

# UNCOMMON 2016

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Lilah Neider                  February over Lake Champlain

The placid waters of Lake Champlain  
have frozen over now  
It crackles in sheets, like tectonic plates.  
The sky is clear blue,  
and bright, too cold for clouds now  
too cold for the geese who have finally gone  
and the neighbor's dog, who always barks.  
Only the occasional sparrow dares to  
show its face, though it quickly retreats  
into whatever dark hiding place it has.  
The trees groan and bend low with  
the weight of the snow,  
And the sun beats down, offering no heat  
and little hope of warmth,  
Not that we need it.  
Winter has finally come  
and I fall into its familiar coldness.

Remy Schulz

## Headlights

In the dark of night headlights appear,  
headlights that come ever closer,  
headlights that break up the night.  
It always strikes you as odd;  
no one ever drives on these roads.  
Every time you go looking for the headlights they disappear,  
besides you never find anything in those dense forests.  
Then as you walk away you hear the tires grinding in the mud,  
you go back to look but you only see skid marks.  
Every night you see the headlights,  
every night you go look.  
Some things just don't have answers

Cece Hinds

## Surviving Life

It's an achievement to survive things:  
shark attacks, hurricanes, bombings  
But to survive life, it's completely different  
All the hiding in the closet, under the bed  
All the tears that kept you awake  
All the nights you couldn't sleep  
All the mistakes you've made  
All the things you forgot  
All the things you could never forget  
All the things that should have happened  
And all the things that shouldn't have happened  
Even if you survive life  
You aren't branded as a hero  
But you can go through as much pain  
As the people who go through all those other things  
Surviving life isn't easy  
But there are so many other things  
To do than to worry about surviving  
I can't argue that it's harder to survive life  
But I can argue living through all those other things  
Are all part of surviving life

Beckett Richardson    Mr. Topiary

When Mr. Topiary walked into his home after work and received the excited greeting of his two young children, his brow furrowed as he frowned slightly. Mr. Topiary's work at Oil for America is both stressful and morally ambiguous, so although he is happy to be in the comfort of his home, there are concerning thoughts swirling in his mind. He is an oil billionaire and he knows full well that his work will make the waves lap at the eaves of his Maryland home ere Ronald and Hillary have completed college. To placate his conscience, he donates the vast majority of his earnings to environmental charity, however it is difficult for him to believe himself, that he is doing good works.

He walks over to the kitchen island where his wife, Columba, has placed the post, and reads the grim newsletters about the lawsuits against his company, which is a P.R. and lobbying firm for the energy sector. The litigation came about after he made advertisements slandering politicians opposed to his agenda in order to get them recalled before a major vote.

It sounds egregious, but that is simply the way politics is done nowadays. The largest corporations design the economic policy to suit them, and of course therefore the people, and the pentagon has a five faceted method of ensuring our safety from the terrorists. His actions would further corporate interest, and therefore national interest, but not his children's interest, and so Mr. Topiary's brow is still knit. He unsuccessfully tries to reassure himself, that he is taking a sensible and balanced approach rather than being a counterproductive fool.

Mr. Topiary is now sitting down to dinner, a nasty frozen meal with a little slice of fillet from a few nights ago placed prominently atop it as a garnish, and tells his children that the ski trip is cancelled because of the lack of snow.

Sophia St. John-Lockridge

Childhood

I am from red metal roofs and rainbow cars,  
berry picking and ceiling stars  
lemon chicken and catching frogs,  
gogo boots and knee high bogs.  
trading makeup like currency, yelling at boys,  
I'm from pizza putt and gum machine toys,  
from tending chickens in my princess gowns,  
broken treehouses and creepy clowns.  
I'm from autumn mountains that matched the sun,  
from shooting my dad with my potato gun.  
Little toy jeeps that never got fixed,  
rock collecting and pixy stix  
colorful vans and building forts,  
nature walks and playing sports.  
I'm from burning incense and science kits,  
muddy faces and full out glitz.  
I'm from raspberry picking, and blueberries too,

valentine boxes, hands covered in glue  
I'm from peeling that off, and playing with goo,  
singing alphabets and tying shoes.  
Counting to one hundred, counting again,  
then practicing doing it by tens.  
Lava lamps and raising chicks,  
kitten heels, and new lipsticks.

Katya Marsh                    3,000 People

For the past seven years, the most commonly used phrase in my vocabulary has been, "I can't go; I have dance." What started out as one afterschool class quickly turned into a five day rehearsal schedule with four competitions and performances per season. My freshman year of high school was our busiest competition season. The studio was my second home, and the team was my family. Four out of five weeknight dinners were eaten in the studio kitchen. Countless ponytails and ballet buns were pinned to perfection using the floor-to-ceiling mirrors, and sometimes there was even a rare chance to take a quick nap in between classes. That season we attended three competitions. The first two were a piece of cake- small, local, and relatively laid back. But our last competition was more along the lines of something one might see on the TV show, Dance Moms. It was held in Maine, and attracted at least 500 dancers from around New England. The venue was a massive high school, too large for anyone from Vermont to comprehend, with an auditorium that held 3,000 people. I started out the day with the usual pre-competition jitters, but the second we stepped through the doors, the jitters turned into full blown panic. As we walked through the hallways, every single dancer gave us the "up-down glance" and quickly determined we were not, and never would be, a threat. The dressing room was a gymnasium in which teams claimed their own plots, first come first serve. We secluded ourselves in a tiny corner of the room, feeling like fish out of water, and little fish in a big sea, all at once. I sat wide eyed, biting my unmanicured nails as I observed the competition, with their sky-high pony tails, five-inch false eyelashes, orange spray tans, and rhinestones glued anywhere they could fit. I felt like an organic, whole-grain Cheerio in a bowl full of sugary Fruit Loops, and I knew I looked like one too.

