

A wooden fence with vertical planks. The planks are painted with abstract, expressive brushstrokes in various colors: orange, red, blue, and teal. The background is a dark, semi-transparent overlay.

Verse of Silence

Spring Issue, April
Issue 1, Volume 2

Verse of Silence

A literary venture to facilitate your creative curiosity.



Issue 1, Volume 2

Spring April

(Poetry, Short Fiction, Literary Reviews & Visual Arts)

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EDITORIAL



Editorial Note, Verse of Silence
Spring Issue 2019
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Hello dear readers, and welcome to the Spring Issue of the Verse of Silence. I still remember conceptualizing this magazine in the month of February 2018 with a bunch of passionate and hardworking art enthusiasts and getting the first issue out the very next month. Not to forget, we had over a hundred downloads and we were thrilled. It's 2019 and we've come a long way, making some creatively necessary decisions for the better working of the magazine and of course the very talented individuals who submit their wonderful pieces for this magazine. Trust us, we read and carefully so each and every piece you send us. The shift from Verse of Silence being a monthly magazine to now a quarterly was intentional, the purpose being making this space more diverse and opportunity prone for you all.

While I started this magazine with the sole intention of creating an un-biased platform for artists- a literary magazine they can trust their work with, we feel overwhelmed to have come to know so many enthusiasts making their name and space in their own field. Having successfully conducted two poetry events in New Delhi and Bangalore, India in 2018, we are on a run for the 2019 and we promise to make this worth it for you all- to bring Verse of Silence closer to home and to you.

The Spring Issue features some wonderful poems, experimental not only in their structure but content, some beautifully crafted short fiction with stream of consciousness cradling in the backdrop, a literary review worth your time and attention and two amazing artworks we fell in love with the very first time. Take your time dear readers, and relish the works of artists who've worked hard into making their pieces reach out to you.

And for you dear artists, we are proud to be re-presenting your work through our magazine. Keep being creative, until next time.

Lots of love and chai,

Editor-in-chief

Kavya Sharma

4 POETRY

Good Advice from a Priest

by Kenneth Pobo

I wanted God to like me,
even a little, attended Wednesday
morning services with a dozen
older women. Conversations veered
from grandchildren to Laetrile.
I added little. None
had a favorite T. Rex song.
Father told me to stop coming,
to go out and have fun.
He was right. I hadn't
found myself yet,
only God, who wasn't
much fun. It took years.

Fun had a noose around it
and it dangled me over hell.
I slowly undid the noose,
liked my neck better
without rope burns.

ABOUT THE POET

Kenneth Pobo has a book forthcoming from Clare Songbirds Publishing House called *The Atlantis Hit Parade*. His work has appeared in *The Fiddlehead*, *Amsterdam Review*, *Hawaii Review*, *Atlanta Review*, and elsewhere.



SHORT FICTION

Creatures of Habit

AMY L. EGGERT



Joyce's fingers stung as she scrubbed clean aluminium. The wad of steel wool was a knotted fistful of course dirty hair in her hand. The silver shone spotless, but still she scrubbed, round and around, scouring the saucepan in the sink. Her muscles ached, burned against her rapid motions. After the pots, she moved to the cabinets, emptying, prying bowls and mugs and platters from their dark corners. She swiped away non-existent dust with a rag clenched in her fist. Top to bottom she worked: emptying, swiping, repositioning dishware. She had to keep busy, to keep her mind occupied and focused on tidying up the already immaculate house.

After the kitchen cabinets, she moved to the china hutch. She was careful to remove the antique dishes, her mother-in-law Sylvia's Spode porcelain and delicate bone china, piece by piece, plate by plate. She set each down gently until the dining room table was covered and the hutch only half-emptied. She paused, a blue Italian gravy boat cradled in both hands, searching for an open surface and almost spied Syl, watching from her customary spot near the fireplace, her fingers pulling idly at the pillowed afghan spread over her lap, her gaze locked.

Before she died, Syl spent her days watching Joyce. She no longer spoke, but she watched, her piercing gaze shadowing Joyce around the house as she cleaned and stitched and baked and caught up with girlfriends over the phone. Syl's grey gaze, unwavering even as her daughter-in-law bathed her and fed her and shifted her heavy limbs to prevent bed sores and decubitus ulcers until Joyce's back had begun to give out and they'd had to call in a girl to help. Even years later, Syl gone for nearly half a decade, Joyce felt that leaden stare boring into her skin. She'd catch herself glancing suddenly at the empty wall space beside the fireplace where Syl's wheelchair used to sit. She'd picture those skeletal fingers stirring, scratching at pillowed yarn. Even years later, Syl gone for four years going on five, Joyce's eyes sprung open from sleep, sure she'd heard those raspy gasping breaths from the next room.

Before she died, Syl spent her nights choking on her own blood. Joyce and her husband Jonah would wake to her aspirating, and one or both would rush into the next room to tilt her head to the right, to wipe the blood from her lips, to murmur soothing words until the old woman finally found her oxygen.

Syl's cancer was ruthless; it spread quickly but killed her slowly. The chemo was worse.

Joyce barely slept during those three years Syl lived with them; Jonah slept less. He gained weight and developed indigestion. His receding dusky hair blanched white within months of his mother's arrival. The vein at his temple abruptly bulged and throbbed visibly beneath his skin. Joyce worried about him. Often, she'd walk into a room and find him sitting, staring unseeing into the space before him, his palm sweaty and clutching the lower half of his face in what looked like frightened contemplation. He'd see her and his hand would fall away from his mouth so he could offer a reassuring little grin, quick to comfort her as always.

