

Segue

online literary journal

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Editor: Eric Melbye
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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.

Segue
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On The Other Side Of Time

An arrow pierces a diary
with unmarked pages

as the day hasn't happened.
At least with that there is nothing

to say when nothing
can happen because it can't

happen and this is different
than past lives. How can I explain

when all I can say is I'm sorry
for confusing compromise by letting

everything in like the time
he said he didn't have a problem,

that he didn't need help
you'd be forgiven for thinking

time held its breath, that night
had a punctured lung,

the sound of a man coughing
blood. It hit the walls, splatters

the floor on a day not even thought of
let alone born.

The Front Man Moves In

For him it was a career move, for her a shiny
new crucifix, something to believe in,

someone to love and eventually,
someone to hate. The trouble was he arrived

there first although she refused to read
the clues he was a front man and a front man

never leaves and a front man always stays
in that secret world and that secret world is

an open secret of what will occur. She'll be
asleep and he will be watching as the moon falls

into the maiden hair fern, as the darkness comforts,
as the darkness is a shroud. Nothing

will happen but the magic of the slightest
movement, a chair, her book open to a different page.

The windows will open, the lights turn on the
times she is out and no one will harm her.

She is safe, protected unless he gives the word
and the word will be silent and the word will be

bound and gagged, tied to a tree, the rich red soil
as moist as a bruise on a bruise. The noise

is the wind howling, then the quietest cry
through a body unrecognisable dead or alive

and she can sleep any time she likes,
pretend she didn't hear the front man who watches

because always will as he carefully leaves
messages to remind her of everything she's done,

everywhere she's been and she sleeps with
the lights on and she sleeps fully clothed. She's not

really sleeping watching the maiden hair fern,
the fronds uncurl and dead bark breaks like a raw

new song the day she decides to talk and maybe
die. Nothing happens. He always did lie.

Time Warp

Even when he collapsed on the couch,
his face turning a Buddha blue, drool
escaping his pale white lips while I turned
him over, in the coma position,

checked his airway, called an ambulance,
waited when they rushed in, placing
oxygen on his face as he slowly came
back to time well before his memory

ever did he couldn't remember who
I was although something registered in
the reptilian part of his brain and he
knew I'd never hurt him and he knew

I was safe and while he couldn't remember
my name he mouthed the word 'wife'
in amongst the precious gift his drooling
smile he had the strength to decline

an invitation to the hospital which left
me with no choice but to work night
duty at home I watched his breathing,
checked his pulse, moistened

his lips and it was as grand as a brand
new day beaming hope and all good
things when he woke, staggered to the
shower, lost in the steamy forgetfulness

except there was one thing he couldn't
forget and just when I was making coffee
I heard the car pull out the driveway and
he was gone, just like that he was gone

so I waited and while I waited got sick
of waiting and resented the time of waiting
a frozen morning frozen in my mind when he
complained he was tired and out of reach

taunting as he swallowed a bottle of sleeping
tablets and the staggering toward a time
I didn't know and he fell into it, I call the
ambulance again and I didn't know men

were capable of swooning and there he was,
he kept swooning or it could have been one
big swoon captured in time and it was too soon
he refused to go to the hospital and I left

him to find some time and found him in a
dark and dangerous mood, furious I may have
a different time than him when I asked him
to leave he kept phoning and I learnt with time

to hang up until the day there was something
in the timing of his voice and I knew I knew I knew
it was terribly wrong and I knew he was losing
it and losing time and when the hospital rang to

say he was in ICU, not expected to live 24 hours,
would I like to come in, say goodbye and didn't
they know time and time again I had said goodbye
and didn't they know I saw him under white sheets,

tubes coming from and entering his mouth,
his chest, his belly and he was white as well
and I said goodbye to someone who wasn't listening,
who was frozen in time like the rabbits on the road

on my way home I didn't hit any, everything
was cool and cloudless as I walked in the door
my heart smashed the day I don't know if the tears
were some sort of relief I wish I could delete.

Author Notes

Alison Eastley's work has been published in Mannequin Envy, SN Review, Ascent, and many other fine and quite ordinary online literary sites, as well as in many small presses and anthologies, one of which was an Australian anthology edited by Peter Porter.