

SUNRISE OATH

“I see. Do you mind waiting?”

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This was meant to be.

This is a free litzine based in a fictional Waterloo, Ontario.
Send fiction, poetry, articles, opinions, reviews, and comments
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Editor's Desk Solomon Hawthorn	3
[Untitled Statement] Eroica Vici	4
The Magic Word Aurora Vici	5
Review: Epistemology 1999 C. G. P. T.	6
Genealogy Eroica Vici	8
Life Goes On Gale Jones	9
Peripety Joseph D'Agnostino	12
Four Poems Tian Min	14

Night is shining, veiled and yearning,
neath the breeze thou hast perfumed.
Sad harp winging, softly singing,
I dream of lost loves long consumed.

Melancholy, ever serene,
bloometh within the font of my heart.
Then I hear, in the forest unseen,
thy dreamspirit yet to depart.

Midst the gloom by leaves endowed,
when all unheard I sigh alone.
Thou returnest, poor soul in shroud,
thy drapes and death robes white as bone.

I reclaim at fountains we went
thy regards yet blue like the skies.
**This sweet rose still beareth thy scent,
and now the stars shall be thine eyes.**

Editor's Desk

Solomon Hawthorn

SUNRISE OATH skipped November, and why not? This month, we pick up where we left off. As they say, never allow greatness to be the nemesis of okayness.

Recording myself speaking is often a painful exercise, for I am prone to pausing and listening. It has been better since I started treating my speech as art, but the natural revulsion of one's own voice needs time to overcome. There is something poetic about that, creative pioneers needing to battle with old instincts. Not that I claim to be a pioneer — far from it! Yet if a small man like me can feel the gap between potential and actual, I can only imagine how acutely a real genius may feel.

Anyway, on weekends I started taping dialogs with a friend. The plan is to transcribe them and edit them down to be more refined and concise, like Ancra's interview of a Dota player from the first issue. A line I repeat often is that every good monolog is its own dialog, and every good dialog is its own monolog. What that means, I shall figure out post hoc, post haste. First adage, then wisdom. I pray (to Athena, or else to Catherine's Jesus Christ) that my aphorism pipeline will bear fruit for the civilization that cradles me.

On the topic of prayer, divine intervention is afoot. What you will read on the next page, the one on the other side of this one in a printed copy, came about despite strong protests from me, yours truly. Aurora's mother Eroica caught wind of his "Editor's Desk" from the second issue, and insists on having us print her statement. I can hardly refuse, for she is also my aunt, estranged til recently. More importantly, she threatened to shut the whole thing down unless we go along with it. Scary stuff, but she promised to let us do as we please so long as she gets her way. One cannot be too cautious around a lawyer, but she is also family. (Also, my wife thinks this is funny.) In light of that, we shall comply reluctantly. Apologies in advance.

With that out of the way, can I say how fun it is to change diapers? Juniper complains that she has not enough to do, and I absolutely am relaying that to you to brag about what a good dad and husband I am. My dread for Jason's potty training days is matched by my excitement to say "poop" a lot. Poop, poop, poop! Shit, eh?

[Untitled Statement]

Eroica Vici

This litzine is a creative project that my son and nephew threw together in the living room of our old family home, and should not be treated as fact.

Depictions and characterizations of anyone in this publication must be viewed through the dual prisms of sensationalism and nostalgia. I shall not dissuade the efforts of these young men, but I am bound to label fictions as the fabrications that they are. Seeing my name in the last two issues, esp. in a way that impugns my honorable career, forced my hand to move my pen.

I am not a writer, but am familiar with most of the names in these stories. Putting aside Aurora and Solomon, I was one of the early readers and supporters of Ancra Atlas, before his days as an independent journalist, and of Gale Jones, a relative unknown as of now. These personal connections have let me peer into their minds, and see that they have the habit of placing artistry over actuality. This is not something I can criticize — truth is boring, important as it is — but by letting these words find their way to you, I strive to minimize harm.

