

UNSTRUNG

A magazine of,
for and about
poetry



Summer 2025

The Poets



Doty



Siringo



Chorlton



Fournier



Ashley



Pellegrino



Staller



Sauchelli



Kenney



Pellegrino



Staller



Sauchelli



Kenney



Black



Aruguete



Fenton Sederstrom

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Unstrung is a project of the nonprofits The Blue Guitar
and The Arizona Consortium for the Arts

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Roxanne Doty

Where Did You Sleep Last Night, Lavigne?

Parked in the Planet Fitness lot
east side shaded in the afternoon
an old Honda Accord expired plates
windows covered with cloth
rear windshield cracked and patched
a million strips of duct tape zigzagged
across the glass.

One day I saw her and she smiled.
I asked her name and she asked mine.
Lavigne was a small woman, no longer young
she wore a colorful skirt and a wool cap
spoke with an accent, lived in her car.

Cervical cancer spread to her kidneys
she'd just finished chemo. She pulled off her cap
to show me her bald head. I brought water
in aluminum containers, she didn't like plastic,
a heating pad for her back, sore
from sleeping in the car.

She had a son but didn't get along with his partner.

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She told me she was going home.
To Kampong Cham, Cambodia
seventy-eight miles from Phnom Penh.
She would be back in November
for more chemo if she was still alive.
She thanked me for being a friend.

I never saw her again.

I imagine Lavigne living
amongst lovely temples and pagodas
colorful French colonial buildings.
I imagine her buying fresh vegetables
in an open-air market.
I imagine her healthy.

And I think about friendship
its many shapes and durations
and how the world can shimmer
in unexpected places.

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Roxanne Doty



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Roxanne Doty lives in Tempe, Arizona. Her debut novel, “Out Stealing Water,” was published by Regal House Publishing, Aug. 30, 2022. Her first poetry collection was published by Kelsay Books in the spring of 2024. She has published stories and poems in Third Wednesday, Quibble Lit, Superstition Review, Espacio Fronterizo, Ocotillo Review, Forge, I70 Review, Soundings Review, The Blue Guitar, Four Chambers Literary Magazine, Lascaux Review, Lunar Review, Journal of Microliterature, NewVerseNews, International Times, Saranac Review, Gateway Review and Reunion-The Dallas Review. Her short story “Turbulence” (Ocotillo Review) was nominated for the 2019 Pushcart prize for short fiction.

Roxanne Doty

The Phoenix Bird

6 hovered over Black Canyon city
as we sailed down Interstate 17
in your old Chrysler, New Yorker
4-speed, gearshift on the floor
that immortal bird of resurrection
and renewal, larger than an eagle
crimson and gold as if on fire
its sound-song reverberated
through the car, over-powering
the Eagles, *Take It to the Limit*
playing on the stereo, the promise
of the new desert city, a flame
lit by that bird born of story
soaring above us as we neared
Phoenix, time ahead eternal
we could burn out and rise again
drift on belief in rebirth, falling
and regenerating, searching always
for our own legend

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Roxanne Doty

Beer-Wine-LOTTO

Prayer candles flicker
on East Van Buren
in front of Alamo Liquor
winter air breathes
across the desert
its cold teeth bite
into the city bones
of a man rubbing hands
over the small flames
images of Jesus and the Virgin
painted on the candles
dancing in the glow
of Alamo's neon promise
Beer-Wine-LOTTO
as quiet violence whispers
at the edges of used car lots
and single-story motels
the sky luminous with stars

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Koki Siringo

Mesquite Man

My father beckons me to his side
I went to school with this fellow, he says,
placing a bear's paw on the flaky shoulder
of a weathered mesquite-man.

His dusky skin is chipped,
there are deep lines around his watery eyes.
This man has seen his share of disenchantments
and partaken in acts of unhurried self-immolation.

8

He flashes a yellowed smile.
There is great dignity in his handshake.
The backs of his splintered legs creak as they wage battle
with a back that curves his snowy head into a question mark.

(What was the meaning?)

My father smiles affably as he chats with his peer.
His curly hair is black, with just some dashes of cotton white.
Such a straight posture, such strong arms and legs.
Built like a powder keg with a heart of flint.

Time exonerates no one,
but, on select cases,
it grants deferments.

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Koki Siringo



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The poet, who writes under the pen name Koki Siringo, has family on both sides of the Sonora-Arizona border, and his family roots in the region date back to countless centuries. He has a deep love and appreciation for the people and the culture on both sides of the line. Besides writing poetry, he is also a translator, teacher, and author. His first novel will be published independently at the end of the year.

Koki Siringo

My Grand Tour

My Grand Tour started and ended at home.
No bags were packed, no tickets were purchased.
My diploma worth its weight in fool's gold.
The seal and signatures were real,
its value was counterfeit.

Nowhere else to go
but back into the sandy womb
that I had battled so heartily to escape.

