

Autumn 2026 | Issue 2

MUSHROOM RAIN



FOREWORD

“Mushroom rain” (or *gribnoy dozhd’* in Russian) is a term used in some cultures for a rare kind of weather: rain falling while the sun is shining. The name stems from the traditional belief that these conditions are ideal for mushroom growth. It is a fertile phenomenon, much like the birth of poetry.

I take it also as a symbol of convergence — the coming of all life-giving things together. Visually, this convergence is sunlight reflecting through rain: illumination within what might otherwise seem grey. It suggests that something hidden can be revealed, that there is a quiet, glistening reality beneath the surface of things. An animating grace, giving shape and light and life.

This is what reading the ineffable in poetry feels like to me, and I hope this becomes a place to hold that feeling, and to share it.

To me, this issue feels like late summer coming into autumn. Still a little warm, but changing. There are themes of longing and holding on, longing and letting go, memory and nostalgia, alienation and transformation. Please forgive the scattering some of my own paintings throughout, it is with the end goal of encouraging more art and photography submissions in the future.

As always, thank you to all contributors for your little sunlit raindrops:

K. R.
Kenneth Pobo
Farah Ali
Wilson F. Engel, III
James Bengier
Gabriella Garofalo
Scott Thomas Outlar
Edward Lee
Martina Matijević
Rebecca Clifford
mwpm
mutt rousseau
Duc Van Khanh Tran
Matthew Mousseau

If you would like to contribute to future issues, please write to submissions@mushroomrain.org or complete our online form.

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A Small, Glass Bottle — With Fruit

K. R.

She buys me a bottle of perfume. It's a birthday present more happily remembered. It smells of passionfruit. I only know that in reading the label. I've not eaten a passionfruit. Maybe someday. Someplace nice. Somewhere it grows. Greece? Italy? I spray it once, lightly, under my right cheek. It's the summer. Necks are exposed.



clover on baby blue, 148 x 148 mm, oil on gessobord

DU FU SENDS AN EMAIL

Kenneth Pobo

Hi,

I thought you might
like to know that
the flowers are surprising me
this morning. Those red
chrysanthemums I thought
wouldn't survive winter
are blooming now,
well before their usual
fall blossoms. That big pink
hibiscus is kind, turns
no pair of eyes away.
I'm told a text would be
quicker to get a message
to you. I'll hug you
in electricity. I hope
to see you soon though
we're separated by mountains,
rivers, and death.
We'll manage.
We always have.

Du Fu

FRANK BIKING

Kenneth Pobo

I've not been on a bike
for decades. At first,
I think it might
tip over until I relax,
even speeding up
and ringing the bell.

At ten I had
a Schwinn Racer
that I steered no hands,
a school-is-out breeze
in my face. After

a mile and a half,
I ride home, still
ten years old,
my future like a mirror
that doesn't reflect.



losing you i seek refuge in the leaf litter

Farah Ali

you swept daily under the apricot tree
gold carmine piled high to shelter
tender ones you vowed to protect

calm in the gloom counting larval hearts hidden
from the sky's bloodshot eye and the desire
of dissecting birds i breathe the mildew
of memory decipher decay's calligraphy
quilled into the curling palms of the fallen

the seamstress of loss arrives at dusk to unpick
my exoskeleton with a fingernail aching i forage
for nectar pooling in the throats of night-blooming
flowers you anchored deep in my moon garden

reeling into perfumed umbra i elude the trap's cold
gleam and cunning jaw you are no longer here
to admire my anatomy at your leisure before
releasing me quivering into morning

on a day hewn from amber i emerge
from a withered tapestry to join butterflies
around the canopy who cluster in welcome
unversed in the argot of longing unaware
the bruises left by loving you are visible
only in moonlight

Winter Rambo

Wilson F. Engel, III

of John Chapman's seeds
one certified remnant lives
one tree to vouchsafe.
Isaac Newton's tree
Was another matter; I
fetched an apple there.
Chapman's tart fruit was
medicinal; Newton's mass
a gloss for science.
Chapman rests in Ft. Wayne.
Newton sleeps in Westminster
their examples live.
I fancy each his
fable runs ahead of me
through eternity.
such distance, such time
golden ragged paths extend,
confound conflation.

Expectations

James Bengier

These mornings give her all she needs.