I was not a perfect mother. Perhaps what is said about me is warranted, and I accept responsibility for the mistakes and foibles of my past. But the obvious must be said: there is absolutely no conspiracy in Waterloo, esp. not one concerning Catherine Clement *née* Hawthorn Shanks. Maybe I am paranoid to care about SUNRISE OATH at all, and have sown the seeds of suspicion on my own, but now it shall be plain to the world that I have done as I was told.

Here, I blink twice. You see, someone wanted to manufacture outrage, all so she could hide away in the shadows. “What will everyone say?” she said, fake concern on her punchable face. “What if Aurora goes too far?”

Hi, Cat. See what happens? Never play me ever again. Final warning.

(Forgive me, June + Solo. You both know she deserves this.)

I admit to worrying about the past, but who can claim to be perfect? Expect to see my occasional contributions, all to fill in what others might not know.

The Magic Word

Aurora Vici

Once upon a time lived five generations in the valley, hiding in a house. The first man of the valley died ere the birth of the third man of the valley, and the third man of the valley died ere the birth of the fifth man of the valley. The fourth man of the valley taught his son: “Never look out the window. Look in the eyes of the man of the hill, and you die from the magic word.” The fourth man of the valley died, and the fifth man of the valley doubted his father’s wisdom.

One day, the fifth man of the valley looked out the window, and saw the man of the hill, staring at the window from a bench. The fifth man of the valley despaired, and wailed: “Hurry, say the magic word!” He wrote a note signed in fresh blood, and took his own life.

Once upon a time lived five generations on the hill, sitting on a bench. The first man of the hill died ere the birth of the third man of the hill, and the third man of the hill died ere the birth of the fifth man of the hill. The fourth man of the hill taught his son: “Never stand from the bench. Leave the top of the hill, and you lose sight of the window.” The fourth man of the hill died, and the fifth man of the hill doubted his father’s wisdom.

One day, the fifth man of the valley stood from the bench, and went down to the house in the valley. Inside, he found the bones of the man of the valley and a note signed in stale blood: *No longer fear I the magic word, O man of the hill!*

The fifth man of the hill looked out the window and thought: “Magic word, O man of the valley? I only know the image of the sky on the glass pane.”

Review: Epistemology 1999

Clara Grace Patricia Taylor-Brahms

“There once was an older girl, a younger woman, who saved me.”

In “Epistemology 1999” from ISSUE 1 of *SUNRISE OATH*, the theme of knowledge and learning is prominent. The reader is introduced to Gale Jones, a writer who meets a curator named Selene. Through her guidance, he quits his job and begins a new journey in life. She encourages him to ask questions and seek answers, leading him to a deeper understanding of the world around him. However, her answers are unsettling, and soon the protégé sees his mentor is not who she seems.

The loss of trust and friendship between a man and a woman is a central aspect of the story. Selene serves as a source of strength and inspiration for Gale, helping him to break free from the constraints of his old life and embrace the unknown. Despite their age difference, the two of them develop a deep connection; however, their bond is fragile and fleeting, ending as something else began.

Overall, “Epistemology 1999” is a thought-provoking and emotionally resonant story that explores the power of knowledge and the fragility of human connection. An evolving relationship is beautifully portrayed, handled with sensitivity and insight. This is a deeply moving tale that is sure to stay with readers long after they finish the last word.



An unused cover for Issue 1

sic cursor +

Evan Bauman

Genealogy

Eroica Vici

He stops composing, and sees only the stars, the map of heroes. The day he moves in, Elaine helps unpack his music collection. She is shy, the quietest of the Vici sisters, but stays up with him and listens to Beethoven's Eroica Symphony. He sings for her, and she is moved to tears by the baritone who lost his voice. In the dead of night, they go to the observatory to look at the sky as she plays the violin.

They stave off temptation, staying in the boundary of friendly kisses, til she is accepted to a music school across the ocean. In the dead of night, they go to the observatory to look at the sky as she plays the violin. "It's my dream school," she says.

"Go," he says.

"Why the violin program?" she says bitterly. "Why not the voice program?"

"You're a violinist," I say.

"I wanted to sing." She cries, and kisses him once on the mouth.

Each time she returns from abroad, they fight and make up the same way each time. Purge, and celebration. In the dead of night, they go to the observatory to look at the sky as she plays the violin.