10

In my hometown
there are no theatres or museums.
No galleries or civic spaces.
No caf  s in which to sip unsweetened brews
from chipped porcelain mugs
while stabbing the pages of a leather-bound notebook
with a fountain pen,
etching them with scribbled wounds
to be recited at yet some undetermined posterity.
Ink cadavers to be enshrined in the mausoleum of "collected works."
Small swaddling scrawls embalmed
and shrouded in a folder signed with my name,
"For your consideration" at the base of a pyramid of letters,
praying for that tidy grant.

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In my hometown,
a movie theatre is a far-fetched extravagance.
A bowling alley is a flight of fancy.
A well-kept park is a pipe dream
worthy of De Quincey, Baudelaire and Blake.

(The best coffee in town can be found
in the gas station on your way out.)

I was forced to trade these metropolitan notions
for a decaying house overlooking
a waning deserted landscape
where culture is the smell of gunpowder
filtering through the dust-soaked wind
at three in the morning.

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Of my Grand Tour,
the only souvenir I wish to keep
is the stubborn belief
that a rich inner life and the bitter taste of experience
can keep one's dreams afloat
while marooned between corners of broken asphalt.

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David Chorlton

A Page of Hours

Mid-afternoon, when gardens glow
and simple back yards
with their stacks and stones lie back
waiting for the birds to make
what is ordinary special.

12 Lazy shadows pick themselves
off the ground to drift toward their next
appointment; the one
in which they hold a conference
with doubt. Anyone's invited, any hopeful optimist
or herald of the fear night brings
when warm air and cold time collide.

Daylight on the run. The sun exhales.
Hawk in the restless sky. It has happened before
so often the trees have forgotten
where memories roost.

No gardens now but continents, and each
of them in turn closes
both its eyes. It is then possible
to hear light dripping
from the edge of the world.

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David Chorlton



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David Chorlton continues to learn much about poetry from the desert. He occasionally returns to his life as a visual artist, sometimes making poetry and painting part of the same work.

David Chorlton

Earth Tones

The sky comes all the way down
to the ground with nothing
in its way to interrupt
the view. And gravel flows in the arroyos,
saguaro hold their flowers
for the sun to see, mesquites crouch
half broken with verdins on the branches,

lizards by the roots
and dove calls in the morning light
that wanders downslope from the mountain

to the desert with its colors
underground: red hearts
in rocks, the yellow souls of bees
and blue memory of night.

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David Chorlton

What the Sky Knows

Desert fire and starlight, further information

to follow when the dry slopes

send a text and mesquites

email warnings to the backyard trees.

But resistant to technology

somebody up early

every day looks north

and reads the sky. She says it knows

more than all the messages

and orders to evacuate, it being a confidant of lightning

that knows fire

as a friend. It understands

impatience and the wish to embrace smoke.

Glow, night, glow, the sky will be alive

above the embers. It can see

where time has been and where

it's going. It follows

spring migration and it counts

from one to millions in the dark.

Sky sees all: a few degrees of Earthspin and it

can read a fire's mind.

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David Chorlton

The Night Marty Robbins Died

Wednesday. As close to winter
as the city gets. Wooden floors creaking
across the living room and the radio
tuned to KNIX playing low. Next door to the west
the jazz pianist with

his pale Goth wife
and to the east the older lady and her son
who listen most nights
to the stars passing overhead
and the traffic humming

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a tune to itself.
Dishes washed, radio alive
that time of day

the hours ride cowboy style
to midnight. December in the year
a friend was shot when walking on McDowell.
No reason needed. Someone early
in the day auditioning
for fame. Nothing romantic,

no woman
involved, no horseback ride
along the border
between foolishness and heroism, no
tune to make the story
last and last

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Continued from page 16

the way *El Paso* plays three times
each hour all night
while it rains and rains until
the darkness shines.

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Alfred Fournier

Indelible

for Bruce

Like the handprint of a bruise
worn like a tattoo on my shoulder,
though you never raised a hand to me.
Like footprints in cement. Dime store idol
pocketing the five-fingered discount.
Broad-shouldered sidewalk stride
I longed to follow. Everyone did.
The halo of your desire a beacon
in the dark mouth of the seventies,
shining past the shadow of Mom's death.
A star burned into leather-brown eyes,
shrugged off, like charisma was nothing.
Moving through the crowd
as if you owned their eyes on you,
like you owned my envy and admiration,
though we couldn't be more different.
My Felix to your Oscar.
Your Icarus to my Daedalus.
Caution always held me back
but how I longed to blaze like you,
to ride your dusty trail, Sundance to your Cassidy,
leaping together for the river,
the Law never more than a step behind.

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Alfred Fournier



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Alfred Fournier is a community volunteer in Phoenix, Arizona. His poems and creative nonfiction have appeared in South Florida Poetry Journal, International Times, Great Lakes Review, The Perch Magazine, Drunk Monkeys and elsewhere. Poetry publications include “A Summons on the Wind” (2023, Kelsay Books) and “King of Beers” (2025, Rinky Dink Press). He lives in the foothills of South Mountain with his wife and daughter and two birdwatching cats.

Alfred Fournier

Phototaxis

My concern is with the light around the body.
The moth who longs to burn inside the lantern.
A child leaping stone to stone across the river.
Show me the pain you've secreted from the world,
and like a fortune teller I will divine your fate.

