

THE GREEN LIGHT LITERARY JOURNAL

Summer 2020



The Green Light

a literary journal

Issue 3
Summer 2020

The Green Light Literary Journal: Summer Issue 3 Copyright © 2020

Published in June 2020

Poetry Editor: Jessica Pearse

Fiction Editor: Alissa Schneider

Cover Photo: "Door County Sunset" by Alissa Schneider

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical reviews and certain other noncommercial uses permitted by copyright law.

NOTE: Certain pieces have been edited for spelling, grammar, or understanding.

www.thegreenlightjournal.com Email us at greenlight.journal@gmail.com

A NOTE FROM THE EDITORS

They said this would be a new roaring '20s, but they never could have predicted this.

This is the year that COVID-19 shook the world to its core and claimed the lives of countless individuals, leaving a global community never the same.

This is also the year that George Floyd, an African American man, was murdered in the streets of south Minneapolis. We are here writing this less than a week after his death, less than 10 miles from the Powderhorn neighborhood where the madness occurred—and absolutely none of it feels real. There are no more words. Only shock.

Our whole hearts, thoughts, and prayers will always rest with his family, but we know that what we need here, now—beyond all this—is peaceful and swift action. We gratefully ask you to email the Hennepin County Attorney to demand justice for Floyd, and you can do so easily with the template [here](#). The link also includes additional contact information for several other offices in Minneapolis, as well as ways to fund other organizations who can help effect change. Together, we can make a difference. Good God, enough is enough.

We created our journal to create something real. Something that could bring together a community of artists to showcase their beautiful craft. Something that could serve as a green light to expression, to truth, and to the voice of the individual. We are so humbled to receive the most submissions we've had yet to the journal, and every piece is a green light. To the writers, artists, present and future readers—thank you for sharing that voice and your beautiful craft. Our journal simply couldn't exist without you. Your art is a testament of strength, and it is needed—now, and for always.

With this, we are honored to present to you our third issue of The Green Light. Cheers to many more issues to come—and to a much stronger, more resilient, more unified world.

Jessica Pearse & Alissa Schneider

Editors, Co-Founders

The Green Light

KATHRYN HOLZMAN

Activists on Valentine's Day

Sara barely saves her latte as she trips into the restaurant's backroom with the hot beverage held aloft. The man waits in a corner booth. Headphones reining in long curly hair. Dark mustache and a full beard. His backpack is on the bench, his phone on the weathered table.

"Happy Valentine's Day," he says.

The previous year the Cultural Council awarded Sal a grant to run poetry slams for troubled youth; the steering committee for the community garden allotted him a half acre to show sustainable farming practices. Sara sits down beside him wishing she had a napkin to wipe off the milky froth dripping down the hand she extends for what she hopes is a business-like shake.

At the next table, a slender man wearing a lime green sweatshirt taps on his keyboard as he looks around the room. Their eyes meet. Sara raises her eyebrows to apologize for her clumsiness.

It's snowing outside. Black ice coats the pavement and pedestrians walk with the small steps of geishas.

"It's treacherous out there," Sal says.

"I'm from the Midwest," she answers. "I'm used to it."

They are sitting at a table next to the window. Harsh winter light bounces off the snowpack as traffic whooshes by. Men in brightly colored vests push heavy snow off the sidewalk and into the slushy streets.

A painting on the wall portrays an exaggerated wide-shouldered American Indian with long black hair, a red blanket over his shoulders riding a horse. Jazz drifts from loudspeakers amid the popular aroma of bacon. The front door squeaks. The whir of the espresso machine competes with the jarring clank of used coffee grounds being thrown into the garbage. The concrete floor, once painted industrial brown, is scuffed and cracked.

"I want to become more involved," Sara says, getting right down to business.

Sal says. "We're trying to find ways to expand our outreach. We are looking at the intersections, meeting with small panels, connecting with other groups. The question I have for you is:

where do you see opportunities?”

“Three inches of ice on my windshield!” A slender young student with a blond ponytail and a hand-knit cardigan flops down in the seat beside Sara and begins to break off small pieces of a heart-shaped cookie with bright white frosting and Let’s Kiss! written in pink letters across the top.

Her friend wears a hoodie embossed with the University’s logo. She, sets her yoga mat on the bench, separating the two women from Sara and Sal.

The students speak quickly, animated by the cold. The girl in the hoodie says: “I got into a fight last night with this old Italian lady in Boston. I drove around the block twelve times before I found a parking spot on top of a humongous snowbank. She screamed at me from her window: ‘I paid a hundred dollars to have my driveway plowed’ This morning when I went back to retrieve my car, the same lady helped me to dig it out. I want to go back and give her a card.”

“Sweet.” Biting off the “iss” in “kiss,” the pony-tailed woman asks: “So you’re looking for a place to live over the summer?”