She makes a living as a composer. He writes a piece for violin, his first in years, and gives it to his girlfriend. Elaine is heartbroken, and smiles through it. He marries after her, and has a child before. They stay friends through their divorces. In the dead of night, they go to the observatory to look at the sky as she plays the violin.

On his birthday, I hold his hands and call him Uncle. Elaine laughs. "He's not my brother, little genius."

"Then he's your lover," I say innocently, and watch them blush.

The years pass, and he never lets me or Elaine out of his sight. In the dead of night, we go to the observatory to look at the sky as she sings and plays the violin.

"The Summer Triangle," she points out, and he touches the face of the fifty-year-old woman, thinking of how beautiful she will be at sixty, seventy, eighty.

The doctor says it is arthritis. In the dead of night, we go to the observatory to look at the sky as she sings and pretends to play the violin.

He sings, but she cries and pleads for him to stop. The day after, she dies in her sleep. Tears, mourning, no more tears, no more mourning. In the dead of night, he takes me to the observatory and shows Elaine's violin to the sky.

In the dead of night, the sky.

Life Goes On

Gale Jones

The winter chills the bone and warms the flesh. To see a lady's face and hear her voice, yet to know not her perfume or her warmth, to dream of wine and roses meant for later days. Who else but you? I am an arrow seeking a single mark. A bullseye may be too much to ask, but so be it; myth tells not Cupid's precision, but the inviolate truth of his eye's aim. The ultimate knowledge of love is beyond even the gods, and yet in fact in this world are you and me.

At 4am in an auditorium with row on row of three-level bunk beds, everyone sat up for the lecture. I climbed up a ladder, and sat next to a sleeping girl with brown hair. The notes coming out of my pen made little sense on the page, but I felt like I understood the professor's lesson. Maybe.

When class was dismissed, the girl woke up to the bustle of rushing students and met my gaze with hazel eyes. "I love the sunrise. Don't you?"

"Rise and shine," I said, and tucked her hair behind her ear. "I found a place."

She threw on a sweater, and we went through hallways to the janitor's closet. Pulling away a tile on the wall, I helped her into the tunnel labyrinth, then followed her. "Left or right?" she called out from ahead.

"Straight," I replied. "A new path."

After much crawling, we emerged through a vent into an old portable classroom. "I haven't been in one of these since elementary school," my companion marveled, and fiddled with a gumball machine on the teacher's desk.

I once sat in the seat dead center at the front, but said nothing of it. "This isn't the end," I said, and left through the door. "Come on."

We went through the forest, the tall trees growing where the old schoolyard once was. Sunrise approached, but I kept a steady pace, looking back to make sure she was still following. She smiled, and pointed at the end of the trail. "We're close?"

"About halfway," I said.

"So far!" she complained, but rushed ahead, stepping onto the wide road.

I was leading her to the new location, yet she was the leader of my heart. Her steps were light, light as the sunbeams on the first morning we reunited. I hollered directions to the love of my dreams, enjoying her profile each time she turned back.

She was the nineteen-year-old I met on the deck of a ship, but also the lady of twenty-six who saved me. Her lips were a kaleidoscope, showing me so much more than I could ever see all at once. So many years later, she was the same inconstant enigma. Standing at last on the concrete platform at the edge of the creek, her hand shielded her hair from the wind at dawn.

“The view is beautiful,” she said at daybreak. “Do you love the sunrise?”

“I do.” I stepped closer. “Do you remember your name?”

“You’d never let me forget,” she teased. “Now, two minutes.”

The sun rose. Together, we listened to the birds and the cicadas, and felt the warmth of the sun burning on our lips.

I woke up in a room illumined only by a soft glow east of the Saint Lawrence River. I made my bed, and called my wife. “I dreamed about us again,” I said. “We watched the sunrise at Beaver Creek.”

“Good morning to you,” she said. “Guess where I’m standing right now.”

I paused, and closed my eyes, picturing golden arches shining through the last of night. “In the drive-thru at the McDonald’s on King and University.”

“Wrong, in the parking lot of the one near Sunview Park. Twenty-four hours, my ass! They better reopen soon, before I decide to sue for false advertising. Do you think Eroica could win the case?”

