

Submissions for issue 8, before Apr 18th, midnight

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Vaccine Nation

Peter Marmorek

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So you're stuck in your home while your dreams have been blown by the news of the latest lockdown

You're just doing time for the universe's crime and you're feeling pretty brought down
There is nowhere to go, no friends, films, nor show: despair is running endemic
With masks and with Zoom, in glowering gloom you trudge on through the pandemic

But mired in that prison a hope becomes risen when you hear of the new vaccine
From out of Big Pharma there comes good karma: a sight that's rarely seen
There's one, there's two, there's now a whole crew arriving to offer protection
And in a few days, the government says, you can get your injection

I felt a new hope, no reason to mope, no time to become laxer
Stay on the course that doctors endorse, I'm no anti-vaxxer
A dotted line? So where do I sign? I'm ready to get my dose
My joy grew, the virus is through, Covid will be but a ghost.

I sought for a plan that would fit the whole land, a map both just and fair
Well thought through designs: first the front lines then those in long term care,
Then work down by age, progress page by page, a plan most copacetic
But instead what I found was chaos all round: a sight both sad and pathetic.

Over some number –or under some other– or somewhere in between
You'll get your shot, or maybe not, it's really quite a scene.
And pharmacy A just gives shots away before the stuff goes bad
While hospital B does not agree so people get quite mad.

We'll get a new crop or the shipments may stop, we really can't be sure
If your vaccine's AZ then it's risk free, the doctors reassure.
Well maybe not if you don't want a clot or minor complications
And yesterday's rules are pasteboard jewels and just abominations

Some get their shot, and some do not, for others a later date
And a second dose, the story goes, for that you'll have to wait
Four months at least, and not four weeks, as was originally said
A minor correction: with *some* protection you won't get very dead

I'm on a list! No, wait, I'm dismissed, a matter of some concern
While every day what the premiers say takes another turn
When the virus mutates and the plans rotate despair is plenty due
They had a year to make things clear, not play Catch 22

So we wait till they say what the rules are today, strung out on reality's fringe
We're hung out to dry and our life passes by while we wait for our shot from that syringe.
Dark and despondent for our only constant is ongoing vacillation
And each mutation builds the conflagration in the wait-for-vaccine nation.

Flowers

Jessica Eden



Tuscany Dusk **Collage**

Lauren Renzetti



Reflections at Moonset Peter Marmorek



A Prayer

Doug Crozier

I invite you in God;
asking that you help me put down any
sword or shield I carry today-
so that I can be in your light, sense your power
and know your love.

May I now move into my heart to feel
the warmth of my spirit.
Clear my eyes so I can be who I am while
seeing family, colleagues and friends-
as they are.

Help me drop any façade which keeps me
from you, myself and them.
Teach me patience and compassion so I may
clear this space for peace.
Quiet my mind so I can hear as you
whisper will my way.

Amen

Dream Story

Karen Richards

[Click to hear](#)

We're camping and sitting around the fire by a small lake.
I receive an urgent call and need to leave to take care of some problem.

Returning I pull into the space by the tent and silhouetted by the headlights I see that my companion has fallen asleep in the chair... his head down.
I also see that he has let our campfire burn down to only a few glowing embers.

Turning off the motor I leave the headlights on, their lights shining far out onto the lake.

Beautiful!

I notice the moonlight shining down onto the small waves ...
a gentle breeze and clear starry sky.

Both lights invite me to swim!

on the shore I step slowly into the water, the water is cool.

