

"How do you know what they want?"

She appears to hold her breath. I'm sure that she can't explain, as if an explanation might wake the tiny baby on her chest.

I said, "But she can choose her own name later, right?"

“They are fine with that. I checked or... negotiated? It’s never really clear where we stand.”

“Just how in depth are your conversations with powerful good and/or evil spirits?”

She gestured like an expanding cloud around her head. I knew this to mean, her chats were all encompassing.

“Since I was a child. My father had them too,” she said.

“Conversations.”

“Conversations.”

“But you’ve never mentioned it until now.”

(In seven years exclamation point, though I kept that part to myself.)

I keep secrets too, like how I never took that ugly lamp to Goodwill because I think I can up-cycle it. A slightly less ugly lamp could light up our baby’s room when we read it stories, after all.

“The voices kind of disappeared, or faded out when we started up,” she said.

“You’re welcome?”

“Then they came roaring back in pregnancy.”

“You need sleep.”

She nodded, closing her eyes. For all my resistance to the name, this baby did resemble a loaf of bread. A little blood balloon with flesh like water. She cried like a mother. A mother. She was hungry wet hair and disappearing fists. We were old and this was our last try. The labor seemed weeks long and no one slept for longer. No one died. Even my heart held. The midwives didn’t need the ambulance around the corner. How would we deal with nothing wrong? Mother and baby slept with the same tight eyelashes.

Midwife Janice said, “Looks like you’ve got maybe 30 seconds and there’s a birth certificate to sign. Follow me.”

We approached the desk and she squinted at the paper. “It’s not my place to judge.”

“It’s a much blessed and cursed family name,” I said.

Was Midwife Janice hurrying me along? It had been a long day for her too, no doubt. Or is our baby a key to the Antichrist’s takeover. Or is our baby the second coming of... Stop it stop it stop it. I hadn’t slept in 48 hours. I scribbled wherever it said signature. I felt a pinch in my heart and wondered if I should’ve checked one more time that this was indeed the name we were contractually bound to write on baseball gloves or tap shoes, but it was too late. The ink was dry and Midwife Janice said, “Good work, Pops!”

It felt good to know we were hyphenating anyway. This name is a lot a lot. Good good, I hope.

Ever since I was a child, I knew never to break an agreement with anyone with magic. Every fairy tale goes south in a hurry, if you betray a witch or talking animal. Break the promise and poof! The baby turns into dessert. Poof! The mother loses her ability to feel love. Poof! A monster eats them both. And then the townspeople shun me while I live forever with a broken heart and the shame of my shattered promises. In a cave, probably.

It was time to make the announcement calls. My phone had been melting out in the car. Scorching to the touch, the screen showed several missed texts and one in particular from a familiar unlisted number. It must be God or the Devil – they’re always texting me some malarkey, though I never know which one it is. Today’s text though is a miracle of emojis. Of course, they already knew! I probably don’t need to text back, right? Should I send a thumbs up? I don’t know if prayer hands would be offensive to at least one of them and/or possibly pandering to the other. What’s the etiquette here?

JR Walsh / Oswego, New York

I hadn't set out to read tea leaves for a living, but it quite literally fell into my lap. No, really, I was sitting at a teahouse in Old Town and someone knocked into my table and the tea spilled all over my lap.

But when I looked into my cup, the little bits and pieces of *camellia sinensis* swirled and tilted like a whirligig until suddenly, the shape of a perfect star formed. Within that star I saw a movement of black leather jackets and I was transported to a rock concert. I turned and saw a woman standing beside me with the brightest black eyes, like glowing obsidions and I knew that she was The One.

With a next blink I was back at the teahouse, the blonde who had knocked the table apologizing and trying to clean up. I asked her if she was going to a concert any time soon and she mentioned that she was headed to one later that evening. I told her that she would meet a woman with dark eyes and that she should ask for her number.

She gave me a weird look but smiled and shrugged it off. A week later I ran into her, and her new girlfriend, at the local farmer's market. So I began to explore this new talent, this new skill, and found that it lead to a very intriguing set of predictions and opportunities.

It's not always sunshine and lollipops, sadly, as there's a lot of tears, death and desperation in our futures as well. But certainly it helped me to make a few wise stock purchases so that most of my time can be spent reading books at teahouses.

I don't charge for my readings, that would be wrong, especially because sometimes I lie to people. Why ruin their night by warning them that their dog was going to be hit by a car? They couldn't stop it from happening, I'd learned the hard way that my predictions always came true.

Including the one that I am awaiting right now.

