Lucky Number
13
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It isn’t a fear of science 
or the small green light breathing out 
for you.

Only the love of people you touched 
yet never quite met.

an 11 pt font blinking back (immaterial) 
distance.

Fourteen billion light years from the sun 
and I’m still trying to atone for wanting 
anything so perfect and so cold.

Observable distances mean nothing. 
like a road trip,

all courage takes good planning.

what was I writing on 
the sum of all my knowledge 
an ancient potentate 
dictating to tablet

that these aren’t my regrets 
that’s what I tell myself.

Memory precedes and finishes 
prior to the first and

a body has many buttons, which have no known function.
Such days abandon
to accumulate.

    the Dow Jones
Dreams

another transit year.

Its long advance re-flooded
in transition.

Lost Memory is a solvent
for the books you read
to recreate
its circuitry.

There dance
the lights,
the body's puerile heat
still smiles against
its bony fists.

Thoughts often go astray.
So many lights.

Ignites the oxygen.
A hundred years
or more

while we return
home broken

homogeneity.
seneca pulls me through / the crowd like thread, stitching
this bar / into something to keep me / warm
it is march and not warm, but in me / is two beers, a shot
of whiskey, so heat radiates from anything close
enough // my body earthquakes / spins / I am not quite in it, but floating,
folded over laughing while sen shakes / her hips // all these strangers'
ips and eyelashes / blinking, drifting wishless to the floor
drenched in tequila and the feet
of 2am, and we are a part of it
the music loud / glancing off our skin's glow // I want nothing
now, and it is light / slightly dizzy / the song ends, we push open
the door, announce ourselves
to night as both made / unmade things, whole
and unwhole, riddled / wanting / leaking smoke into lungs / willingly
and it is past / midnight; the sky solid / nonexistent beyond
these loose-lipped
grins / unkempt, bent laughter pouring out / pouring in, these
flicked flames, this breathing
in, breathing / in, tomorrow's stone / safe in our pockets / not
yet thrown.
A Failed Attempt
Emily Alexander

Side street near Bellecour: syrah
split between three, foie gras, fig
chutney, dim lighting lifts shadows
across napkins & wrists, & remember
    the open windows, remember our nakedness
    unknown to the cars below?
    It's like that, but more
    lonely. If only my knees fit the table,
if only you could try this, if only I didn't follow
every stranger's conversation & leave
my own. The difference between being
in a place & floating through it
    is maybe more reach, but I am always wanting
to be somewhere else. This city opens
like a mouth full
of teeth, & it's hard
to focus on flavor & speech when I get lost
on buses and falling asleep. I pour
more wine & watch
the dark sea curl into the glass
    like the smallest announcement, & the light
seeps through. Every sip is smooth
across this confused tongue, what more
could anyone ask for? Months ago:
your hair undone, tiptoes & body
blurry through my almost
sleep. This doesn't taste quite
as good, but probably should be close.
A True Story
Emily Alexander

We are wading through the florescence and weary glances of Winco grocery shoppers. I love you,

but don't know it yet. We sip mimosas from paper coffee cups; all bumble, all tipsy,

all floating in the glow of post-work in jam-stained shirts. Our nectarine hearts ripen,

wait to be picked by some accident of a soft hand. We follow, clumsy while our friends consider various kinds

of shampoo & champagne. People check milk prices, fill bags with bulk rice, I often lie

about the wideness of night, & how it seeps through me, how it rattles. I bruise easy. Still, I skate the floor

somewhere between the nonperishables & the cool hum of refrigerators with all these strangers,

doing what we do to keep ourselves fed; pressing thumbs into pears & palms. "Look

at all these people!" Your beard is wet with orange juice, so I touch your face

to pick out the pulp. A woman passes, lifts a box of Diet Coke, & the cans make small rumblings & settle

in the metal basket. "Beautiful!" You are saying while lovers and once lovers reach for another box of Cheerios, check phones

to no recent calls. I know we can't quiet hunger just by standing here together, but I like you so much