I knew a woman once who went alone into the jungle
with nothing but a knife, a light, a machete.
Food was difficult to find. She learned to follow the baboons
when avocados ripened on branches too high to climb.
Their wild leaping onto limbs shook loose the ready fruits,
which she would gather from the ground.
I've known few people like this—willing to go all the way.

When finally with feet up on porches we look back,
which life will we see? The harried rush of traffic
among skyscrapers, the elevator rides?
Or the yellow flame of lonely hours,
the burning of wing and scale,
sacrificial grey smoke spiraling like a serpent skyward.

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Alfred Fournier

To the Hair Growing Out of the Top of My Ear

You must wonder why I keep plucking you
week after week, persistent as you are,
standing straight, alone,
like a misplaced bristle from a brush.
Rising like a cellphone tower,
naked flower stem, antenna
on an asymmetrical insect.

I'm sorry. I know you mean to be useful.
It isn't your fault you look silly there,
making me feel old, cells of my body
confused, yet eager still to be players
on the field in the latter innings of life.
I can't help but grin at your enthusiasm.

21

Maybe I'll leave you there.
See how long you grow.
Let you have your moment, tall and proud
in the light of the bathroom mirror.
Though wouldn't it be nice if you had a twin?
My other ear so lonely and bare.

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Alfred Fournier

In the Dream Where Poetry Ruled the World

We were kind to each other
because we could see that the earth was dying.
We weren't as distracted by sports,
social media or binge watching
as we were by the light of the stars,
its long journey across time
to brush our faces with silver.

22

We marveled that sunlight
could conspire with air and water
to form the perfect cup of a tulip.
We were unhurried, and wrote
a new definition of happiness
that cradled the peaceful release of death.

The seasons to us passed slowly,
every blackbird's trill
and each emerging leaf was noted.
People read out loud on subways
and in restaurants,
their overlapping voices
like the chatter of sparrows.

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A perfect line overheard
in the grocery store
would be carried home
with the apples, milk and cheese.
War ended, because. And the soldiers
built homes for refugees,
and wildlife corridors
that connected the globe.

In the dream where poetry ruled the world,
sonnet and free verse were neighbors,
and haiku nestled happily with sestina,
giving birth to tanka and ghazal.
We slept where the sheep grazed,
and when we woke, abdicated
human rule, and gave the world
back to itself. Earth sighed
as all of nature smiled. And we,
the humble, mortal caretakers,
retired to our rooms to write.

Mary Knapp

Slippery Regret

There it goes - another day - like a pound of slippery regret strapped to my back adding to the sad pile already there, and if I'm not careful, one day, the whole thing is going to come crashing down, taking me, my regret, the whole thing with it. Believe me, it's not going to be pretty.

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Mary Knapp



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After a career as a biologist, Mary turned her attention to traveling and writing — literary nonfiction mostly with a dash of poetry — and has plans to see what tomorrow may bring. You can reach Mary at marymknapp@gmail.com.

Mary Knapp

Miami Airport, Time irrelevant

I've decided to surrender myself into the wallow of boarding gate hell as I write this note. I was up all day Monday preflight trying to calm my nerves and convince myself that 'COPA' airlines was a legitimate company. I had always wanted to see Brazil – experience the Amazon River – but my decision making skills suddenly seemed misplaced. I had landed at 6 Tuesday morning in Miami and it is now 3:30 Tuesday afternoon and I have been waiting for my next two flights, the first to Panama and the final one which will hopefully transport me seamlessly in Manaus in the early hours of Wednesday morning, inshallah. By my calculus, that is at the very least 48 hours of cumulative Boarding Gate hell.

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A word to fellow travelers, Miami Airport should be avoided at all costs – here's the scene – miles of underground walkways painted white leading to nowhere, overlapping frenetic hives of TSA encampments, punctuated with over air-conditioned hallways filled with scary imports destined for preteen duty free bags. But at least it's familiar territory, at least to these American eyes. Good practice for the floor of the jungle I'll soon encounter.....

Reminds me of nothing so much as an ant colony on acid.

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Mary Knapp

Front Range

During the night
 a cold front passed over
Leaving in its wake
 the high country
Dazzling white and inescapable
And the hawks
 with their proud chestnut wings
Now stood sentry
 in brief but noble glory in the front range...

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Mary Knapp

For Wallace

The oranges are waiting for me...
Sumatra and Borneo are preparing their secrets

Rafflesia as if it could possibly be in store—
Dazzling and hard won – as I speak

And what about Malaka – could the smiles be as
Genuine as they were before ? God knows I'm as eager
As an open door

Never knowing the delights until they have been bestowed
And even I remain a willing student as their rough verse shows...

Lombok or Celebes or tiny hidden volcanic wonderlands
Even Wallace himself might still be waiting there with samples
And new proofs

With manuscripts trudging across lowlands shaded like houses with
Palm leaf roofs,
trudging inexorably across haughty volcanos from one
Inevitable discovery to the next.

