

HIKA Literary Magazine

Fall 2019

HIKA - Fall 2019

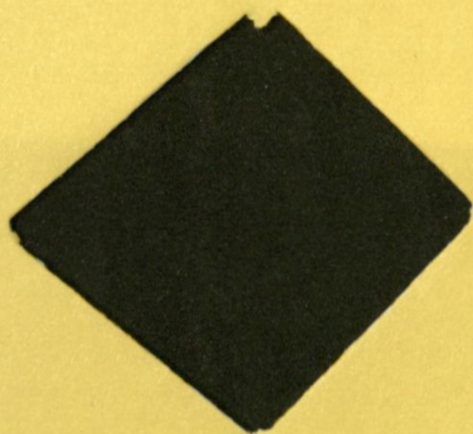
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HIKA

2019
Fall Preview

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Can't Say I Remember

Winner of our Fall Spooky Story Contest

Day 1

"Tell me about your father."

"Whew. Where to start? Well, he was a sax player...." Over the next half hour, I told the doctor everything I knew about my dad. How he was terrible at almost every game under the sun, except for card games, where he was somehow invincible. How, when I was little, he'd take me to play catch on sunny days. The special, peculiar way he chuckled.

The doctor smiled and placed her hand over mine. The world spinning, pieces falling away. I shook off the disorientation, before I noticed I wasn't alone. "Oh, hi doctor! What brings you here?"

She asked me about my father. I didn't really know why, but it wasn't as if there was any reason not to tell her. "My dad? Never knew him. Mom raised me."

Day 2

"Tell me about your mother."

"Mom? Ah, she was great. Worked hard taking care of me all on her own." I told the doctor everything I could remember. How her pale blonde hair had glistened in the sunlight. How kind she had been. That special smile, reserved just for me.

The doctor smiled and placed her hand over mine. The world spinning, pieces falling away. I shook off the disorientation, before I noticed I wasn't alone. "Oh, hi doctor! What brings you here?"

She asked me about my parents. I didn't really know why, but it wasn't as if there was any reason not to tell her. "Never knew them, unfortunately. I was an orphan."

Day 3

The doctor smiled, and placed her hand over mine. The world spinning, pieces falling away. I shook off the disorientation, before I noticed I wasn't alone. "Oh, hi doctor! What brings you here?"

"My name? I can't say I remember."

Day ?

The doctor smiling and patting my hand.

contemporary angel



Rotgut

At age six I stopped biting my nails
and used their tips to carve the skin off of apples
in tiny oblique crescents until just white,
lumpy pulp remained.

In eighth grade I burned my hand on a stovetop and
woke up smelling something exquisite,
something fried and snatched by the birds
in the wee hours that left
me with a little less hull in the morning.
I was relieved to be relieved of a piece.

In the coldest winter I learned that
not only fire can waste
away and in summer
my toes bristled to ash when their
tiny heads met the water.

On the last day I unkindled with my
wetted hands I wiped the pulsing prints off
my scorched fingers and felt the
fineness in my spine,
the waning pyramid of my sacrum.

In time I found that I could hide
some part of someone
in some endmost calloused crust of me
so that we both fell away in the cessation.

In time I found a pureness that could
solidly cook outward from my belly:
a disemboweled sort of clout
filleted and served on a cedar plank.

I am gutted and it smells so good.

Break/Fast

I ate him and I spat him out.
He the apple,
I the worm.

I the knife and the towel.
Her the tree I lay beneath,
mouth open, catching cherries,
hoarding their indiscriminate cores.

The potato soldiers sat fermenting
in their sweating, rusting armor
while I dialed the landline on the cellar door
and whispered into the oven.

I invited the lemon inside—
didn't wait to slice her open
before I doused her face in sugar and wanted more.

I ate my parents and my sister
over and over, much too fast,
tried to throw back up their rinds
but choked on my faith in the sunrise.

I starved myself and learned to love the leaves,
spilled salt into my wounds
and sucked them dry.
Woke up next to a moldy pitcher
with a throbbing between my legs.

I mixed bread in my stomach and left out the flour,
got locked outside the next morning
retching yeast into the snow.

I rewarded myself with a day soaked in brine
and a night on a bitter roller coaster
with the ghost of she, the lemon,
he, the apple,
I the knife.

