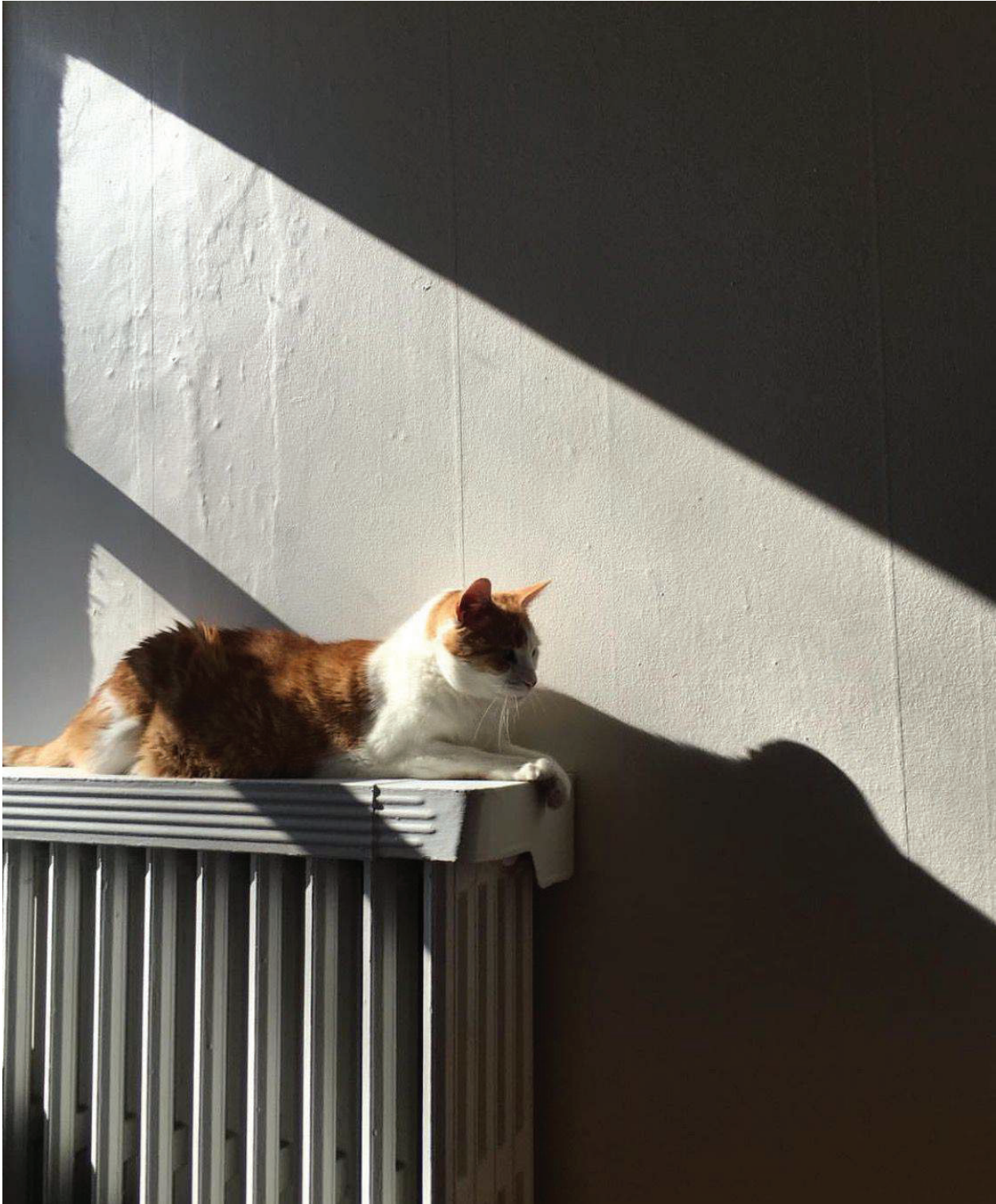




APRIL 2018
ISSUE 40

THE SHABBY DOLL
READER

Welcome to Issue 40!