If so, then the wait would be a long one for me

But ultimately and spectacularly
well earned

*Dedicated to the memory of Alfred Russel Wallace,
English naturalist and biologist*

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Paula Ashley

A Tale of Wild

My friend, did you call for wild?
How shall I respond?

I've followed the straight and narrow
set there at an early age.
I found the straight quite crooked
with forks to choose and hills to climb.
The straight led up a mountain
to heights I never planned to scale
then slipped me down a precipice
so steep I lost all sight and sound.

29

Waking on the gurney
clamped in an ambulance
I thought that all was lost for sure
and blanked out yet again.

When I awoke, I was inside
a wild primeval forest.
The darkness there my shroud.
I sank into a crevice
between the roots of some old tree
then dropped my head onto my knees
my arms around my feet.

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When I looked up, I found
I'd adjusted to the dark
and saw the tracks of forest creatures
the trail a fox had made.
An owl hooted from above
as I stood up and looked around.

And so, you never know
what life has in store
and where your roads will take you.
No matter what you choose, my friend,
the way is always wild.

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Paula Ashley



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Paula Ashley is a retired software engineer. She lives in Glendale, Arizona, with her husband and three feral cats who sleep under the bougainvillea in their backyard. Paula received her MFA from Queens University of Charlotte. She has poems published in the anthologies “Poetry and Prose for the Phoenix Art Museum” by Four Chambers Press and “Weatherings” by Future Cycle Press. Two chapters of her manuscript, “What Sparks Story or What is Left After the Declutter,” are published in The Blue Guitar Magazine and “Beyond Boundaries: Tales of Transcendence.” Email: p.c.ashley@ieee.org. (Photo by Elena Thornton)

Paula Ashley

On a Hot August Day, I Try Once Again to Declutter My House: House with No Attic, House with No Basement

Voices roll out from under the bed,
bounce off the bookcase
behind the kitchen table.

32

Voices of the dead
leap off old papers and books
stashed in boxes and shelves.

Don't forget me.
Remember me always.
And I cover my ears.

How could I forget?
I push boxes back under the bed.
The intent to throw out — gone.

Laughter echoes in the hall.
They've won again. Their legacies
live on.

© 2025

Lysa Cohen

Hear Me Roar

I am woman.

Hear me roar:

Not in whispers,
Not in apologies,
But in the thunder of footsteps marching,
In the crack of glass ceilings shattering,
In the echoes of voices
That refuse to be silenced anymore.

I am the fire they tried to extinguish,
The wave they tried to hold back.

I am generations of struggle,
Of women bending,
But never breaking.

I am every “no” turned into a fight,
Every dismissal met with persistence.

I am the daughter of suffragettes,
The sister of activists,
The mother of dreamers.

I carry their battles in my veins,
Their courage in my breath.

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When I speak,
I speak for the ones who couldn't—
The ones whose stories were erased,
Whose strength paved the way
For this moment,
For this life.

I am not just the strength in my arms,
But the fire in my mind,
The depth of my heart.

I am the softness they underestimated,
The power they overlooked.

34

I am the complexity of contradictions:
Fierce and gentle,
Bold and vulnerable.

I roar for equality,
For justice,
For the freedom to be.

I roar for the girls who are told to be quiet,
For the women who are told they're too much.

I roar for myself,
Because every roar is a reminder
That I am here.

I exist.

And I matter.

I am woman.

Hear me roar.

It's not just a declaration—
It's a revolution.

It's the sound of change,
The rhythm of progress.

It's the echo of every voice,
Coming together,
Until the world hears us
And cannot ignore.

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Lysa Cohen

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Lysa Cohen is an educator and writer who explores themes of resilience, identity, and the unexpected humor in life's challenges. With a teaching and academic coaching background, she has spent the past two decades helping students find their voices—both on the page and beyond. She holds an M.A. in English, an M.Ed. and M.Phil. in Education, and a PhD in Curriculum and Instruction. She has also been published in *Be Open*, *Black Coffee Poetry*, *Loch Raven Review*, *Page & Spine*, *The Penman Review*, and *Zen Poetry*.

Lysa Cohen

We Are Not Alone

To the women who wake each day beneath the weight of silence—
who feel the burn of words forced back down,
who carry bruises hidden beneath brave faces,
we are not alone.

We stand together,
from streets pulsing with protest,
to bedsides where courage breathes and waits to be found.
Across oceans, across borders, hands reach out,
fists clenched in solidarity,
voices rising even in the quiet.

37

When they push us down,
when they make laws of our bodies,
when they ignore the cries lodged in our throats,
remember this:
somewhere, a woman stands for us,
holding the line, refusing to bend.

To the women stripped of choice,
to the girls taught their worth is small,
to mothers who shield daughters from the world's sharp teeth,
we carry each other's grief, bear each other's rage.
It binds us across language and land,
across the scars we can't erase.

Continued on page 38

Sisters in fire and fury,
in whispers shared across continents,
in songs sung in a thousand tongues,
we are an unbreakable chain, forged in pain and resolve.

In the darkest hours, know this:
for every hand raised to silence,
a thousand rise like iron, unbowed—
a thousand voices cry, *we are here*.