three relaxed strokes
out
out
out

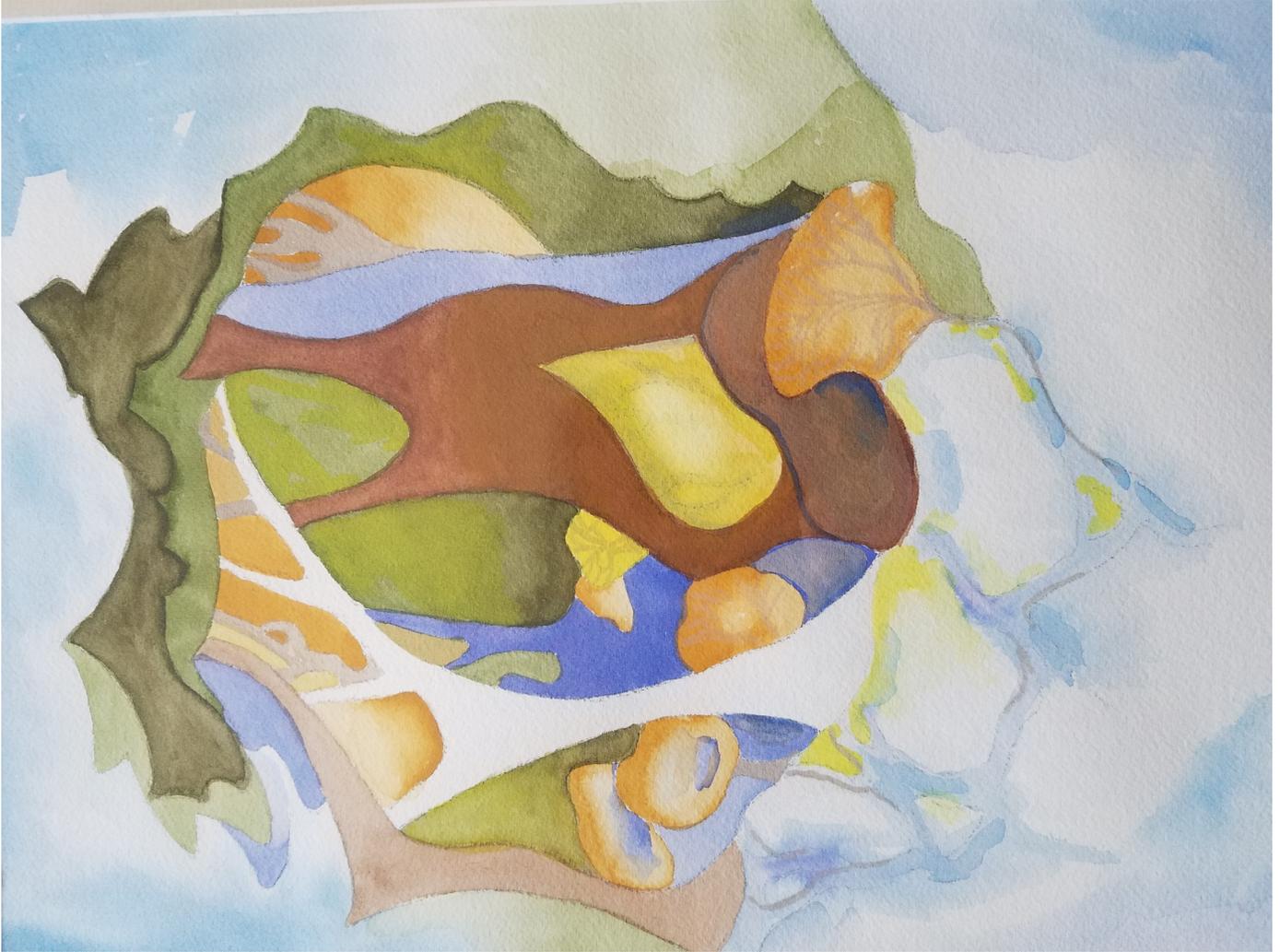
I wake while still sleeping ...
wishing only to return

since this is a dream I replay it again and again until morning

Upon awakening, I quickly sketch the scene and write this down hoping to capture its essence.

out
out
out

In the early days of Spring
The snow sparkles with blue lights
The pussywillow bushes blush orange
And the forest begins to reveal its secrets



Poem and image by Brenda Linneman

Hanging into life

Gordon Thorne

It's not often you are encouraged to act unsafely, to lean into the wind and hang your head out into the unknown but that's exactly what I was doing and it was wonderful. So it was that in January of 2019 I found myself riding the rails in Sri Lanka.

The island nation that was formerly called Ceylon, sits off the south eastern tip of India and is blessed with fertile lands and seas, equatorial weather and ringed with white sand beaches. The trains in Sri Lanka are the main way that people get from town to town and around the country. For about the equivalent of 20 cents, you can travel from the centre of the country to the furthest tip in the south. They are old rolling stock and everyday they teeter between being coaxed into working and breaking down .

This aging machinery is still filled with life though, as everyone from tourists to the poorest families use it daily. Most of the trains don't have reserved seating so locals know to get on trains a station before a large hub like Colombo, to snag a seat. On most trains in this hot tropical country, the air conditioning consists of a single fan, pushing the hot steamy air back and forth.

You may find yourself propped next to a nursing mother discreetly breastfeeding her baby, a family transporting their produce to market in open wicker baskets or an Instagram influencer vastly over dressed in a billowing pink party dress as she struggles to get just the right angle for her selfie.

The daily train from Kandy up into the mountains to Ella is the exception to the rule. It leaves on time, is air conditioned and your seat is reserved. On any other Sri Lanka train getting a seat is something that is hard fought and not easily given up. On the Kandy train, the best experience is to leave your seat and hang out between the cars.

To be fair, they do warn you against it but no one listens. I heard the warnings and being the observant rule-following person that I am, I dutifully watched from my window. It was as I returned from a bathroom break that I noticed all the people crowded around the open doors. There were people sitting on the stairs and there were people gripping the handles meant to assist you in climbing into the train, hanging out from the train.

Viewed from inside the vestibule looking out, the passing view was a blur of colours and textures. The rhythmic clack was raw and unmuffled. All the people hanging into the slipstream had a look of concentrated bliss on their face.

I was intrigued but there was no empty spots. I walked the length of the train and each entranceway between cars was packed with people. Every spot was crowded with bodies.

Soon, one of the men I was watching noticed my fascination and motioned to me to take his



place. I hesitated, thinking of typical first world safety but he motioned again and I inched forward and gingerly taking hold of the bar, I thrust my own head out into the wind.

It was as though a whole world had opened up; a world living on the edge of the track. Couples tending their small family garden, their sole source of food, looked up as the train rushed by.