Sure, life hasn't turned out
in all the iridescent ways
all the teachers, the councilors
said it would, if only she'd
keep her head down and do the work;

she did that, did it better than most,
and a couple decades on,
no high-rise apartment in some
neon-drenched nightlife of a city,
no exotic cars to go faster than memory,
no inexplicably attractive lover
to perpetually validate her every move.

Instead, she finds herself
taking her instant coffee
from a chipped thrift store mug,
looking out the kitchen window
of her singlewide, watching the sun
declare its domination of the day.

In less than a full rotation of the
minute hand on the tacky cat clock
dangling from a nail in the faux wood panel,
she'll load into her base model commuter,
(she still finds AM to be far superior
for the morning drive; keeps her attached),
and arrive at a job that she doesn't love,
but doesn't hate either.

The job is a section of extension ladder
lower than her adolescent dreams,
but she owns her trailer outright,
and it keeps her in gas and heat,
and once a week, she fries a steak
in her grandmother's cast iron skillet,
leaving the window open so that stray
will come and help her clean the paper plate.

These mornings give her all she needs.

The coffee's down to a murky sediment,
and the sun is full bright now,
and she reflects on how this is
about as perfect as anyone could ever expect.

To B.

Gabriella Garofalo

What? Rise and shine in the morning? No way—
First things first, a naming of blue names
While the radio airs shards of music—
Jazz, Miles Davis, maybe—
Out of the blue, the light, a trick to weld reverse worlds,
Loose as a moon hanging between curses and blessings,
Heavy as a sudden call from family you hate—
And she sweeps through like blue mist, or smoke,
As you watch her from afar, summer and her many lovers,
Tourists looking for tacky sunsets and cheap escapes—
But why cicadas chirp and crickets drone?
Nothing to enjoy, right?
Dear soul, so fed up with noisy summer days,
When you can't have heaps of words or leaves,
Just that awesome duo, clouds and waves,
Such a scream, sure, rowdier than a lover who iced you
When drinking life in sips was a blast, remember,
Our early spring afternoons on the beach,
Our nights luring us with fireflies on blades—
Water under the bridge, I know, oh, and by the by,
Cicadas, now cut that bloody shrill chorus
So she can see words as stark branches in the wind,
And poetry can bare to you her Styx,
A dayglo light asking where's God, or why you need the wind
To tangle the blue, the absence, even reverse words—
Even your own.

To P.

Gabriella Garofalo

Up North, at twilight.
Get the fire going, losing herself is only the start—
The soul is like a weary hiker of ghosts, a hiker of horizons,
Shedding the heavy skin of yesterday's loss,
Who always stops in the worst possible places,
In the green so deep it tastes like shouts—
Hating the way the trees reach out
As if they have the right to keep her, and she's done
Wandering godless, rotting woods—
Where is the trail, that cruel geometry,
A sentence she's still writing,
Blotted out by the ink of the coming stars—
Everything's too green, a mossy, fern-crazed green,
It does not give you light, it consumes you
While you stand there, waiting for the wilderness
To validate your existence.
Spoiler: it's too busy to care—
Don't look back, soul, twilight is a thief stealing
The sharp edges of trees until everything is blue
And shadows, until the green turns its back on me you—
If you look back, the trees will be standing where you stood
And the silence will finally learn your name,
That loss that feels like breathing,
Those breaths that hit the air like blue shards
Drifting upward to be extinguished
By cold, encroaching stars—
To think you thought you felt God here once,
Across a sky that never gives a damn if you freeze
Or starve.

Commissioning Makeshift Antidotes

Scott Thomas Outlar

taste of spiritual naturalism
manifesting instinctively
by will of survival mechanism

eye for an eye for a vision
trilateral disunification
back to tribal methods

hand for a hand for a branch
olive oil greasing nostalgic keyhole

How many grips does it take
upon one resource
before the bark's
fabric splinters?

the healthiest dose
down adrenaline lane

one block away from detox avenue
building steadily with courage
and creative manifestos aplenty
every step along the way

ONCE YOU ARE THERE

Edward Lee

The dirt beneath your nails
should have been a warning
when you returned
to my bed, but my heart
had turned so cold
from your absence,
it needed you close,
no matter the chill
of your skin against mine,
the cobwebs of secrets
dancing in your hair.