In memory of Rachelle Toarmino's

Bug

Perfect Peach

*Catching Up With Peach Mag editor,
Rachelle Toarmino*



LK: What is *Peach Gold in Poetry* and how did the idea come about?

RT: The *Peach Gold in Poetry* is our new annual poetry prize. I've always had a five-year plan for *Peach* and a poetry prize was a necessary part of that, but Matthew, Bre, and I wanted to wait until we were a little more established before launching it. I've found that timing is everything! I owe a million gigantic ups to Bükem Reitmayer, the EiC of *Cosmonauts Avenue*, for her mentorship in preparing the details of the *Peach Gold*. CA presents prizes in poetry, fiction, and creative nonfiction every year, and I happy-gasp every time they announce a new guest judge. I

find Bükem's hustle and generosity so inspiring. I'm so grateful for her friendship and for her litmag secrets <3.

A quick note about the name of the prize: Yes, the Olympics. Yes, Reddit Gold. But let's please not forget about this million (actually) dollar idea (attention jeweler demographic of the Shabby Doll Reader):



Imagine rose gold but with more yellow gold in it... imagine!!!

Why are poetry contests important?

It's important to give poets money.

How did you choose your guest judge, Morgan Parker?

I opened for Morgan this past summer when she came to Buffalo to read at the July installment of the *Silo City Reading Series*, curated by my good friend and mentor, Noah Falck. She and I were fast friends; by the end of the night, my dad was trying to get her to come to Thanksgiving that year. If you've never met Morgan, let me tell you first that she is funny as fuck. She's also so encouraging, so kind, so generous. She has been very wonderful to work with.

What shouldn't people send you?

Uh oh. If you are a cisgender man, please no poems about masturbation. We all have had enough of those.

What is *Us Too* and how did the idea come about?

Us Too will be a poetry anthology that re-publishes work that has either been withdrawn from a journal/press or has disappeared alongside the journal/press after the publisher was exposed as abusive or predatory. The title will most likely change once I start editing, but I wanted to be

clear in the call for submissions that this project wouldn't have happened without the bravery of the survivors who have come forward in the past few months.

I got the idea for the anthology after reading a few Facebook and Twitter threads in which writers were disappointed to have accidentally trusted certain publishers with their work and who were now unsure of what to do with it. Then, one day recently, I got an email in my personal inbox from Robin Jordan, a Buffalo-based writer and one of our *Season 1* all-stars. She explained that the digital journal that had published a poem she'd worked on for years had disappeared from all corners of the internet after a few women went public with their stories of harassment. After talking to Matthew and Bre, we were unanimous in deciding to publish her poem. Backstory aside, it is such a cool poem. It goes live on April 24th.

Robin's situation got me thinking about how many other cool poems might need a home right now because of similar trouble, and how I might be able to combine *Peach's* reach with my knowledge of editing and design to build that home. Bringing these poems into the world as a physical collection will be powerful. *Us Too* will serve as an example, a reminder, an outlet, an alternative -- it will sit on bookstore shelves and nightstands and coffee tables and inside purses and backpacks and will be passed from one set of hands to another. It'll be public.

Why is this important?

Reclamation is a necessary part of working through abuse. Though it's not a submission prerequisite for content to be abuse-centric, nor must submitters be survivors of abuse, I want to make it clear that my goal in publishing a collection of withdrawn poetry is to encourage writers to stand with survivors by reclaiming their work. The collection is an alternative to publishing with harmful people. I don't think it's too extreme to say that choosing to publish with a known predator is complicity.

On another note, and without wanting to say too much about my personal life, I've had more brushes with abusive, predatory men than I could have ever imagined for myself, the worst of which has been a recent revelation. In editing this collection of reclaimed work, I hope to reclaim a part of myself, too.

The release date of the anthology is October 8th, which you have described on the Peach website as 'the anniversary of Harvey Weinstein's firing'.

Would you be open to changing this text to say Lucy K Shaw's birthday?

Like this?

