

# Shell of a Story

Feb 1–28, 2021

An initiative of [OysterArt.ca](http://OysterArt.ca)

## *Why have a writing competition?*

*Oyster Art enriches a space with a unique story that's told by the people exploring a miniature world visible in the art that they may otherwise never experience.*

*As the artist, I carefully consider each piece—looking and listening for the story it's telling me—then write a short caption, a story-starter of sorts, before christening it with a one-word title. Any doubts I may have had about doing this have been vanquished as people share how certain artworks have more fully resonated with them because of it.*

*I was curious what name someone else would christen a new artwork and the story behind it. With a year of social distancing due to the Covid-19 pandemic it seemed the perfect time to create a fun way to get an answer!*

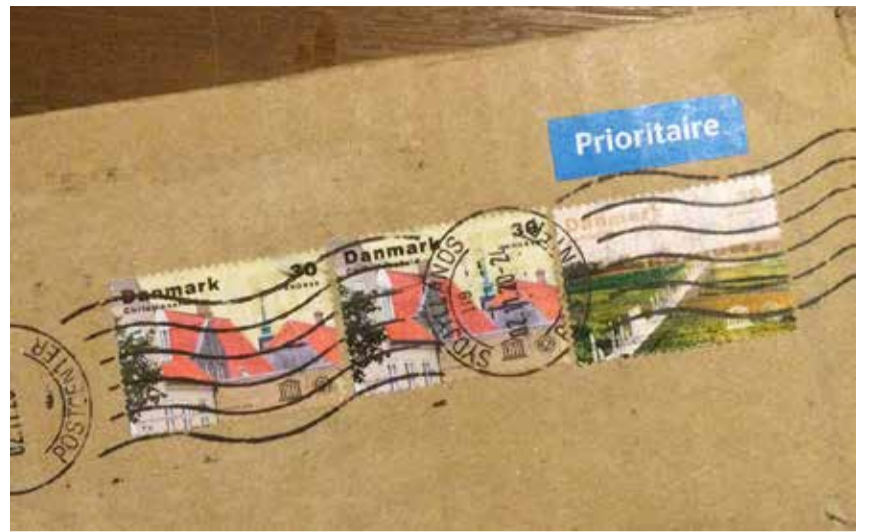
*Shell of a Story was launched as the first annual micro-story writing competition designed to spark creative writing across Canada and around the world from February 1, 2021. A new artwork inspired by a Limfjord Flat oyster shell from Denmark was the visual prompt for entrants to submit an original story limited to no more than 300 words and give it a one-word title. They were to tell the story it evoked by considering all its characteristics for a chance to win a piece of Oyster Art.*

*There were twenty-five creative stories within the word count limit submitted from Poland, Australia, United States, Denmark, Canada and the United Kingdom. I hope you enjoy reading them as much as I have. The new artwork is now called "Isbryder"—the title of the [winning story](#) by Dara Naraghi, from the United States of America.*