We are not alone,
even when shadows press in,
even when hope feels hollow—
we are not alone,
and together, we are stronger
than they ever believed we could be.

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Lysa Cohen

We Start From Here

We can't go back to who we were before.
Nah—
That door is locked.
That chapter? Closed.
The woman I was, the world we knew,
Gone.
Swept away, like dust in the wind,
Like waves erasing footprints on the shore.

We can't change the past.
No rewind button, no second takes.
The storms came, uninvited,
Left their mark—deep, raw, unyielding.
And we?
We bore it,
Skin bruised, hearts cracked,
But still—
Still we stand.

And now?
Now it's just this—
This moment,
This ground beneath our feet.
Shaky? Maybe.
But it's ours.

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We start from here.
From the ashes, from the rubble,
From the pieces we didn't think we could hold.
We gather,
We stitch,
We build.
Not what was, but what will be.

Here's the truth:
The past doesn't define us—
It sharpens us.
Cuts us open to show what we're made of.
And let me tell you,
We're made of fire.
Made of roots that don't quit.
Made of hearts that break
Just to beat louder.

So no,
We can't go back,
But we don't need to.
Because here, in this place,
With these hands,
With this will,
We are enough.

We start from where we are.
And baby,
Where we are
Is power.

Lysa Cohen

What Remains, What Rises

The waters rose in a silent swell
not a creeping tide, but a flood that snarled, slouching across the shore.
It swallowed rivers, devoured paths,
twisted fences, wrenched trees from the earth,
drowned homes as walls buckled, rooms filling to their ceilings,
every inch claimed by a dark, relentless force—
our world consumed in its jaws.

When the storm passed, silence fell,
thick like mud with our loss.
The sky bellied low, darkened and bruised,
a witness to the wreckage we picked through,
to the ground littered with our history, shattered.

41

Our hearts hung heavy, hands hollowed,
and we sifted through fragments—
the echoes of everything we were.
Our voices broke in the stillness,
calling to neighbors, to friends,
to anyone who had survived the night beside us.

Continued on page 42

And somehow, we began again,
our hands lifting what little was left, clearing the wreckage,
our voices rising, though frayed and tired.
Side by side, we pieced together the bones of what might come,
pressed seeds into soaked and broken earth,
knowing the storm could strip us—but not quiet us.

Hope emerged slowly, like the first fragile light,
a pulse beneath the rubble.
We gathered what pieces remained, made them ours,
not as they were but as something new.
We held each other, battered but unyielding,
and from the wreckage, we began to lift our world.

42

Yes, we are scarred, yes, we are changed,
but the wind did not shatter us, only bent us.
From the cracks, light pushes through,
and we build for tomorrow—
not whole, but defiant, not untouched, but unbroken.

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Marge Pellegrino

a fetish holds spirit

your blue-stone spirit flows from Marianna
Marianna who at 90 teaches me still
still waters run deep
deep and true reflections she offers
offering me so many sage-gift shares—
“share yours” is her call to action

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43

K R Staller, Liz Sauchelli, Linda Kenney, and Marge Pellegrino

Okey Dokey / All You / Your Turn
Again / Onto You / Tag You're It

An Exquisite Corpse poem

Who wants to start the first line?

Straight lines, curvy, lines that always tell the truth.

Truth, a malleable thing, pulled apart like play doh,
leading to different shapes.

Shapes, a circle is tricky, what goes around comes around,
we must be careful,

Careful, careful! Mom calls out as I balance on a cairn by the ocean
Ocean waves crash and slip toward the shore before retreating
Retreating into the love that comes to me in heartbeats
sent by loved ones through the universe

The Universe cradles all humanity like an ever knowing parent,
we can't escape each other

Other times, my sole attention falls to stretching my toes
Toes that wiggle and dig into the sand

Sand traps into every crevice in the seats in my car,
stubborn particles remain after repeated sweeps

She sweeps silently as if on a secret mission

Missions fill her head, tasks ticked off, colorful pills

burrow in shaggy carpets. Hands, steady as a napping cat, hold the boy.

K R Staller and Liz Sauchelli



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K R Staller, above left, graduated from SUNY Oswego in 2018 with a Bachelor's Degree in Creative Writing with a focus in poetry. She has a chapbook published, "Give Water to the Potter," and is usually working on several pieces at once. Her hands are always busy with wood carving, crochet, painting, and any craft that she is currently hyperfixating on. She is located in Washington State and enjoys the trails and nature with her cats (yes, they are leash trained).

Liz Sauchelli, above right, lives in Northern New England with her husband and four cats. She works as a reporter at a small daily newspaper.

Linda Kenney and Marge Pellegrino



46 Linda Kenney, above left, is a retired elementary school teacher, school psychologist, and special education program manager. During her retirement, a new interest in writing initiated by a class in Guided Autobiography was ignited. Linda now enjoys exploring all forms of writing along with spending time with her five grandchildren, attending the theater and the symphony. She is also active in advocacy groups, determined to give back to the community that has given so much to her.

