

# barbara

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## HIS LOVE

His love is my favorite worn-out sweater  
That I long to curl up in  
On lazy Sunday mornings.

Sliding over my body and twisting around me-  
A shred of armor to protect me  
From the curious stares of the world outside my window.

I tease my finger through the holes  
Of his love, testing the strength of the fabric.  
Always wondering where the next ones will appear.

But this love, it could be reduced to threads  
And I would still insist on folding it gently into a box  
To keep tucked in the top shelf of my closet, never to part.

Nix Carlson

[instagram.com/bynixec](https://www.instagram.com/bynixec)

## Diaspora

I am sorry  
that I have coated my tongue  
in peanut butter  
and privilege,  
layers so thick  
that I can no longer  
swallow  
the curves of  
your ancestral vowels.

Jeanie Ngo

## The Rooms We Inherit

I live inside my mother's hands.  
Each one knows where the spoons belong,  
how to fold a silence into a napkin,  
how to leave the window half open for ghosts.  
I dust her photographs but never look at them.  
I do not want to see what she saw.  
I only want to hear her breath  
in the scrape of the broom across the floor.  
Every house keeps a kind of hunger.  
Ours eats the light first.  
I keep feeding it anyway,  
crumbs of memory, chipped laughter,  
a bit of my own voice, still warm,  
set on the sill for later.

Pravy Jha

[instagram.com/\\_\\_\\_pravy\\_\\_\\_](https://www.instagram.com/___pravy___)

## Spider's Lament

As a spider in a clean home,  
I labour, labour constantly.  
Laying thread upon thread  
and then wait,  
until cleaning day,  
when I must begin again.  
Could you be less fastidious  
so I may be as well?

Tun-Min Poh

## My Sister's bunker garden

She planted marigolds in ammo crates,  
Lined the bunker walls with moss.  
The sirens wailed above ground,  
But down here, it smelled of lavender and loam.  
Each bloom was a rebellion,  
A refusal to die ugly.  
She named the vines after the Apostles,  
Fed them gospel and canned peaches.  
When the ceiling cracked,  
She tucked me beneath the ferns,  
Whispered, 'Let the garden eat the fear.'  
And it did.  
Even the apocalypse  
Could not uproot her tenderness.

Khayelihle Benghu

## Taking Care

My mother teeters at the white lip of the bath,  
precarious on legs she can't rely on.

Wears a fluffy pink towel draped like a shawl.  
She has dwindled down so small.

I am testing the temperature, warm not hot,  
while she waits to receive this weekly blessing.

Shower head in one hand, shampoo in the other,  
I ask if she's ready to begin.

Now her head is in my hands, her frail  
precious skull. The bones of it

are bird-like. Her still dark hair is  
feathers: fine and downy as a fledgling's.

When she trembles I imagine  
she'll take flight.

Abigail Ottley

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## Fear of the afraid/A frayed

When i'm sad  
i like to go into my closet  
& sit amongst the clothes.  
It's warm, quiet, insulated  
& dark: womblike.  
Besides, when I was a child  
playing hide and go seek  
(with my too too many siblings,  
too too few now)  
i marveled at the mingling  
of my parents' scents,  
worn into their wrappings.  
This is the smell of how i started  
A closet feels like Love

Warren Forrest

## symmetry

my cat has three legs  
and a glass eye, the same side  
as my uncle's

sometimes he rolls it around the table (my uncle)  
and the cat watches it with his one  
good eye, waiting to pounce

Helen Smith

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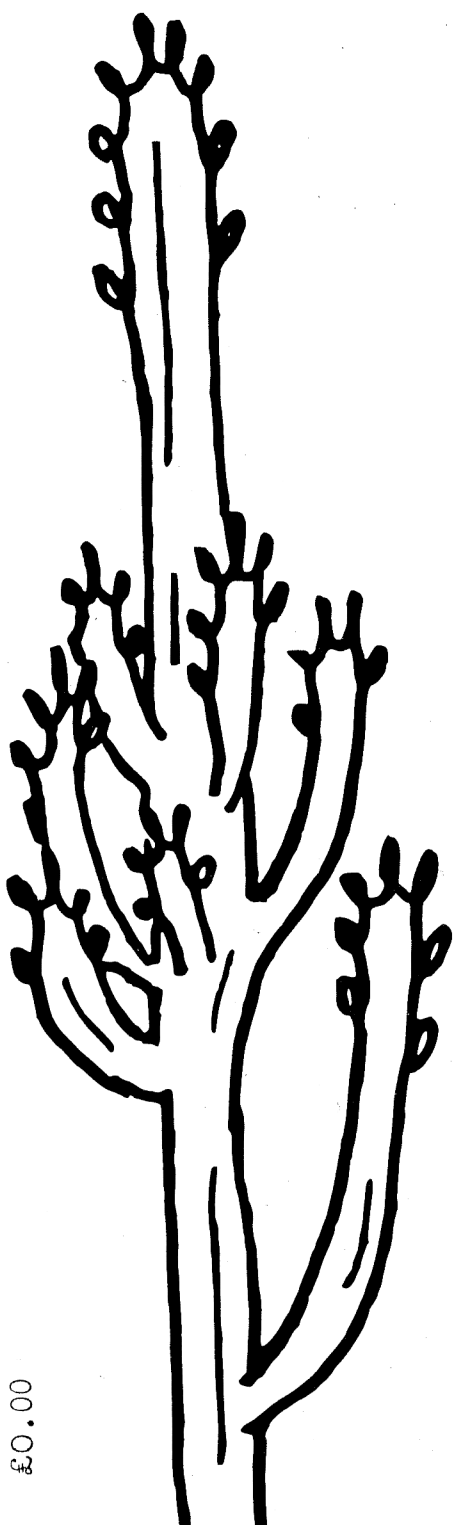
Writing softens rest  
Hibernating in comfort  
Candle glows beside her

Natalie Buckland

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