*—Debbie Brady, fine art photographer*

# Table of Contents

How did I get an oyster shell from Denmark? .....	1
Danish Limfjord Flat Oysters .....	2
Colin Seymour—My Danish Connection.....	3
Why oyster shells?.....	4
Visual Prompt is Name! .....	5
Shell of a Story Submissions	
ISBRYDER .....Dara Naraghi ..(WINNER) .....	United States of America..... 6
SELF-ENCOUNTER .....Jana Begovic * .....	Ontario, Canada ..... 7
CUSTODIAN .....Bronwen Cartwright * .....	Sydney, Australia ..... 8
LIMGRIM .....Moses Shuldiner .....	Ontario, Canada ..... 9
SORROW .....Esther Jones .....	United Kingdom..... 10
APHRODITE .....Kamila Tran .....	Warsaw, Poland ..... 11
LISTEN .....Rosemary Boyd .....	Ontario, Canada ..... 12
KAI .....Don Quarles .....	Prince Edward Island, Canada ..... 13
UNIVERSE .....Sharon Joseph .....	Ontario, Canada ..... 14
TEMPTATION .....Melissa Wong .....	Newfoundland, Canada..... 15
ROCKPOOL .....Veronique Bequin .....	Ontario, Canada ..... 16
EVOCAATION .....Voula Plagakis .....	Quebec, Canada ..... 17
MYOPIA .....Regan Schneider .....	Temecula, California USA..... 18
DROWNING .....Maureen McIntosh .....	New Brunswick, Canada..... 19
HERRINGBONES .....M.W. Anderson .....	Alberta, Canada ..... 20
FLUX .....Melissa Wong .....	Newfoundland, Canada..... 21
MEMORY .....Melissa Wong .....	Newfoundland, Canada..... 22
ESSENCE .....Ivon Jaimes .....	Ontario, Canada ..... 23
BELONS .....Dawn Truell .....	Ontario, Canada ..... 24
EYESPOT .....Anita Hansen .....	Denmark..... 25
Ræveøje .....Dawn Truell .....	Ontario, Canada ..... 26
PEARL .....Melissa Wong .....	Newfoundland, Canada..... 27
AMMONITE .....Paul Vreeland .....	Prince Edward Island, Canada ..... 28
OESTRA .....Kirstie McCallum .....	Canada..... 29
FLARES .....Marie Phillips .....	Prince Edward Island, Canada ..... 30



The writing prompt for “Shell of a Story” was a piece of Oyster Art inspired by a Limfjord Flat oyster shell from Denmark.

### *“How did I get an oyster shell from Denmark?”*

On October 16, 2020 I saw an instagram post showing beautiful oysters from Denmark and commented *“It would be lovely to see those #danishoysters up close with my photography gear. DM me if you are interested in sending some. In the meantime happy shucking!”* I was ecstatic when a mere four days later I received a reply graciously offering to send me some shells. With each passing week I began to wonder if the promise of shells—at his expense no less— was simply too good to be true.

***Who would take the time to clean and package oyster shells and send them to someone they had never met on the other side of the Atlantic?*** The answer: [Colin Seymour](#), an Oyster Art fan from Denmark. He sent me an entire box of shells which filled me with anticipation for what I would discover when looking through my camera lens. Limfjord Flat oyster shells are so different from the Malpeque oysters we have here on Prince Edward island. I hope you’ll enjoy learning more about Limfjord Flat oysters and my Danish connection, Colin in upcoming pages.



## Danish Limfjord Flat Oysters



Following social media posts with #oysters has allowed me to travel the world virtually: meeting and learning from people passionately involved with oysters. Connecting with [Colin Seymour via Instagram](#) introduced me to Limfjord Flat oysters, which are strikingly different from the Malpeque Oysters native to my home, Prince Edward Island, Canada.

Besides having beautifully round flat shells this is what I've learned about them so far.

The European flat oyster (*ostrea edulis*), more commonly known there as the Limfjord oyster is a native inhabitant in Denmark. It's the northernmost climate in which

this native oyster can live. They're famous for growing slowly, resulting in a firmer texture and more complex taste—a celebrity among bivalve enthusiasts.

The oyster beds on the Island of Mors, dubbed the Shellfish Capital of Denmark, are part of the last large colony of wild European oysters left in the world. The shallow Limfjord waters are teeming with oysters making it very easy to harvest them by hand if you have wellies, a bucket and a shovel!

There is so much more for me to learn and see so you know where I'm headed when it's, once again, safe to travel internationally.