Marge Pellegrino, above right, has written for more than 40 years. “Journey of Dreams,” a Smithsonian Notable, was Southwest Best Book; “Neon Words: 10 Brilliant Ways to Light Up Your Writing” inspires others to empower themselves on the page. Her poetry has appeared in *Amaranth Review*, *Blue Guitar*, “Writing Out of the Darkness,” “Sabino Canyon Chapbook,” and “Arizona: 100 Years, 100 Poems, 100 Poets.” “The Sculpture Speaks: A Refugee’s Story of Survival,” which she co-wrote, benefits the Owl & Panther project.

Duann Black

Glitter and Dust

Pixy glitter and fairy dust fill her spatial toy box.
Imagination aflame with fanciful thoughts fills her joyful heart.

In the vast sea above the celestial plane,
she plays at planetary design,
inside the starless expanse.

“Let’s place one here,” she says,
as she deftly hangs a burning star in empty space.

Sprinkling asteroid-sized fairy dust,
she sets the system to rotate.

47

Tossing pixy glitter throughout the sky,
she smiles at the pencil-point lights.

Spinning the objects, freeing them to explore endless space,
she gleefully giggles.

Twists and arcs, collisions and atoms fly in all directions,
filling planetary skies with never-ending wonder.

Turning to a new direction, she opens her toy box again.
Pixy glitter and fairy dust refill the box anew.

She fills her space with whimsical objects,
smiling as she plays,
humming a tune to the frequency of time.

Duann Black



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Duann Black is an author, poet, imaginationist, and well-traveled veteran, with stories to tell. She collaborated with her husband, Alan Black, on 20 books, including “A Planet with No Name” and the award-winning “Metal Boxes.” The author published “Stories to Tell Book One” in January (available on Amazon). This collection of short stories, which she and Alan wrote, kicks off a new series of short fiction and poetry. Her published works are listed on Alan Black’s Amazon Author Page. Duann always has a story to share and believes no good story is too short or too long.

Duann Black

Home

In the darkness of time, they call this world home.
It is not.

Swirling round about, spun to and fro, lives twisted out of proportion.
This is not home.

Emotions raw from the depths of despair drive them farther into darkness.
This cannot be home.

Disease names rise like mountains upon the flat wasteland.
This won't be home.

49

Home is this.
The blue orb, gleaming in the darkness, lights up space.

This is home.
Peaceful times, relaxing moments, smiling memories.

This is our home.
Calm seas, floating thoughts of joy, remembering loves.

This is always home.
Colorful views across desert sands, green expanse to tall mountains, and shining seas.

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Duann Black

Never Run Out of Laughs

Two years of missed hugs.

Four years without a kiss.

Smiles mixed with joy sustain me.

Memories come from obscure sources:

Taste, and touch, and tears.

Longing to reverse time, I'm out of focus.

My promises live in the future.

Remember me to your children.

Ask your children to remember you.

Generations looking outward,

and remembering the past,

never run out of laughs.

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Duann Black

Twenty-Four Hours

I ask for one more day.

To turn back time.

To hold your hand.

To share your love.

I hope you understand.

I ask for just one more.

To search within your eyes.

To understand.

To share the love we have.

51

One hour by twenty-four is all the time I ask.

To stand beside you.

To stay with you.

To hold your hand the whole night through.

I hope you see my plan.

Twenty-four hours is all.

I won't release you.

I can't, my love.

For twenty-four is all we have.

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Abraham Aruguete

in the sequel

the air struts about in ultraviolet
in summer clothes, half tanned
and the lines are drawn
where the skin shows
on the folds of its arm fat.
truckers nod off on the side of the road
five o'clock shadows on chins
which tumble down illegally.
by the theatre near the dog food factory
we get shown a series of images
with the actor who has
done it before.
a thousand calories of popcorn
tumble down our throats
and we, with distended bellies
waddle out of the theatre
satisfied for another weekend.

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Abraham Aruguete



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Abraham Aruguete is a human being. He has inhabited Northern Arizona for most of his life. He has been published in Asylum, The Blue Guitar, and Unstrung. He can be found on Instagram as abrahamaruguete.

Abraham Aruguete

all apologies

i can write letters like no tomorrow
with respect to yesteryear's delusions.
i can never promise
protection from the new

© 2025

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Abraham Aruguete

bad

if i should wax on
how mind's panopticon was always trained on me
the burning light of a self-critique
flagellating myself in front of my mind's eye.
the security cameras in my padded cell
oh—how i wish they'd look!

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Richard Fenton Sederstrom

After the Red Creek Storm

and after the creek,

that had run a thirty foot wall of water finally lowered,
the woman who lived in that cabin above
the flood and its debris
looked out into the clear morning.

Sprawled face down
on the rock surface lay a young girl swept
for how many miles no one knew for some time.
Of course, it took weeks to identify her.

The woman who owned the house
shut her creek-side windows.
She feared what she thought she would see
if she went to the broken gray-white object.

It was an it, an object. Had to be by now.
And her phone was out. She walked west
from the creek and from the creek's wreckage
lying on the rock surface,

and she found a phone at a nearby bar.
She phoned, and in the time
it takes too few men to go too many miles
after too many such discoveries, they arrived.