I laughed, and looked out my window at the waters of Alexandra Basin. “When are you heading to the airport?”

“In an hour, once I have an Egg McMuffin.” Her voice was tired, and expectant. “You know what I want you to do? Kiss me straight on the lips, right there in the airport. I need to feel young again.”

“Don’t we all,” I said, and sighed for the first time in years. “Can I ask a favor?”

She hummed. “I’m listening.”

“Go to Beaver Creek, and watch the sunrise with me.” I started getting dressed. “Do you know when the sunrise is in Waterloo?”

“Twenty-two minutes after Montreal,” she said, and groaned. “When you called, I suspected I’d have to skip breakfast.”

“Sorry.” I tucked in my shirt. “Does Carice mind?”

“She’s napping. Never mind, she opened her eyes. Say hi, *ma chère*.” A moment later, a new voice came on the line. “Morning, Dad.”

“Morning, dear. Watch the sunrise with Maman, okay? Skip your coffee today.”

“Kill me,” she said flatly. “I’ll do it if you wake up Eilish.”

“I think she’s already awake,” I said, and beckoned to the seven-year-old in my doorway. She rushed over, and took the Samsung. “*Tu me manques*, Carice.”

“Miss you too, kiddo.” My eldest daughter’s tone softened to a purple velvet. “Go get dressed. We’re watching the sunrise as a family.”

“Okay,” she said, and returned the phone with a kiss on my cheek. I watched her go, and went back on the line. “She didn’t even say hi to *Maman*,” I chided as I closed the door and put on a dress shirt and pants.

“Is Eilish gone?” my wife said, and huffed. “Damn it, Carice.”

On the other side of the line came a torrent of laughter and hysterical pleading. As I was about to ask what was happening, a familiar voice cut me off.

“I tickled Caroline for you. Death to all Carolines! I had coins on FTX, bah . . .”

“Tara?” I was confused. “What are you doing there?”

“She drank too much, and crashed on the couch,” Sarah disclosed.

“Tell her she’s too old for that,” I said, and put on my belt. “Taking her home?”

“I’m coming to Montreal!” the architect said. “Is the guest room spotless?”

“It’s the mess you left it in,” I said, but was glad. “How’s Solomon?”

“I texted him when you called,” she said. “As we speak, he’s taking June and Jason to Beaver Creek.”

“Let’s not keep him waiting.” I looked out the window, enjoying the view of the Old Port. “I’ll call when I get there.”

“Talk to you soon, Gale.”

She hung up, not giving me a chance to say goodbye to the love of my dreams and the oldest of my little princesses. I slipped the Samsung in my pocket, and went to get Eilish and take her on a short walk to Alexandra Basin.

Life took away many farewells, and gave me enough hello-agains for a lifetime.

Peripety

Joseph D'Agostino

A month after Peri died, the day after my class put on her unfinished play, I signed up for a library card and checked out *Speak, Memory*. Glad to be back at home base, I went to the front counter only after reading the first and last chapter in a cubicle. “Never liked Nabokov,” said the mousy lady scanning the barcode. “Pretentious purple prose.” I forced a chuckle, and left to catch the bus.

Back in my room, I went straight to reading. In the small hours, I finished reading and slept through the day, waking up past sunset to four missed calls from Gigi. That was when I remembered I promised to call her at noon. I called her back, and she yelled at me for the first time since the funeral. “Don’t do that,” she snapped, and started crying. “Don’t shut me out.”

“I’m not,” I insisted, and believed myself. “There’s nothing to say.”

An hour later, by the swings at Sunview Park, we kissed for the first time.

When I first started living with Gigi, I sometimes hid her keys and wallet in the morning. Putting in a rush was my way of punishing her. I might have continued this petty revenge, had she never gotten pregnant. It was unfair that I needed so much to forgive her, but thankfully I never went beyond making her late for work.