Vice Wars

some things you can't wash
blood out of if it marinates
under the wrong gaze.
your cat's pine needle tongue

leaves much to be mopped
and the faint smell of iron lingers
like some gnat or eyelash
plucked free from your eye.

if you ever cease kindling the fire
in your throat, that alone will be
how you cease flame. Not,

with a wave that crashes or laps,
not with loss of love or limb and
not with all the willingness in the world.
not everything can be an opus unless
you are always expecting to die.

And you cannot expect to die.

the salt-stone of your belly is irresolvable.
the crippled talon of your spine
is almost soluble enough to tap

and drain into an hourglass with
stinking grains and no bottom.
You are pregnant with a sickness
that breathes

and catches on loose threats.
in your dreams you are skiing
on hills that go flat as you near them.

could you still—
wracking for ribs—
hold your breath as the clock listed
the names of the dead in reverie
without hearing your own?

would you breast the slick slope
of your fantastic subterfuge and find it
too smooth to grasp and too hard to crack
so you are left sucking on your bloody fingernails
once again?

would you find the taste is no longer that of metal
but the bitter burn of pill capsules and
the salty prickling of guilt

because you can no longer parade
in your rented skin
as though blood is the only thing
inside you.

An Arsonist's Guide to Gardening

Author's Preface

I am a man of simple tastes.

I enjoy walking my dog around the block, seeing my daughter at her violin recital, and watching the charred remains of my neighbor's Honda Accord that cut me off one time on the 105 sizzle and pop.

But above all, I love gardening.

Digging up the ground with my trowel, burying seeds, and watering them is one of life's simple joys.

So when I waltzed into my local mom and pop bookshop hoping to find a gardening guide that was right for my lifestyle, I was dismayed to find a whole lot of bupkis.

My disappointment was immeasurable.

And unforgivable.

But let's not get into that. Nothing was ever proven, anyway.

My deepest wish is that this book finds its way into the scorched hands of my fellow flamespeople. Those fiery souls taking fiery tolls. Those hot chaps making houses collapse. Those smoldering prime suspects of an apartment fire who may or may not have done it. Nobody can hold a candle to you bright souls, albeit you hold a candle to most infrastructure.

To the pyromaniac looking to reignite their passion for life, I wish you the best as you discover what gardening has to offer.

Like my daughter says, "Gardens are lit."

Haikus

I am looking up.
Can inanimate objects
Look back down at me?

The fridge is a prop
Propped up by some wooden beams.
It serves no purpose.

Pick Me Up I'm Scared

I survived this, if you're worried about me. I don't think you want my worries.

This happened to me back in my hometown. I come from the suburbs, doesn't matter where. Picture clean-cut lawn rows, wooden picket fences, idyllic summer swelter. In the evening, I'd take walks around that neighborhood. My mom would always say to be home before dark, but I was a boy, and boys don't fear the dark yet.

Please stay with me a while longer.

There's a moment, just before night, when the streetlamps come on, and my neighborhood is reintroduced to me in hoops of light and shadow. In the park, all of the soccer kids on the soccer fields have left with their soccer moms, and it's just a field with fizzling night lamps. I'd walk past sleepy houses and stretches of shadowy earth until my doorway, a rectangle of light. That's where I was headed the night I was found.

"Hi! I'm almost there. If he listened, he'll be by the field."

A woman walked behind me, talking on her phone. She sounded like the quintessential Soccer Mom, replete with hoop earrings and a bob haircut. Of course, I couldn't actually turn and confirm that. That's the way it is when someone's walking behind you. You can't see them without them seeing you see them, and people have got to ignore each other when they're on their way places.

"I don't know if he's going to play next year. What, you don't think he might get hurt with the older kids?"

I tilted my head. She probably got that image from me.

"He never tells me he loves me anymore, you know? He's growing up; he doesn't need me." She laughed.

My back prickled with heat. I tugged my shirt, looking around. The trees caught the light from the lamps and reflected yellow-orange foliage; they cleared ahead into a park of trodden grass. At the far end of the soccer field was a boy I see more often these days.

He looked like me. A lone boy, far after others had gone. Lone boy who hasn't needed anything from anyone. Lone boy who wouldn't come home. The air behind me sizzled up with snug mother-love.

"I bet he's exhausted. I'll let him sleep when we're home."

I realized that I'd stopped walking, and then the boy vanished. I'd been seeing shadows as I moved; the field was empty, and the summer night heat coursed around me like a bloodstream. I noticed that the mother's footsteps had stopped.

Lights fell. My back burned up, burning and smothering like the inside of a heart, and her voice was above, around, inside me to make everything float away.