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They picked up the unresisting subject
and wrapped it in a tarp, lacking body bags.
Then they put it gently into the back of a pick-up,
and they drove away.

Weeks after, the woman sold her place
cheap and moved. Most people stayed.
They hadn't been near. Hadn't seen the body.
Their places stand around a bend. They like

to point out the new boulder that smashed
into their bank from way far up-creak.
Nobody speaks much of the other.
Long ago now you know, for a long time.

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Richard Fenton Sederstrom



Richard Fenton Sederstrom's family moved to the Sonoran Desert of Arizona in 1954. They brought Richard along, for which he is still both appreciative and bewildered. The Sonoran Desert, for all of humanity's wounds and insults, remains a gift. Sederstrom's seventh book of poems, "Icarus Rising: Misadventures in Ascension," which occupies that desert from Tempe to Guaymas, appeared in 2020. "The Dun Box," which regards the "American Century" as a total of minus 21 days in 1945, was released in 2023. "Pewter," attempting to recover some of the chthonic tradition of Intelligent Artifice, is ready for the tender care of The Jackpine Writers' Bloc, the poet's longtime publisher.

Richard Fenton Sederstrom

Blueberry Day

*The oval portrait
of a dog was me at an early age.
Something shimmers, something is hushed up.
John Ashbery, "This Room."*

That winter I had found my grandparents' old
Cocker Spaniel Freckles in the laundry room
lying curled around his empty food bowl. Freckles,
whom I had loved, and for whom I would grieve
foreverandever, had never enjoyed the company
of small boys. I would teach myself to pretend old.

* * *

In summer again we will drive to the open land
that lumbermen had left barren decades before,
all but fire-trap slash, left to burn or rot—replaced
by scattered jack pine, red blossomed fireweed,
aspen saplings—nurse trees and green opportunists

of burnt-out clear-cuts—and acres of blueberries.
That day our ambition will be mostly blueberries,
small low-bush, only pea-sized, but ripe and sweet,
just a little tartness, tastes that the grocery store hybrids
lack in favor of tasteless heft and empty beauty.

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My grandfather will take a galvanized pail
in one hand and my hand in the other.
“We’ll go over that way where the big ones are.”
We do. Pretending size, we’ll pick berries
and we’ll drop them into the pail.

And my grandfather will tell me to open up,
and I will. I will stick out my purpling tongue
and he’ll pop a berry into my berry-eating mouth.
Then we will drop some berries into the pail again,
and we will hear the galvanized hollow echo

when each berry strikes the bottom, accusing.
After a while we’ll stop “for a little rest”
and eat a few more berries. We’ll never drop
a berry into the pail but that we hear the same
hollow ping. I think no berry can ever hit another berry.

Then my grandfather will sigh again. And he’ll
stretch as though he were relieving great knots
of overworked sinew from heroic effort.
And then he’ll declare firmly that
“Well, it looks like we’ve done all we can here.

Time to get back to the ladies, I think.
But we’ve done a good day’s work, you and I.
Here, let me take the pail. It looks a little heavy.
Even for a big guy like you.”
We’ll trudge back to the car where we wait,

having been gone maybe forty-five minutes.
Or a half hour, or twenty minutes and the rest of
life so far and so far into five years old.

Then,
then as always my grandmother would return
with my mother and my little brother Jackie,
and they would show off their blueberries
while my grandfather shyly dumped our few
dozen berries into one of their buckets and
congratulated everybody on our productive day.

I could see in some other, inner outward eye
my grandmother giving him a look
while she thanks me and congratulates me
for being such a brave berry hunter.
“But why don’t you let me take the berries
and we’ll make a pie when we get home—

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well, two, I think. You two look like
you haven’t eaten in a week.”
My grandmother would have coined the phrase:
“Genius lies in simple ideas well blended.”
She didn’t, so I did it for her just now,
with a little help, I think, from Einstein.

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With her permission, I may wish to borrow it.
She looks at my blue-stained mouth
and I hide my blue-stained hands.
She looks back then at my grandfather, turned
in a noiseless whistle of innocent profile.
And she smiles at him, shimmering.

But she winks at me! . . . “Hush.”
Somewhere in an old album is a photo of Freckles.
An oval portrait. Sepia. It was taken years before
I was born to grow old, lying now curled
around the tinder-slash of sepia weathers
and now I can stop the flow of another poem

62 that is *too long*! Catch my breath. Catch Freckles’
breath, for whom since last February I have the rest
of seventy-five years of old-ghost breath to share,
and I still owe those years of dream-breathing
to Freckles and to the Ghosts around us two.

It’s another failed poem, I know. Good: I *learn*!
The holes. But sand will fill the holes. The sand
that subverts every hour fills every hole. Or ash
of firewood: the trees that grow to replace exiled
blueberries. The aspen, jack pine, and red pine,

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the maple, ironwood, birch, oak, and sumac
refill scar-holes left from corporate ignitions,
fill the holes that greed has left for now, until
the final back has turned into the final
hole—

soon, fairly soon anyway, for the hopes of lives
left on depopulated Earth. Or ashes perhaps:
from the fire not next but this time, burned down
to cellar holes, mourned only by orphaned lilacs
and me, at a nether day not far advanced. Or:

somewhere in an old library
or a high shelf in a pantry above a root cellar—
long since replaced by modern concerns

63

abandoned to mutate one unlikely luckless day
into a short-circuit nightmare of AI thunk-clank-tank
lie piles of old albums.