SUBMIT:

EMAIL ENTRY AS AN ATTACHMENT

TO PEACHMGZN@GMAIL.COM

WITH SUBJECT LINE "ME TOO"

INCLUDE A SHORT 3RD PERSON BIO

OPTIONAL: TELL US WHAT CAUSED YOU TO SUBMIT

RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER 8TH, 2018

THE ANNIVERSARY OF HARVEY WEINSTEIN'S FIRING
BIRTHDAY OF LUCY K SHAW -- VISIONARY, MENTOR, FRIEND

DEADLINE: JULY 1ST, 2018

Just kidding, kind of. But why did that date feel important?

Oop were you kidding? Bitch you know by now not to get an idea in my head.

October 8th, 2018 -- the first anniversary of Harvey Weinstein's firing -- is important because October 8th, 2017 represents a moment in time when people in power listened to those in positions of lesser power -- *and acted*. It's sadly so rare. This action empowered survivors and catalyzed an inundation of people coming forward with their stories. I celebrate that.

Do you want to talk about Bug? I feel like it would be absurd to talk to you right now and not talk about Bug. *But I can also delete this, obviously.*

Omg, thank you so much for asking. I really want to talk about Bug.

To fill in those who don't know, Bug was Rachelle's cat, who she found as a kitten, 15.5 years ago, and who passed away a few days ago :(

Bug was given a week to live in January, and then survived for two and a half more months, because he was a miracle cat.

First of all, I want to say, I'm so sorry, Rachelle. ♥

I liked the way you posted about him asking people to share memories. Have you felt encouraged by people's responses?

Thank you so much, Lucy.

Bug was my best friend, my life partner, my baby, my man, my home, my rock, my king. I don't want to talk about him in the past tense because I feel like he's still here with me. My guardian angel. He was sick for so long and it was so hard thinking that when he died, he'd just be gone. I've lost people in the past who just feel very gone. I don't feel that way about Bug, though. Whenever I see a little square of sunlight on the floor, he's there. I dumped my clean laundry onto my bedroom floor yesterday and knew he was loafing on top of the pile. He rubbed his chin all over my work boots when I took them off this afternoon. He's drinking out of my water glass right now even though the water bowl he shares with my dog is three feet away. He's still sleeping under the covers with me -- every night for almost sixteen years without fail. He's greeting me at the door when I get home from work -- every day for almost sixteen years without fail. He's making that sweet little snorty sound he makes when he purrs. He's here. I feel him.

It's wild to have had him be that big of a part of my life for so long -- I mean, I found him when I was *eleven* -- before puberty, before my first kiss, through middle school, high school, college, our three years together in Spain, coming out, breakups, fights with my family, friends that came and went, shitty jobs, mental health issues, assault, abuse, trauma, healing -- and then be gone. He's my oldest friend. I'll be twenty-eight this year. We took care of each other for almost *sixteen* years. That's older than any of my students! He taught me everything I know about loyalty and love. He was the biggest blessing of my life.

As for asking people for memories, it has been tremendously helpful and I recommend it if you're a person currently struggling with loss. It's so insane to see all these different people from every single random stage of my life come out for Bug. I mean, I'm talking extended family members I haven't seen since I was a kid, coworkers from college jobs that I forgot I even had, my Spanish friends who knew him when Bug and I lived in Madrid and Granada, my circle of friends from elementary school, college roommates, exes, one night stands, friends I fell out with, friends' parents, exes' parents, someone who came over for dinner once in 2012, a catsitter from one weekend years ago, people who came over once for a party, people who crashed at my apartment one night after a reading -- *everyone*. I'm feeling *time* very much right now. It's good, but so wild. So fast.

If you got 'em: Every photo and story matters so much to me right now. However mundane or brief or pixelated. Also big into sad grief poems right now. Help a heartbroken girl out and hmu <3.

You should write something about him!

