Segue is published once a year in August. We accept submissions of high quality fiction, poetry, and creative nonfiction between January 1 and April 30 (closed May through December), and writing about writing year-round via email. Before submitting, please read past issues to understand the sort of work we publish, then read our submission guidelines.

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The Visit

“It’s me, Tammy,” she told him. “Your wife.”
She pulled back the heavy drapes as if across
A great distance to let the sun in over his bed.

“Day,” he said.

He wore a large hat, a cowboy hat
Of which he was part. It spoke for him.
It was clean and high. Like a sail.

"Wind.” he said.

An attendant came. Shaved him, took away the razor
Carried off the pan of water. His eyes followed the pan.

“Sea,” he told her. “Boat!”
The boat dashed by a storm fell into his drams, hurling him in against the vastness.

“Swim!” he said, making swimming motions with his arms.

“I’m here!” said his wife. “I’ll be here all day. Come on.”
Early Morning

No talking now, no turning on the news
No drunken smile or music
The room behind you sways in shadows
With sweetish warmth and sleep of dreams
Its your time to stand under the heavens
To blink back, drop jawed, at the splash of stars.
Even as a kid you lay on the roof and wondered
Where it all came from, where it started.
“I know but I’m not telling! I like to watch you squirm.”
Sister trying to be funny.
And Aunt Rose who kept her thoughts like her feet
on the ground, got frightened.
“Hush, honey,
don’t talk about stuff like that or I’ll whip you both.”

It’s still cool, chill as cherry blossoms
In the fog or the pear tree
Dappling its ice sickle fierceness
In the garden moonlight.

Far away in the immense
breathing space of darkness
wild and still, time breaks in upon you
opens itself to the famous
three o’clock morning air.

“The world has written every poem
Played every tune, over turned every stone.
loosened with persistence every viewpoint on existence.”

They sing like a hurricane in Aunt Rose’s church.
Glad for the truth, glad for the beauty, glad
For the stillness in the soul.

If Ronnie Gene had only listened he wouldn’t be
Locked up like he is.
A bird calls over the river
across the park
horse’s hooves suddenly surge
where a light flashes in the trees.
What on earth?
Was that a scream?
A woman’s frightened voice pleading
“Why Willie why Willie why Willie why?”
The beating hooves run on
hounding the question, on and on.
Almost a jabber, almost a chatter,
blue jay, crow, wren.
then quiet again.
What Kind Of Woman Was The Victim?

Pretty? Not exactly. Certainly not your usual victim. Yet highly excitable, Like they all are. Looking for thrills, only on a higher order, mind you.

I can't think of her now without thinking sunlight on water. Or a slender blond tree, wind rattling its leaves. Rattled. Yes, that's the word. Rattled by something. And she was all eagerness. Almost you'd say ecstatic Every atom in her dancing

The way she threw herself into love as into a green briar riot Or onto a barbwire hedge, not caring what pain might come Yet within a month she exhausted herself. To give him credit He didn’t really know what she was like…but who would? Like there was the time she threw the suitcase in the yard when she couldn’t go somewhere. Like I say, who knows? No doubt already the man's traveling mind was swimming in and out Of that barbwire, needing to bottom feed and come home later and later.

Did she suspect something was being planned? Hard to say, the loving heart has many places to hide its head. She saw no shadows in his good clothes and polished boots like the hovering shadows of hawks whose talons struck the screaming kittens at play.

And he so eagerly showed her everything: the new books just out, rocks, flowers, bones of swamp rabbits shells from the beach.

One day they found a bird fallen from its nest. I ask you: what is more pathetic, what disturbs the spirit of mankind more than a lost baby bird chirping frantically in the middle of this dumb cosmos. It had fallen in some glades where a cat was watching So they took it home and cared for it. They called it Ishmael, or the Outcast of Apple Tree Nest, and gave it hamburger and fries The American Death Diet, the man said. He was British, tough, slender, unknowable. Ishmael thrived and grew a few fluffy feathers. It was their baby now. They talked about it at parties, how it followed the woman around. She hated to say what it looked like. Scrotum, she whispered and laughed.
Then one day Ishmael collapsed and make horrible gasping sounds
The man stood over the panting bird, decided to put the creature out of its misery.
He would gas it. He set about building a little execution chamber,
a little box with a hole in it.
Here in this hole is where the hose for the gas will go, he told the woman.
Now don’t forget.
“How can I forget something like this?” she said in a strange voice.

When the man left her for another woman she knew what it felt like
To be swallowed up in the jaws of grief, to actually be digested
Alive by one horrible thought. It was winter. Snow piled up.
When she passed the enormous piles of snow
Heard the breaking down inside she knew that was like her soul breaking to pieces.

She knew the world had cured itself with poetry many times
And so she wrote to save herself. She wrote
Oh, verse my sting and unbreak my wing
That I might learn to fly again!
For I am a woman grieving
One who loved and loved
And could not take it leaving

But her heart would not lift, it was too heavy to even move.
She needed the man’s handsome hand, needed it so badly.
She would accept any connection just to feel its warm strength upon her again.
The night was on her, but the hand would take the night and bend it back
Back on back, open and open, like a great claw releasing her forever in the air.
Like a song on the radio is released into the air and goes everywhere, far and wide,
Here and now and forever.

When the man heard of her death he lifted his head from the face of his new wife
Like an animal that had been drinking in a clear blue pool, and looked about in fear.
There were many people who wanted to embarrass him with questions
They wanted to hear from him. Unknown people. Smirking strangers.
So he thought he would write. He would write something
He would write a song, dumb it down for the Americans
Who would make it a hit and sing it on their way to work
Singing in the morning traffic with their hair combed wet and still
With the hot jazzy spell of death stirring them, and the vision of the woman
In her nightgown falling through the sky as if she were on fire.
But no one liked his song. It was not a hit. The woman was still with them
She just kept on falling. That’s the kind of woman she was.
Not exactly your usual victim. More like a glow somewhere far away.
Like a star that is gone, forever dead, but forever blazing too it seems,
with only those who have been in both places,
Where the dead live and the living have died, know what it’s like.
To be a lady grieving, who loved and loved and could not take it leaving.
Author Notes

Jo Neace Krause has strong connections to southern and middle Ohio as do many people from Appalachia. Her family and connected relatives migrated from Breathitt County, Kentucky to the Clermont Country region after World War II. Krause is a short story writer as well as poet and folk painter (she hears she is a significant one!) with paintings in the permanent collection at The Kentucky Folk Art Center in Morehead. A short story, “Mothers and Children,” will appear in the forthcoming issue of The Arch.

About the Work

My advice to anyone who wants to write is take this test. Read but be choosy. Read not just the quiet hidden minds of poets, but begin with the public ones. Start with the Bible for its dramatic poetics of over statement, its megalomania. “I am the resurrection,” “I am the way, truth and the light.” Then on to Shakespeare. Memorize the speeches of Hamlet talking to himself, and Henry V talking to soldiers, for they will turn you into music. Say them out loud when you are doing the dishes or laundry, carry on like someone come back from the dead with a headful of flashing secrets. And if the secrets take hold, if the flesh is hooked and heart swells, then you are in. You can sit down and make your start.