Scattered about inside
are collections of photos
of families and family pets.

The photos were taken years before
any of us—families, pets, even poets
were born to grow old, lying

now curled around the tinder-slash
of those sepia weathers, wrinkled, sere
and faded into an absence even of oblivion.

Editor's Note

Dreams can be an amazing resource for poets, dredging up images and themes from our subconsciousness.

Or they can be a chimera. I remember once writing an entire poem in a dream. Of course, the minute I woke up, the words evaporated.

The other day, I dreamed this line and fortunately was able to remember it and write it down:

“How Nurse Kitty lost her hearing when the aliens came.”

I have no idea what prompted this swerve into science fiction, but it would make a terrific title.

Dreams also can involve everyday, earthly events.

My mom, who lives in a less-populated, desert neighborhood, recently had to relocate two pregnant diamondback rattlers that had shown up in her backyard. She was able to snap a picture of them camouflaged in the bushes before they were rehomed out in nature.

I'm sure I'll be dreaming a poem about that one too ...

Rebecca “Becca” Dyer
Co-editor

Editorial Staff

Editor: *Rebecca Dyer*

Editor: *Richard H. Dyer Jr.*

Publisher: *Elena Thornton*

Artwork for front and back covers: *Marjory Boyer*

Coming in Fall 2025!

The Annual Blue Guitar Festival of the Arts!

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dance, cultural presentations, art activities for children
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for the Arts website, www.artizona.org.**

A Call to Poets

For Summer 2026

Unstrung, a magazine of, for and about poetry, will seek poetry submissions for its Summer 2026 Issue from June 1 through July 4, 2026. Poets must submit original work (no AI-generated work) and must have a tie to Arizona. Simultaneous submissions will be accepted, but the poet must notify the magazine as soon as possible if the work is accepted elsewhere. It is free to submit, and multiple poems may be submitted. Please include your name and the best way to contact you on your e-mail submission. Please include in the e-mail subject line: Attn. Unstrung — Poetry submission, and send to Rebecca Dyer at rebeccadyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org.

For more information, e-mail Rebecca at rebeccadyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org or visit www.theblueguitarmagazine.org.

Unstrung, a magazine of, for and about poetry, is a nonprofit project of The Blue Guitar magazine and the nonprofit The Arizona Consortium for the Arts. The Arizona Consortium for the Arts is a startup, nonprofit group dedicated to supporting and fostering artists and the arts in Arizona, including the literary, visual and performing arts. For more information about Unstrung magazine, The Blue Guitar magazine and The Arizona Consortium for the Arts, visit our websites:

www.theblueguitarmagazine.org

and www.artizona.org

Unstrung • Summer 2026

A Call to Writers for the Fall 2025 Blue Guitar

The Blue Guitar literary and arts magazine seeks literary submissions for the Fall 2025 Edition from Sept. 1 through Oct. 4. Submissions are sought in all genres — fiction, poetry, plays, creative nonfiction. Writers must submit original work (no AI-generated work) and must live part- or full-time in Arizona. Simultaneous submissions will be accepted, but the writer must notify the magazine as soon as possible if the work is accepted elsewhere. It is free to submit, and submissions may be made in multiple genres. Please include your name and the best way to contact you on your submission. To submit or for further information, e-mail Editor Rebecca Dyer at rebeccadyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org. For more information, visit www.theblueguitarmagazine.org.

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The Blue Guitar, The Blue Guitar Jr. and Unstrung are nonprofit projects of the nonprofit start-up The Arizona Consortium for the Arts. The Arizona Consortium for the Arts is dedicated to supporting and fostering artists and the arts in Arizona, including the literary, visual and performing arts. For more information, visit our websites: www.theblueguitarmagazine.org and www.artizona.org.

Meet the staff of Unstrung magazine



Elena Thornton, publisher: Founder of The Arizona Consortium for the Arts, Elena is an educator, artist and poet and lives in Phoenix. Reach her at info@artizona.org.

Rebecca Dyer, editor: A Tucson native, Rebecca is a poet, journalist and teacher residing in Mesa with her husband, Richard, her co-editor for Unstrung, The Blue Guitar and The Blue Guitar Jr. Reach her at rebeccadyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org.

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Richard H. Dyer Jr., editor: Richard (married to Rebecca, above) is a managing editor of monthly newspapers with websites in the East Valley, a photographer and a welded-steel sculptor.

Marjory Boyer, cover design artist for Unstrung, The Blue Guitar and The Blue Guitar Jr.: Marjory, of Scottsdale, is an award-winning artist, muralist and an acrylic painting instructor. Her biography and contact information are available at mboyerart.com.



UNSTRUNG

A magazine of
for and about
poetry



Unstrung will
return in
Summer 2026