"No need to worry. I'm picking him up right now."

The ground fell away. My senses crumbled inside a warm dark sensation like a velvet cocoon. My breath thrashed, dampened, then ceased; I didn't need to breathe anymore, didn't need anything wrapped in her embrace.

My head eased into numbness, touch disappearing down my body. I was not scared. I couldn't be. My body began shaking in a way of ending, discharging life, and dying soft. I gave one last kick with my soccer-kid leg.

My sole struck the path. It hurt. I pushed it forward, hurting again, dragging myself through miles of her embrace. Piece by piece the dark and heat tore away, and I heard her voice languish behind me as I was born back onto the sidewalk, running away into the freezing summer night.

"Don't stay out too long."

"I'll bring you home later."

Down the street, towards my house, threw the door wide. I shut it behind me and sat, cradling my head with eyes wide open. Through the door, I felt her warmth at the base of my spine. I couldn't bear the way it soothed me.

And so I sat there until morning with her pressed against my back like love.

I haven't slept much since then. Every time my eyes close, I feel her warmth around me. I tell stories to keep myself up, but they're all this story, one way or another. The cold of the world hasn't left me since that night, and I keep telling myself that's the only reason I shiver.

I stay awake from her. I do all that I can not to need her. But maybe that's just how she wants me: a scared child, waiting for her to pick him up.

zeide's fingers were held together by wrinkles probably

Written and meant to be read while listening to beethoven's symphony no. 7 in a major op. 92, movement ii, allegretto on a never-ending loop

wrinkles working together like basket-woven joints
but they were the strongest wrinkles
 (that probably knew they were strong when they woke up
in the morning
 and ate a dozen eggs)
his wrinkles the only thing
 warm
on his body
and they gravitated toward
the forward
leaning
piano
bench
to fall onto keys springingly

This is the part where it builds up

I don't have wrinkles yet but I feel them forming
and can often hear the sound of their deeply cracked spines forming
like boots
 that
popcorn crunch
on gravel

This is the loudest part

I know the wrinkles will come to me soon
I can't find myself to write any more of this
slivers of possibility of smooth hands
smelling of jergens lotion
terrifying me in that core-warming way

they might just stay young and
seamless forever
FINE (italian, not english)

This is the woodwind soli

but I think it will be okay, the wrinkles will come when they come
at least that is what my mother tells me
every day
take a break
it's intermission and the clarinet sounds so glorious

It got loud again

wrinkles not on your hands yet but
crows feet count just the same
the eyes can tell you that you are okay with this
that I'm okay with this
I'll get my wrinkles when they come

D.C. al coda

Beginning Middle and End

moshpitting around your big brother with no arms but two extra legs, lenny the big beagle brother is your first memory & his last day before you all (read: your parents) knew what had to happen & when the doctor had to inject him with what they said would make him feel better but take him away from us i guess that moment was blurry to you & i suppose it was during the grand era of lint magnetized to the dried apple juice on your hands when preschool was over so you had bigger things to do & don't you remember when lenny was your show and tell and he sniffed all the chips ahoy crumbs on the ground with those stubborn and unapologetically hound-ish genes of his?

yes, i also remember that after the stuff had to go through his veins & i was four i asked my mother why everyone kept on dying and she corrected me: passing away, danicita

this also was about the time when you went on a semi-permanent vocal rest like a broadway diva like patti lupone or bernadette or maybe even barbra but mine was for years and years and i'm not sure it ever fully ended

now danicita is more than four by just a little but how can you justify being any different all that really happened was your bones stretched and your skin accommodated them (cue: unreliable self-awareness) and while your bones did stretch something in your brain remained like normal bones, inelastic ironically and if i am being honest with you it is the same as the you with the apple-juiced-hands because you still ask that question from before you still ask why everyone is passing away, danicita you still ask but only to yourself now you do not bother your mother with things like that anymore

the title of this one doesn't matter

tractor stands ground
on unremarkable hill
leaning forward
domineering
where are all the humans
who would bother
with domineering tractor
on unremarkable hill

Numerical

There are

ten

types of people in the world: those who understand binary and those who don't.

There are

two

types of people in the world: those who bodysurf to skim on top of all the world's corals and fishes and never look down, and those who dive underneath the skimmer's surface with goggles securely fastened to see all of the world's corals and fishes and kelps.

There are

trillions

of grains of sand on just a

single

beach, or some ridiculous number like that.