I wouldn't know where to begin! A chapbook of love sonnets? Something like *Afterglow*? Something like *The New Testament*? When Bug first got sick, my ex would say that one day we'd tell our kids bedtime stories in which Bug was the hero and his cat was the villain. I'll still do that. I don't think I'll ever stop talking about Bug; I don't think I'll ever not be heartbroken that his physical presence is no longer here. He was my Pantalaimon.

Random fact: the first book I ever wrote was titled *Pee-Wee Lost His Ball* (my third grade composition notebook, 1997), and it was all about my dog Pee-Wee and his gang of detectives

(all my friends' and family members' pets). The sequel? *Pee-Wee Lost His Bone* (my fourth grade composition notebook 1998). It's possible that I'm my best writer-self when I'm writing about the nonhuman animals in my life.

I seriously think you should write at least a chapbook about your life with Bug.

A Bug's Life...

Apologies.

I also want to talk to you a little about Whale Prom...

Yay please do!

It looked super fun. Was it what you expected?

I expected to have fun at Prom, but then I had *SO* much fun. I didn't expect to have fun at AWP, though it was less overwhelming than I thought it was going to be.

How did your trip go from a 'professional' point of view?

I was part of a panel at AWP and presented the very first morning of the trip, which was an enormous relief to get over with (and which I nailed, hell yeah). I also did two readings while I was there, and debuted a new poem I'm excited about. I got to experience some of that AWP magic/luck too: I was solicited for work after both readings, and a guy from *The Millions* asked me to answer a few questions for an article he's writing that was partly inspired by my AWP presentation. So cool. An editor asked me to send them my manuscript (without the intent of publishing, just to read), and I got some really encouraging and constructive feedback. I've spent time reworking the whole thing every day since. Feels dope.

Now that I know what to expect, I'd like for *Peach* to collab-host a reading next year. I got to meet so many of our wonderful contributors this year and it would be such a treat to hear a bunch of them read together. Maybe Shabby Doll House could be there... ☐

Yeah I hope so!

And from a social perspective? Did you get to hang out with people you wanted to see?

Omg, yes!!! I spent some serious quality time with Liz Bowen, whose friendship I cherish so much -- I mean, she really *sees* me. I got to witness Bükem in the hottest jumpsuit and Fenty highlighter -- I'm still thinking about it! I caught up with Amy and Shy, and finally met Jakob, Jamie, and so many others in person. Bre and I met and instantly fell in love with Chelsea Hodson. And (saved you for last because I know you're reading this, punk): Mark Cugini and I discovered that we've known each other all our lives and are making up for lost time by sending

each other sheet mask selfies and platonic sweet nothings in Italian every day. *LOYALTY. ft. Rihanna fade in*

Sounds perfect. Did you see anyone give an amazing reading?

Liz read a poem about piss that I'm still thinking about. Laura Marciano read this one poem that ended with a Drake reference that just about knocked me (and everyone else) over -- it was probably the greatest ending of a poem I've ever heard read aloud.

Damn, I want to hear.

You have an Episode reading coming up in Buffalo with Jamie Mortara, right?

Jamie Mortara and Jakob Maier! Both *Season 1* veterans; we featured them in our freshman *Yearbook* and had the honor of nominating Jamie for a Pushcart. I'm such a huge fan of both of their work, and it will be really fun to host them in Buffalo. Our local openers are Eve Williams, a kickass slam poet who is just so fearless, Dan McKeon, one of the biggest sweeties who is also known for their hilarious deadpan delivery, and Olivea Wiggins, someone I heard read at an open mic in the fall and who I've kept on my radar ever since. It'll be our spring *Episode*, and I'm feeling fresh cut flowers, shades of green (Bre looks amazing in emerald), cracked windows (weather permitting; it'll be winter in Buffalo until May), and strawberries, which are finally in season. The venue -- Georgette (69 Elmwood Ave.) -- has floor to ceiling West-facing windows, so we'll also be in for a spectacular sunset. Saturday, April 14th, at 7pm. Come hang <3.

Good luck with everything, Rachelle!

Checkout the [Peach Mag website for more info on the contest, the anthology and the upcoming reading.](#)

You can [follow Rachelle on Twitter](#)

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