A crazed man, rabid with anger that the woman he'd abused for so many years had dared to leave him, had dared to dream of a life where she might be safe. But the thing is that she was going to be

safe, after tonight.

I was no hero, I didn't want this to happen, but there's no avoiding your fate. So I sit here waiting for the blow, the final piercing sound of the gunshot. Which he wouldn't even intend on firing.

But he would slip on the tea that was about to spill at the girl's table. His head would crack open on the base of the large marble statue of Guanyin, the goddess of mercy. And he would be no more.

His gun, however, would go off when it hit the ground, his sweaty fingers still wrapped around the trigger. And then for me, it would be just blackness, like the darkest of lapsang souchongs. The fragrance of which still hung in the air, from the girl's spilled forth from the broken teapot and pooling on the floor, mingling with the blood.

Elyse Ribbons / Lansing, Michigan

You don't know if it was before or after the wedding. In the basement of his parents' house in a small town in New England. Blasting Pat Benatar. Arms spread wide. Arms tucked close in a bear hug. Did you think you were alone? Did you think no-one could hear you? Up twirling. Down sweeping. Out of tune. Loud. The root-cellar tornado-shelter door to the outdoors shut at a slant.

It must have been before the wedding. Before the coffee and dessert reception in the dining room off the tiny kitchen in his parents' house. Before your aunt called on the land line from the west coast: Are you all married up now? You don't know how she got the number.

You know it was after he wrapped his hands around your throat. Fit of anger. Slut. That was in a different small town.

The night before the wedding you meet his friends downtown for Italian. He tells you to take communion when prompted by the priest tomorrow. You jump up, ask the waitress for the closest phone. In the back past the kitchen. Next to the emergency exit. White pages. Local listings. You call the minister of the Unitarian Universalist church. Would you have picked up the phone at 9 pm? She picks up the phone. Maybe an emergency.

It is an emergency. You ask her if it's okay. To take communion. The only church you ever attended was the UU. When you were a kid. Where you studied anthropology in a basement classroom. Where you were allowed into the main hall at Easter to trade flower bouquets. You'd walk up the aisle, bring your handful of flowers to the stage. Maybe it wasn't Easter. The peonies were in bloom. Lush and pungent and covered with ants. May Day?

You hold the black Bakelite receiver tight to your ear. Stretch the coil as far as it will go. The minister says something you barely hear above the din of the restaurant. The clang of pots and pans. Laughter from the bar. Did she really say It's Up To You?

Morning comes. You walk up the aisle holding a bouquet, the flowers magnifying the ever-so-slight shaking in your hands. You loosen your grip. Say the words. Take communion. You travel home to the different small town. You think you're happy. He waits a few months. Takes revenge.

Nan Jackson / East Lansing, Michigan

I padded into the bathroom. I wanted a cigarette, but I wasn't in the mood to get dressed for a smoke. From the doorway, I glanced back at the bedroom. We met a few hours ago on a blind date. After we spent the night dancing and drinking, he was now passed out, snoring. It was time to go home. I decided to leave before things became uncomfortable.

He lived in an old house he'd been restoring for the past few years. Seeing it from the inside was a treat—it was one of my favorite houses in the area. He had given me a grand tour before we tumbled into bed.

The house was Queen Anne style, built in the early 1900s. Details within the woodwork, flooring, and fireplace mantels were unbelievable. He was doing an amazing job, and I couldn't wait to see what it would look like when he finished.

I took a scalding hot shower, letting the bathroom fog until I couldn't see. It was heaven to stand and let the hot water beat down on me for a bit.

As the steam faded away, I stared into the mirror over the sink and watched with curiosity as a message appeared.

Start searching now. There is money hidden around the house.

I looked around the bathroom. I peeked into the bedroom. My date from last night was still sleeping. Was there a camera hidden somewhere?

"Is this a joke or set up for a TV show? How do you know this? Are you a ghost?" I whispered, not wanting to wake him up.

The mirror clouded over, and another message materialized.

This is not a joke. The previous owner stashed money all over the house. Some places are easier to find than others. A few you might have to work at accessing. Go look. I will guide you.

“Why are you telling me this? Where do I start?”

The mirror fogged up again.

Get dressed and start in the basement. I will guide you. My name is Elizabeth.

As I grabbed my clothes, my date stirred in the bed. I put on my clothes from the night before in the living room and found the steps to the basement.

The basement was unfinished, but it was clean. A faint female voice spoke up. In the corner, by the back door. That bookshelf hides an envelope.

I looked around, but didn't see anyone. “Elizabeth? Who are you?”

“I am the wife of the farmer who built this house. We raised our family here. I died after falling down the steps and breaking my neck. The bookshelf, the envelope should be towards the bottom.”