I feel full. Crooked wheels roll, fumble for friction & the smooth skin

of linoleum, & we are directionless in the cereal aisle, our little lives unknown to the elbows resting

on cart handles, our unnoticed blooming, & theirs, right there in the buzz & the light poured across the grocery store.
I will paint you into nothing
strip you of your ears
this is catastrophic

calculated iambic rotation

can you cast out god
pig seeps
idiot martyr

snoring
snoozing

Khlebnikov

is my bodyguard

not me
not here

or do
word cycle

Mike Linaweaver

something terrible
is all unsheathed
buried within

all find remembrance
ever down hallucinogen
the dim fails experiment
swirl
came gray to
clouds love us

above me struggling flower
you breathe of grim ribbon

until a flame
empty of bending bones

...
word cycle (secondary arrangement)

Mike Linaweaver

something

terrible

is all

buried in

within

all find -

hallucinogen fails experiment

to love us

- above me you breathe struggling flower of grim ribbon

they -

a flame of bending bones

- take

...

until empty
Triumph of a Bottle of Glue

Steve Pelletier

What do you call a
rapidly-evolving something

Better than a list
from the dead

Courage is clearly undervalued
although most of it is artificial

Reincarnate as a drone that
speaks many languages

Commit to helping wrap
gifts

Much of what we buy from the store
becomes untethered
A Typhoon and Folded Dollar Bills

Steve Pelletier

What is it like to redefine
a sense of wild green

Put hands in the pockets and
scope out a settlement

Nobody lacks the lungs or
the arms that grow bushes

Making tea with a symptom
of a celestial chamber

Name the roses all plucked
from the sky
Pastel Wardrobe Being Renovated

Steve Pelletier

What phrase are we searching for
to describe the perfect watermelon

One clue
is that a whale can erupt from the ocean
at any time

Think about drawing an exaggerated Ghandi
using bulletproof crayons

And what size meteor
should be ordered for the occasion

How a bell can ring
so that it sounds like a family

Written on the sides of a well
are directions
to an excellent catering business
the upper shelf book
is like a night landscape
where two nights

equal half a day.
thirteen rosemary bushes
– semiotic signs parade,

fester a candela
over a period of gray monsoon.

(recliners of soot
through the chimney pipe)
the needle pipe grass

– brittle meaning of the pages
like cicadas creak –
meddle with the soil

permafrost chamber echos
whistle with the wind.
It's an atypical opening for a group classified as a rock band.

but this analog performance of raspberries in a hoophouse has

you dancing on a string. Close the gates & tie them with bungee.
Tailor the theme to suit the recipient. It's a little girl's birthday, so rake the sand in your Zen garden & have vintage & veteran Japanese cars drop out of orbit out at sea, to sink below the surface. Seven trumpets are sounded—such a strong presence, those seven Heralds of the Apocalypse. The one in front is acting as an unreliable, even psychotic, narrator. It's one of Hip Hop's most resilient memes even if it does come across as a bit oxymoronic. 1980 was the turning point. The year the US real estate escalator stopped moving up & Vietnamese Catholics gathered on SoundCloud to deliver content to new audiences.
Entering the Forest
A Bagua Poem Under the Influence of Hexagram #19
Barbara Ruth

Begin with no thought, just intention to enter.
Match qi of your wavering body and mind
With the wu ji qi of the trees.
Drop down your shoulders, inhale from your belly.

Holding the seven stars in your dan tien
learn to see the mistake with no blame.
Press forward with a companion. Advance and arrive.
Let your feet sink into the earth. Exhale.
Hey, it's a street corner. So what.
It doesn't remind me of you, still.
Crest, past that corner is where smog forms,
which sort of reminds me of you.
The Crest kids in school always had crazy houses
and asthma. Shortness of breath once
reminded me of you.
Now it's the smog, kinda.
An atmospheric inversion to stop warmth
and its upward charge. A no-no-no layer.
Which could remind me of you, but
not for the green flashes it sometimes shot we
sunset spies, maybe the ugly pink and orange
that lingers on the horizon. So gaudy.
When I asked you to the opera here
I was being ironic. Then you bought a dress.
So wonderfully hideous. Good one.
They still don't know why Stradivari are so badass, they just know that they are.
Like me.
Some say it's chemical.
Trickeries of modern 1710-20 science now lost.
National Geographic says it was sun spots
dipping from the scene.
Maunder minimum making a mini ice age
to harden Strat's wood, if you know what I mean.
But some say it's all bullshit. Hype.
Which reminds me of you again. Well,
since you're here, wanna hear a joke?
You'll like it. It's about someone in a strange new place.