Children with school bags patiently waited by the front gates of their homes as the passing train blocked them from leaving for school.

In the distance you could glimpse waterfalls under which men soaped their bodies in a daily act of cleansing.

We rushed past verdant green tea plantations where gangs of women hand picked young leaves with concentrated intensity and gossiped.

Suddenly the ground would drop away and we would be traversing a narrow bridge hundreds of feet in the air or plunging into darkness as we were swallowed into a tunnel that seemed barely able to fit our locomotive.



Vast views of mountain peaks and valleys turned in an instant into forests so close that you could reach out and touch the branches.

If you looked forward you could see the front of the train snaking around corners that we had yet to reach and looking back you could see the back of the train emerge from a tunnel that moments before you had been inside.

I watched one crazy passenger after another, up and down the length of the train, clinging to small railings and window frames hanging far out into the space. One middle aged women arched her back as if she wished to take flight while another dandled toes in the wind as if to test the temperature of the sea. It was at once crazy but exhilarating and full of life.



Seconds turned to minutes which turned into a good chunk of the journey. When I finally brought my head in and relinquished my place to another traveller, I felt like someone had turned down the volume on life.

Slowly I returned to my seat.

My wife asked, "So where were you?"

"Just hanging out" was my reply.

LASSIE GO

[Click to hear](#)

If I dig a hole too steep to climb would you watch me
slide and slide down the sides?

When I'm scratching in the dark would you
tilt me to the light?

Chorus: Lassie go! Tell the folks back home
that Timmy slipped and fell
Tell them that he's fallen down the well

She is a fragrant forest plant calling me to
sip from pools of prophesy
I am a small and meagre ant clinging to
this vantage view of basin sea

Chorus 2

Inst.

Chorus 3

Picture perfect pitcher plant. I feel myself
dissolving in her liquid song.
Flora sweet and elegant
Will she take a little piece of me along?

Chorus 4 + end

lyrics and music: Steve Koller

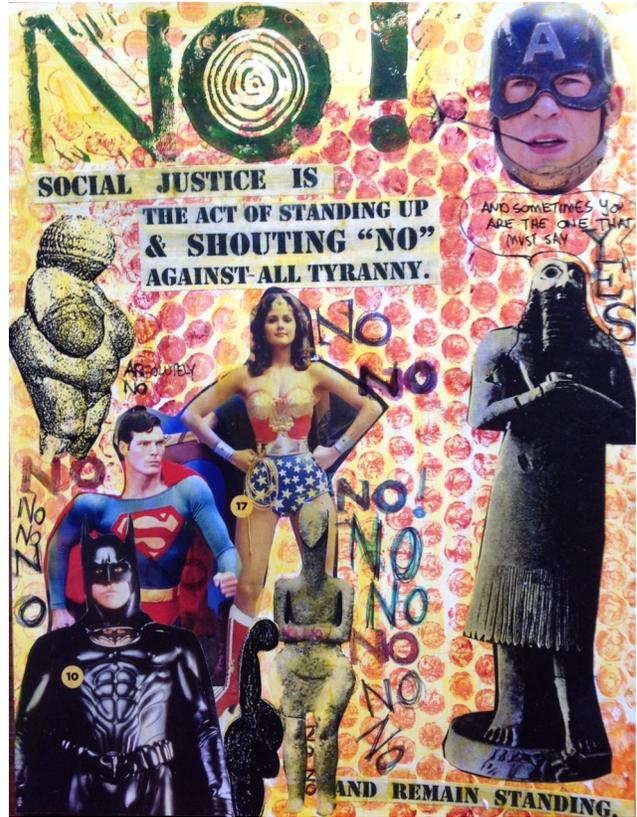
guitar and lead vocals: Steve Koller

Rhodes, percussion and background vocals: Susanne Maziarz

pros & cons of art collage



no collage



say yes collage

venus collage

Lead the Way for Neighbourhood

Susanne Maziarz
Easter Sunday, 2021

Come sing along,
our song grows strong
with every single voice
Please hold my note,
when my throat
grows tired.
Called to rise above,
and lead with love
together, we can make that choice
and show to all a faith of fire,
inspired.

Imagine
a bold vision
of a just and nobler world
with shared respect
and dignity for all.
No one is disposable
life's sanctity affirmed
as one,
responding to that higher call.

Listen to voices lesser heard,
for stories yet untold,
hold opposing views,
assuming best intentions.
Learning is never ending,
love extending,
vision bold.
Beware the narrow view
down in the trenches.

May service be our living prayer,
we'll err,
but keep on trying.
Make amends,
mistakes teach us compassion and
perspective.
Community, the common good,
our mission unifying.
Commitment to relationship,
connected.

The Dreaming

Kurt Thomsen

[Click to hear](#)

A tribute to Neil Gaiman's epic, THE SANDMAN
Some dreams follow our lives, some are fantasies, and some... are, well...
unexplainable. (Ya, that's it. I think.)

Divertissement 3: The Emergence of Hope [Click to watch](#)

Music: Susanne Maziarz

Images: Peter Marmorek