Zane Faour                    What Lies Beyond

I stand still, and feel a warm breeze on my face,  
I feel the sand underneath my feet, and see a vast lake stretched out  
before me,  
Miles and miles, with no end in sight  
I walk on the sand, it's warm under my feet, just like freshly baked cookies are warm in  
in my mouth,  
I turn to my left and see some children, no older than five,

One carries a ball which he tosses up then down, up then down, up then down.  
I was once a kid, but those days are over now,  
I look up at the sky, deep in thought,  
I then look at the ground, turn to my left, and slowly trudge onward,  
I walk, and walk, and walk for what feels like hours,  
The sand under me slowly turns into rocks,  
Hard and sharp under my bare feet,  
I check my watch, it really has been hours,  
I stop in my tracks, and this time turn right, towards the water, and towards the setting sun.

Kent Vaccaro            The Other World

Leaves tingle outside like a puppy in the cold,  
Dripping dew from their tips.  
As I stand outside, sun rises man from bed,  
Bring light to illuminate the world

Walking through the forest  
Tired trees trembling,  
Birds sing like a choir,  
Echoing down the path.

Rodents run, bristles brush,  
Sap smells, the chill cracks the air  
My legs are tired as I swing them down the path,  
Relentlessly hiking, on and on.

Nimaya Lemal            Lemon

“Nimaya:” ‘going home helper’  
“Lemal:” ‘the bad’ or  
“Luce:” ‘the light’  
But my father calls me Moo, my mother calls me Nimaya Grace  
And an old art teacher used to call me ‘Lemon.’

Don’t they say we’re all full of—what do they call them, “Chapters?”  
Chapters.  
Mine have seen their full intensity, colored with this fading clarity,  
joining my speckled Irish skin in pallidity.  
The gentle blue ones; ages five,  
six  
and seven,  
their corners have been rubbed to a friendly rounded curve.

But damn numbers nine, thirteen, sixteen—  
their edges jut out and protrude in sudden, unintended outbursts.  
I don't mean to be angry, no—but I have run over my “identity” with a bulldozer, ripped and  
squished it into different names—  
the victim  
the sage  
And when that was done I analyzed,  
and analyzed,  
the question of it rising with the regularity of a metronome until the term itself had begun to  
sound as dull.

I could tell you I am from Jamestown.  
Colorado.  
That I never cared much for History  
and I picked up a fondness for 80% dark chocolate years before I  
“became a woman.”  
I could tell you I've lived in fourteen different houses in my seventeen years but no place feels  
like home.  
I could tell you I'm not religious  
But sometimes I talk to God, when I wish very hard.  
I could mention that if I honor anything  
it is integrity  
And my “holy grail”—  
inquiry.  
I could tell you that I pack better than anyone you've ever met  
That I live hesitating  
on the edge of gathering everything you cannot take from me  
and running.

That for the first time, I'm swollen with the fear of being alone.

I have decided I'd take flying over telekinesis as a superpower.  
And I'd rather give up the ability to hear, than to smell.  
I could tell you that I love the smell of burning matches, and used bookstores,  
That my favorite teacher once combined those items  
When he set *Fahrenheit 451* on fire in the middle of Literature  
To teach us to care about Literature.

I could tell you I've written over half a million words,  
and those are just the ones I've counted,  
That I've played Emily Webb 4 and a half times, and yeah,  
I'm dating George Gibbs.  
I could tell you I took eighth grade as a nine year old  
pierced my nose as a 12 year old  
That the only practice I adhere to is wearing the prayer beads my mother gave me eleven years  
ago, when she taught me how to meditate.

I could tell you I don't meditate.  
I could tell you I love numbers, and poetry, and psychology,  
That I've spent exactly three days enrolled in a public school  
That I've competed internationally in Theatre  
But singing out loud terrifies me.

I could tell you that my name still sounds unfamiliar sometimes,  
And my face is one I've memorized,  
but haven't claimed.  
I could tell you I see those discolored glass "chapters"  
in a long line from the beginning I don't remember,  
and now,  
But I can't always remember who I am  
And my mother would tell you,  
not knowing,  
is the adventure.

I could tell you... anything  
and everything,  
because so often I only wish someone would listen.  
I'd start with, "Nimaya:" 'going home helper'  
"Lemal:" 'the bad' or  
"Luce:" 'the light'  
But my father calls me Moo, my mother calls me Nimaya Grace  
And an old art teacher used to call me 'Lemon.'

Shijun Lun                  Summer

Softly came, no feelings,  
Languid warm makes us comfy and lazy.  
When you realized that,  
It already had been burning,  
Such as an eternal flame.

Time elapsed,  
Summer will fade away,  
It becomes cool, out of knowing.  
Leaves begin to turn tawny,  
The trail of autumn appeared,  
Summer passed away.

Austin Mital-Skiff

Haikus

Note to all squirrels

A menace is loose round here

A puppy look out

Quivering in fear

The squirrels look down from the tree

Puppy eyes look back

Time for carpet squares

All right everyone winks

Star Wars we whisper

Brrrr it's very cold

But I wonder where the snow is

It is winter, right?