There are

thirty-seven

footprints, displacing

several thousand

grains of sand, and leading to just

one

man, who picks out a solitary grain of sand and thinks,

This beach is now a different beach because it is missing a grain of sand. This planet is now a different planet because it has lost a grain of sand. This universe is now a different universe because it is without a grain of sand.

as he crushes the grain into granules which crumble into atoms under his colossal fingertips.

There are also

three

seagulls by the man who fail to notice that the beach has changed.

I am a god now. I am Hades and Zeus and Poseidon sharing a body. If there are two kinds of people in the world, I am the third.

I understand binary but I sit on the sidelines of understanding, comprehending but not grasping. I do not skim and I do not dive. I

struggle on the surface of the water, I hope to find the bottom but I

drown in the process. I am not a grain of sand, I am a god of sand.

The man shouts into the wind and the wind blows words of the

one

man out of

seven billion

onto the ocean, and zephyrs choose to neither skim nor dive but to

dissipate into a fine mist that no

one

ever sees again.

Horus

1

I met a witch at an urgent care clinic. Was it a witch? I don't know. She was a doctor.

2

The problem was that my eye was swollen, a sickly red lump sitting over it like a shrimp tail. She had small eyes, in a color near blue. You could call the one on the right a lazy eye but that wouldn't quite describe it: the thing stayed fixed on me when it wanted, wandering slightly. An oddity well-worn.

3

And her shirt was very avant-yadda, something like a jazz piece dissembling a tree. Her hair: red. My eye: red. We could make some conversation.

4

She said: *u know I love ur outfit...like something I woulda worn...in the 90s...*

Come sleep in my flannel, my eye said, but it was too swollen for anyone to hear.

5

I could've loved her; I was taken, but I could've. I think of her in little pieces: the touch of her starched doctor's coat. The feel of her stethoscope necklace. The beauty of her odd little eye.

6

She prescribed me prednisone again. I said thank you. Then I walked straight out, like I was supposed to.

Shadow Man

I am not one for pseudoscience,
but when this 100 dollar psychic finds a waste land
in the lines of postmodern poetry on my palms,
reads sacreligious tarot card psalms,
tells me my vices will soon get the best of me,
I think of you, and begin to write my will.
There's apathy for caskets and ashes
are mistaken for chocolate milk mixer
so I want to come back as the ticking in your watch,
shadowboxing you until worms
writhe in your nose, feast on rotting adenoids
because that's how you think things should be.
I'll leave cracking my skull, letting lifetimes of poetry
leak onto the linoleum. Chug them.
Understand how it feels when I choke out
I love yous as you kneel
and offer your God a splatter-paint mural
of Pepto-Bismol-pink sonnets on tile,
because they burn like backyard moonshine
in the Mississippi summer.

I do

I was walking with three legs at noon up a mountain when I
saw an elated murder of crows swim through the blue air and
thought to myself: does the crane sink its beak into rocky clam
so the peasant may find gold?

I asked a puff of smoke tumbling down the dirty trail, who ignored
social etiquette and pushed me aside, too occupied
chasing crouching white tigers.

Up further a triumvirate of eagles perched upon a mantra-scroll,
their nails and feathers scattering around the red-stained yellow.

I walked past their judging stares, stroking my liver.

Panting, gasping, I forced my heavy-as-lead legs
to bite the ground, pulling me up one foot at a time.

Atop the mountain and fighting to stuff air down my
shrinking lung, I found between Euphrates and Tigris a three
pronged bell, a rosary, a fat white bone, and a dusty bronze mirror.

Dawn

I was(am?) trailing on, my feet tapping the floor, or was it the ground?
Cracked gaslight road lamp beckoned in its husky ways.

I am not moth, tapping on.

Riding syncopated cadence, blinking twice, and the moon hums
listless lullaby, echoing off the flight of fireflies by the creek.
restless, I stir(red?).

Craving, Swaying, Straying

Scathing stones chide, booming, dactylic, coarse.

Keening, (I?) shamble on.

It asked Where will you be going?

Gentle breeze brushing up the face.

Did not answer

It asked Where will you be going?

Meandering on

(I?) am(will be?) treading(tapping?) on(along?) asphalt(grass?) and(or?)
lime(dirt?)

Where was I when?

HIKA is Kenyon College's oldest literary publication. It provides undergraduate students the opportunity to publish their work in a selective literary and fine arts journal. *HIKA* also offers students interested in editing and publishing the chance to develop these skills while contributing to the assembly of a professional-quality literary journal. It is published twice a year.

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