Jonah took proud care of Joyce, even when Syl's long dying disrupted their lives. He continued to work fulltime, seven years past retirement—his mother's illness had drained their finances, and he wanted his Joyce taken care of when he was gone; he promised on a regular basis he'd go first, though she shuddered at the thought. He insisted on parking her car in their single-stall garage, even when snow buried his in the driveway. He always kept her gas tank full, even though she never travelled far, especially now that Syl was gone; she'd shop at the local grocery or meet her girlfriends for lunch in town.

When the phone rang, reeling Joyce away from her thoughts, the blue and white gravy boat teetered, nearly slipped from her grasp. She sucked in a sharp inhale, mumbled, "Close one, Syl," and placed the fragile dish on the kitchen counter.

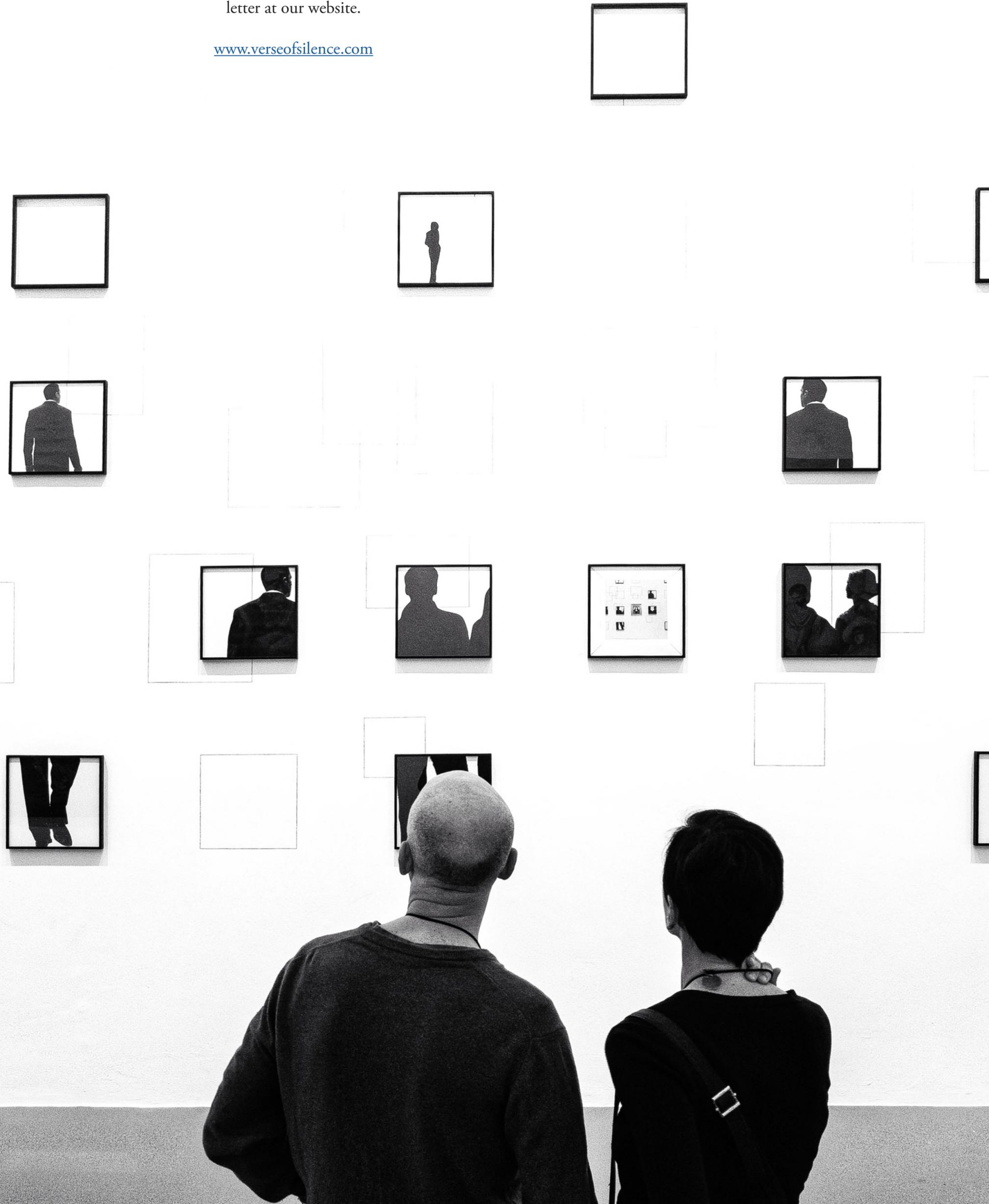
She glanced at the clock over the stove, noting the time. The call was earlier than expected. She let the phone ring again before she could answer. When she did, she held her breath. Her oncologist's voice: "I'm sorry, Joyce."

Jonah slept. His breaths were slow and relaxed, the hint of a snore rattling deep in his throat with each inhale. Since Syl's death, he had learned to sleep again. His face was untroubled, smooth and unlined like a boy's face, save for the snowy goatee he kept trimmed so neatly. In the years since Syl's death, he had shed a few of the extra pounds, though he still suffered from sporadic heartburn, and his hairline continued to recede. Only on rare occasion did Joyce spot that bloated vein pulsing at his temple. He was at peace. At long last. And Joyce couldn't permit anything to disrupt that long overdue peace. Now Joyce peered into his cherub face, so like a sleeping child's, and she loved him.

They never had children, having met and married later in their thirties. Initially this had saddened Joyce. She had always anticipated motherhood, expected it as inevitability somehow. But it hadn't happened. And her life with Jonah grew to be gratifying in a way that transformed her loss of maternity into calm acceptance, a simple absence she never felt compelled to mourn. They looked after one another, devoted daily lives to fostering the other. When Syl's prognosis

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VISUAL ARTS