WAITING

Edward Lee

In dreams
you forgive me,
or I have never wronged you
to be forgiven, all we were
still as it is:
these hurt the most,
when I wake,
knowing that these dreams
have no hope
of ever breathing
outside of sleep,
my chest heavy
with the dread of another day
with your absence,
an absence you gifted yourself
when I gave you the excuse
you'd been seeking since
we first met, though I only
know that now, yes, now.



at the movie set

Martina Matijević

the clack of
the glitter heels
tops my line

the crew stares
as one of the glued stars
falls from
the ceiling

“take five”

such a waste of
Chanel No. 5
as its scent
is trying to glue
these translucent handkerchiefs
that one of the glam girls
has put in my eyes

the scent
undulates between
our mirrored figures

“we’re ready for you”

I’m not ready
for another cut

for those of us who
the studio placed

under

a sky-replica

let’s not forget
how stars smelled
when we were cut
from
their umbilical cords

the director’s assistants
wave instructions towards me

I bounce them back
like a rocky shore

“action”

another clack

“cut”

the thump
of the script
counts down
his exit scene

another layer of powder
might bring him back

“let’s start all over again”

his breath
drives
my stomach
up

do, do
I dare to
swap one of
the glued stars
with my kneecap

“excellent, take five”

the sound crew
on a smoke break
discusses Van Gogh

I lay down
to look at the stars

finger up

this one is
at the same distance as
next week’s salary

finger right

that one is
as far as
the last time
I didn’t ruin a scene

finger left

that one,
that one,

for some reason
knows my name

I once was a willow

Rebecca Clifford

Slender, lithe, supple, malleable to the winds and whims of men around me.

I'd bow and bend at their insistence, making myself follow their desires.

Being too obvious, too clever, too quick off the mark, I'd small myself, make my voice and actions soft and delicate, ever fearful of their disapproval.

Now in advancing age, the hardness of oak fills my words, the tang of pine pitch marks my opinions.

I am loud, confident when I catch them out, when I disagree

and they slink back into the underbrush with knotweed, kudzu, and virginia creeper.

They can vie with the wind and rain, they can try themselves against the changing seasons.

Only forest fire will I obey.



dream

mæpm

dream

a child
says

the newborn
in the spring
smells like

peace

is it
my poem

or
a child's

dream?



like déjà vu, except

mutt rousseau

nothing happened & then

nothing happened again

mixing business with pleasure

mutt rousseau

tennis racket strung

with dental floss

minty tennis balls

without gingivitis

forge

mutt rousseau

foragers are tired of

foraging for common

mushrooms, so they

to go a bank where they

find an abundance of

uncommon mushrooms

that are rectangular,

green & made of paper

Behind an Abstract Street Photograph

Duc Van Khanh Tran

You're amidst a stream of bikes;
you're lost in an opaque night
amidst a group of familiar strangers in
a rush toward blurred destinations, with a
stream of wind fruitlessly attempting to dry the shirt
of sweat that inevitably seeps out as
bikes push you forward in an obscure journey.



Night Traffic by Duc Van Khanh Tran, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

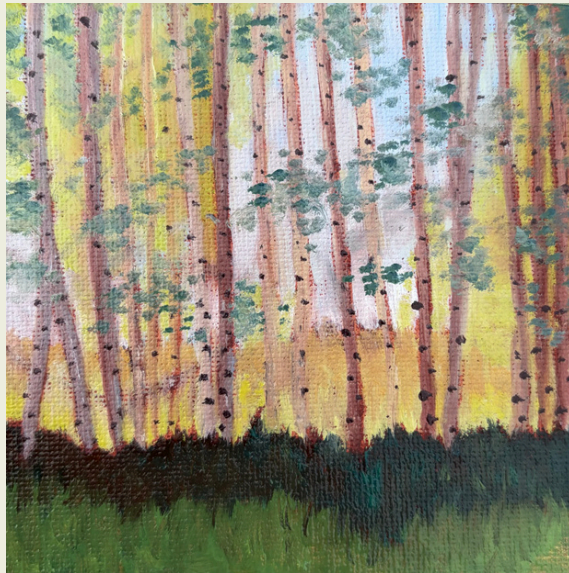
Arachne

Matthew Mousseau

To weave as
Arachne weaves,
a tapestry
that tells of
its own creation,
the transformation
from woman to
spider, and
the quality of her craft
increased
as she, reduced
in stature, is
diminished
until the sole audience
for her refined art
are likewise afflicted,
flying too close
to appreciate the detail
and paying
with their lives.



bedside still life, 148 x 148 mm, oil on gessobord



baby birch forest, 3x3", oil on canvas



VISIT ONLINE

www.mushroomrain.org

SUBMIT VIA EMAIL

submissions@mushroomrain.org

Thank you 😊