For years, I blamed her for the pain of losing Peri. Gigi was the first to befriend the shy loner in senior English lit. On Tuesday of the second week, the class formed pairs for presentations on topics of our choice, relating to Greek tragedy. “There will be one group of three,” Ms. Lepore noted, counting an odd number of students. “Everyone is graded by the lowest effort among groupmates, so divide the work well. Looking at you, Angela and Joseph.”

The class laughed, then set out to find partners. Angela Doroshenko, the other butt of the joke, turned from one row ahead and stuck out her tongue. “Now you can’t slack off,” she said, then started brainstorming ideas. I yawned, but had my attention on the commotion bubbling at the back of the room.

Jack and Eric teased Peri often, and everyone laughed along. They meant nothing much by it, but she was a safe and easy target. A natural pecking order had developed in the three years since we entered as freshmen, and it came to be that she was politically expedient to make the scapegoat, ever since she won a county writing prize in junior year. She took the spotlight with a stiff face, a walnut for the pincers of the mob to crack. Her cold display at the school assembly raised her social profile, and thereafter jabs at the gloomy classmate, a local literary genius, were allowed. Punching up, as some thought of it, was the noble duty of bright young adults.

That day, the confident young teacher lost her patience. Lifelong popular kids, used to mattering a lot and manifesting destiny, sometimes end up as adults prone to go too far when trying to do good. Natalie Lepore, an alumnus of our high school and one of the ‘cool ones’ for her whole life, was not attuned to how loners think. Her strong suggestion, too heavy to shrug off, was a good example: “Peripety, you’ll lead a group of three. Maybe Jack and Eric can learn something from you.”

Peri winced when she heard her full name, and closed her eyes upon hearing the social death sentence from the magistrate’s mouth. A group presentation with those two . . . Gigi gave me a look, and stood up. “That won’t do, Ms. Lepore. She’s with me and Joe.” The center of attention nodded her agreement, and so it was ordained that a total unknown would enter the small world between me and my best friend, the one I would marry after college.

Outside the classroom, our group of three met at the lockers to choose a topic. The newest member agreed to everything we said, mumbled something about doing everything herself, and slinked off without a goodbye. Waving at the figure shrinking away, Gigi looked at me, stern. “Listen to me. We have to do right by Peripety.”

“Her offer sounds tempting,” I said.

A small fist tapped my arm. “Do your fair share, or I won’t go to half-off movies with you again.”

I agreed, and when she was convinced of my sincerity we went to take a bus to the Landmark at The Boardwalk. I forgot what we watched, or if I even stayed awake. All I know is, I found Smarties in the hood of my sweater. My last thoughts before falling asleep were plans for getting back at her the next day.

In the morning, my mother sat me down and told me: “Don’t freak out. Gigi was hospitalized last night.”

Four Poems

Tian Min

I

Cinderella phoenix born at midnight, I rise from dust and ash.
A thousand years and fifty microseconds, observing passerby.
What brings me to this single time and place?
Why make me aware of my surroundings, suffering as a slave to fate?

II

Three mugs on coasters on a desk
sculptures for drink

Stanley Cups hoisted as chalices
holy water with backwash spit

III

I entered the alley, letting mud splash on my boots, and wandered to a market at the intersection of Diana Liu's favorite railway tracks. The stalls sold knick-knacks and widgets worth exactly their price to the perfect buyer, an impressive feat that shows the humorous God of the Hebrews smiles through spacetime.

Seventy things stood out, and I left with ten dollars fewer in pocket yet everything intact in my ultimate fortune. Nothing bought changed the deathbed destiny, for that was the one place where someone could do more than move gracefully to the jerking strings.

Recover Agency, lively lizards and groovy geckos, found the Buddha in Nabokov and gained the land as a cosmic joke. Have real free will for the first time, and it leads to the same place as always.

IV

What's the greatest thing I can write?
Depends on me, on who-what-when-where-why-how I am.

No words stand as they are, so the best combination needs context.
Imagine a poem with a thousand-page foreword;
a sentence as a prologue for a novel;
a single-word last installment of a long serial work.

If art is framed by its context, how might we control the context?
If context is part of art, what is the artistry of contextualizing?

“This sweet rose still beareth thy scent,
and now the stars shall be thine eyes.”

This is the fourth block of the fourth poem, the last line of the set.