“I don’t know where I am going to go.” Warm now, she unzips her hooded sweatshirt.

Licking frosting from the corners of her mouth, her friend answers. “It’s a problem. Last summer I rescued birds in New Zealand. I was assigned to the oiled bird response unit in Tauranga. Fieldwork, ten days at a time.”

“Where did you live?” The woman in the hoodie looks skeptical. “I need to shower every once in a while.” Hugging her hot chocolate, she relaxes on the bench.

“It’s seasonal. I thought it would be rewarding, but it was so frustrating. Some dude took out a blowtorch and tried to unfreeze some pipe and his car caught fire.

He blew up the entire oil field. There were giant puddles of muck everywhere.” “Sounds like a job for a robot.”

Sara says to Sal: “I’m thrilled to meet you. I want to make an impact.”

Sal nods. “It’s easy to get lost in the shuffle.”

“So what can I do to help?” Sara asks again.

“Sal runs his fingers through his rock star hair. “Can you work from home?”

“You mean like social media?”

“Facebook is an important tool to tap into the current lexicon.” Sal chose his words carefully, demonstrating his expertise. “I just don’t know if we are going about it in the right way.”

“To be honest with you,” Sara says, bending over his shoulder, so close she can smell his spicy soap and minty toothpaste, “sometimes the internet scares me.”

Sal answers before she is able to complete her sentence. “I wouldn’t want you to get involved if you aren’t willing to make a commitment.”

They bend over his computer. Sara experiences a wave of optimism. “I think we can dress it up.”

“Great. Let’s give it a try.”

As Sal and Sara huddle over the computer, the man at the next table is joined by a friend in a baseball hat and Red Sox jacket who pounds out a syncopated beat on the wooden table but doesn’t say hello.

“What are you listening to?”

“Radiohead.”

The two college girls, having finished their hot chocolate, pass by speaking of birds, oil fields and rescue. The girl with the short hair zips up her hoodie and hugs herself for warmth. Outside, they continue to talk about their summer plans. The girl with the ponytail pauses outside the window waiting for a break in traffic so that they can cross but the short-haired girl steps off into the slushy roadway without looking down. Her feet fly out from beneath her and she begins to fall. For a moment, she is flying. Then her head hits the curve with an ominous thud.

Sara thinks, Thank God, I am not the only one who is clumsy.

Sal considers running to the girls’ aid, but his mailing lists contain confidential information and he hasn’t backed up the drafts of important articles.

Wordlessly, the two men jump up and head for the street. The man in the lime green sweatshirt, still wearing his headphones, bends over the fallen girl. Sara can almost hear Thom Yorke's ethereal falsetto. Something about the singer's voice has always filled her with dread.

The barista calls 911. A half-dozen customers put down their phones and listen for sirens.

The short-haired girl lies in dirty slush, her hoodie wet and her eyes closed.

"They shouldn't move her," Sal says to Sara.

Sara pushes up her glasses. He should know, she thinks. Sara knows about the activist's ambulance-chasing past. His familiarity with the repercussions of falls, crippling injuries, and the money to be made off them. A profile in the local student paper lauded his decision to leave the greed of his law firm and dedicate himself to the greater good. His revelation, they called it.

Her latte is cold. A crowd gathers around the fallen student making it impossible for Sara to see what is happening. Sara can't take her eyes off the injured woman, a kind woman, someone who would take a card to an old lady. The ambulance arrives and EMTs efficiently lift the victim onto a stretcher. The pony-tailed friend is telling the crowd her story: "Like she didn't even see the ice."

"Do you think the City is responsible?" she asks Sal. If someone is responsible, then there are specific actions that can be taken. Together, they could plot a course of action.

"Sometimes things just happen," Sal says. He closes his computer, no longer looking at the crowd that, even now, is dispersing outside.

The two men return to their seats. The man in the lime green sweatshirt disappears into the music. His friend resumes his syncopated tapping of the wooden table.

Sal extends his hand to Sara. "I'll be in touch," he says.

The pony-tailed student returns to retrieve her jacket. Sal stops her, placing a comforting hand on her slender shoulder. "Will your friend be okay?" he asks, his voice soft, a tempered baritone with experience in offering comfort. "Do you need a ride to the hospital?"

Looking for intersections, he said to Sara. Synchronicity. The Indian rides his horse on the wall. Radiohead howls in a stranger's head. The snow is coming down even harder, threatening white-out conditions, but inside the restaurant, spartan light bulbs dangle from overhead pipes.

Sara watches Sal leave. The activist holds the door open for the student who tried to rescue stupid birds after a pointless accident. They walk outside by side and in their place a cluster of students duck in from the cold. "Happy Valentine's Day," the barista greets the snow-dusted customers as they fill the room with layers of cold air, scrambled conversations and unconcerned laughter.