As I searched through the bookshelf, I asked Elizabeth why money was hidden all over the house.

“The previous owner didn't trust banks. His children thought he was unstable and tried to force him to leave, but he refused.”

I found the envelope stashed between two encyclopedias. It was yellow with age and taped up well.

“Look in the crawl space under the stairs. There should be another envelope.”

“Why are you telling me this? How did you find out where all this money is hidden?” I whispered.

“My husband grieved for me before moving away. I'm unable to leave. I have become a guardian, if you will, of the house. I watched the previous owner hide his money during the time he lived here.”

I let that sink in before asking, “Is my date from last night aware of you? Does he know about the money stashes?”

“He has heard rumors. I do not know whether he knows the full history of the house or is aware of my existence. I’ve never made myself known to him. I suspect the previous owner was aware of me, but he was mentally unstable; he didn’t trust banks.”

Elizabeth guided me elsewhere in the basement, to a loose floorboard in the kitchen, then to a small closet in the hallway. That one I had to stand on tiptoe to reach. Each one had a sealed, business-size envelope. Each one was bulging with what I guessed was cash.

The final envelope was behind a loose upstairs baseboard in another bedroom. Elizabeth said there was more, but my lover from the night before was stirring. I thanked her and let myself out the back door. The money was heavy in my purse. I wondered how much I had found and what was still in the house.

Lighting a much-needed cigarette, I ordered an Uber and started looking up any history of the house that I hadn’t already read about.

There was a lot out there via newspaper articles, neighborhood associations, even Wikipedia, including more about the previous owner. As Elizabeth had said, he never trusted banks, and after his wife passed away, his mental state turned to mush. He never told his children that he hid money anywhere. From one of the articles I found, they were upset he didn’t leave them anything but the house. They sold the house and split the money earned from the sale.

Elizabeth’s husband built the house around the turn of the previous century. He raised his family there and lived to be one hundred years old. Elizabeth died in her sixties after slipping and falling down the stairs. None of the articles I read mentioned that her spirit lingered in the house. My date from last night didn’t know about her. I wondered why she was unable to leave.

I double-checked the money to confirm the amount. It was enough for me to do whatever I wanted for the rest of my life. I knew then that I wanted to buy the house from my lover and finish what he had started.

Kimberly Hayes / Chicago, Illinois

About the Authors



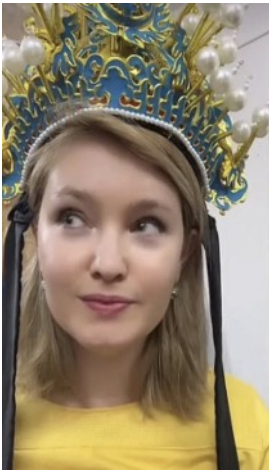
Sigrun Benjamin is a writer whose work delves into themes of sustainable food, climate change, late-stage capitalism, and the human condition. She holds a Master's degree in Sustainable Food Systems and contributed to *Farm to Table: The Essential Guide* (Chelsea Green, 2016), a definitive work on food culture and ethics. She recently completed co-writing her first novel—

Seedland, a 90-thousand-word speculative eco-fiction work—with her husband, writer and educator Darryl Benjamin. Though not yet published, Sigrun approaches writing with a rare blend of deep curiosity, lyrical style, and unflinching commitment to uncovering hard truths through imaginative storytelling.

John Spudich is a creative writer and psychologist who lives and works in Berkeley, California. He has published in *Flash Fiction Magazine* (as a flash contest honorable mention), *Panoplyzine*, *Book of Matches*, *Witcraft*, and *101 Words*. He is working on a book of flash that deals with life transitions and transformation through trauma.

Colleen Addison earned a PhD in health information; she then promptly got sick herself. She now lives, writes, and heals on a small island off the coast of Vancouver, Canada. Her work has been published in *Little Free Lit Mag*, *River Teeth*, and *Halfway Down the Stairs*, and she has been nominated for a Best of the Net award.

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Kim Hayes lives and works in Chicago. She works for the Chicago Cubs. Hobbies include making a mess in her stamp sized kitchen, stabbing fabric with small, sharp, pointy objects and playing Fetch with the cats. She writes fiction, and sometimes spills her guts in memoir sorts of pieces. Larry Mullen, Jr and Gordan Ramsay are her secret celebrity boyfriends. Her husband is ok with that.

Some of her stories have been recently published in Bull, Epater, Adelaide, The Southern Quill, Confetti, and Suddenly Without Warning. Kim is a reader for Hippocampus Magazine.