Thomas Edison offered newly immigrated Nikola Tesla $50k
to fix up his inefficient engine design.
He did it.
Then he asked for his money, lol.
“Telsa, you don't understand our American humor.”
Which explains your cold-hearted fascination with Mark Twain.
Jump in. Jump in they said once. It's just water. The current fickle as, well, you know.

The event horizon only terrifies spectators. People, without, watching in. They swear they see the burning and wave wax wings.

The official (invisible) point of no return, I meant, the black hole's tipping point of irresistible gravity (still must learn to fly). Past the invisible line redshift obscures vision, like looking across a bonfire at the knifefight of shadow and refracted light on a memorized face (learn to open eyes under water).

**

Though no fuel can change your path, (no swimming can pull you from the falls your crash course with gravity)

with forward facing spaceship perspective it's more smooth sailing toward certain doom. Gravity drops books, not the topple of time.

You didn't really slow the hours, you're alchemist, not magician.

How sequential, and jarring, your transmutations.

The edge is a misconception.

Point of no return only if you intended to retreat.

The inner horizon, lesser known cousin to Niagara physics, is the point of freefall where matter is vaporized.
(Pushback of rebound crashing with freefalling droplet brothers.)

The center is where the danger's compacted into that impossible singularity.

To make our Earth black hole-dense its mass would be

3mm, round, cold as gold.

Much too small to fit your finger.
Sunrise and shine slime mold,
    sexy conquistador
color of chorizo
(the fungus trundles in time lapse).
Spongy Thesius. (Does that make us Daedali?)

Outside, creeper mold seems static.  
Outside is
another way of saying without,
or within something larger.
Out of the labyrinth
into the building.
    Building,
    planetary sphere;
atmosphere, observable sphere.

Why is the soap bubble
still floating? Who's causing the up-draft? The room is too small for that,
    stop.
Soon we'll be carried away once more.

Away is another here,
    if you widen circles.
    Philtrum valley
    chocked
by your soap skinned breath.
Don't exhale.

Which is another way
    I am suffocating.

Still, even your gobbled
globule has enough oxygen left for breath.
    Give me gills.
    Ejector seat.
    Trap door.
Forget this elliptical shit,
let's go linear.
Strap me to a space probe
and let's go exploring.
Exit exobase.
Jettison orbit.
Bullet through skin
of water balloon.
Try as we must,
there's no escaping space.

    Space
    is another way of saying
    nothing
    where everything is.

    You too ubiquitous a genus
    for you.
Anyone not me?
    No-no-no-no-no.

Was stop really an option?
    Vacuum,
    frictionless as it is.

    No fuel for retros
    these days.

    So let's go.

We'll take the maze and mice and slime
and tiny sustainable ant farm and its caretakers.

    We'll be specks shooting
in and at absolute nothingness.
    every inch
    extending the observable universe.
Contributors

JONATHAN JONES qualified in 1999 with his M.A. in Creative Writing from Bath Spa University College, and in 2004 with an MRes in Humanities from Keele University. He now teaches writing composition at John Cabot University in Rome. In the past he has had several pieces of his work published in The New Writer, Poetry Monthly, Iota, East Jasmine Review, The Dr T.J.Eckleburg Review, Negative Capability Press, and others.

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BARBARA RUTH writes at the intersection of Potowatomee and Ashkenazi, disabled and neuroqueer, fat and yogi, not this and not that. Her photography, memoirs, poetry, and fiction appear in numerous lesbian, queer, feminist, disability, and literary anthologies and journals. She lives with her beloved in San Jose, California, USA, and her work is often on her Facebook page.

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Epigraph Magazine publishes three times per year. We love experimental poetry. We love poems that make us question what poems are. We love the internet. We love immediacy. We love distance. Guidelines for submissions can be found at epigraphmagazine.com.

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