If you'd like to learn more about these oysters and the place they're from these will help:

[SHELLFISH KINGDOM](#)

[SCANDINAVIA STANDARD](#)

[WELCOME TO THE ISLE OF MORS](#)

## Colin Seymour—My Danish Connection

*After seeing an artist profile of me in Home in Canada magazine, I received a call from the reader telling me how much she enjoyed what I am doing. During the conversation I mentioned the artwork inspired by oyster shells from Denmark. She found it incredible that during COVID-19, Colin and I would have discovered one another's fascination for oysters and form this partnership across the miles. She wrote to Colin explaining that she wanted to drum up media coverage for the writing competition that's using the Danish oyster shell he sent to me as a visual prompt. She asked him three questions: Can you tell me a bit about yourself? How does your business involve oysters? What inspired you to send Debbie the box of shells? This was his prompt reply:*

"I have long held an immense fascination and great love of all, things shellfish from a gastronomic point of view, and oysters in particular. I consider Oysters to be the food of gods and they offer us, mortals, a heavenly dining experience. The native flat oysters of the Limfjord have a long provenance and have been devoured here in the region for over 7,000 years as the massive Mesolithic and Neolithic kitchen middens in the area reveals.

Last autumn the stars aligned, and I was offered my dream position as Director of the Seafood Capital of Denmark Nykøbing on the island of Mors in the Limfjord and now work with calling attention to [Danish shellfish experiences](#).

I think the social media algorithms, through time, must have picked up on all my posts related to oysters together with my interest in photography, and at some time presented me to Debbie's artwork. I started following her on Instagram and she quickly reciprocated. I had previously become fond of a



Danish ceramic artist Kirsten Holm that also makes artwork inspired by oyster shells and also incorporating them in the artwork.

I became fascinated by the depth of Debbie's creative work and it's outer worldly sence and meticulous process. So, when she asked me to send her oyster shells from The Limfjord I was thrilled and excited to assist, and I have been delighted to follow the stunning results. Now I am playing with the idea to set up a joint exhibition in Denmark of Kirsten's Danish ceramic works with Debbie's photographic interpretations of Limfjord Oyster shells." — [Colin Seymour](#)

## *Why oyster shells?*



PHOTO BY CALEY JOY PHOTOGRAPHY

I'm passionate about oysters but not for their gastronomic appeal. I began taking photography classes in 2013. Being detail-oriented I quickly gravitated to macro photography. Photographing oyster shells seemed inevitable when you consider that I live in Tyne Valley, PEI located on the Canadian Oyster Coast and home to the Canadian Oyster Shucking competition. That's without also acknowledging our world-renowned Malpeque Oysters.

An oyster shell holds a beautiful, intrinsic part of our world to be enjoyed when we take the time to look a little more closely. I remember how excited I was the first time I

looked through my macro lens at a weathered oyster shell. It gave me goosebumps to see the lines, unexpected shadows and shades of colour hidden from casual view. I wanted to share my discovery with everyone.

Other subjects have come and gone, but my fascination with oyster shells has not waned. In fact I have collected them from over 35 locations on PEI alone. I'm learning everyday just how unique oysters are based on the growing location and how they're raised. Social media has introduced me to many oyster lovers around the world and I'm actively seeking shells to photograph for my collection. That's how I connected with Colin and received a box of Limfjord Flat oyster shells.

Photography engages me so thoroughly that I lose all track of time! If that means time stands still when I have a camera in my hands I hope it translates into a long life yet to live. I don't foresee an end to the exciting stories I can capture in all their glorious detail!



## *Writing Prompt is Named!*

### **ISBRYDER**

INSPIRATION SHELL ~ LIMFJORD, DENMARK

*The ice dragon, Isbryder, landed with such force that it splintered the silver and indigo crystalline ice and created a spiderweb pattern reminiscent of her iridescent scales of silver and blue.*

When I look at this Oyster Art my experience will be forever enriched by the astounding creativity of all the stories submitted. Each one took me on a new journey of appreciation for the artwork making it difficult to choose just one winner. Congratulations and thanks to Dara Naraghi for his story *ISBRYDER*. I want to give special mention to the stories *SELF-ENCOUNTER* by Jana Begoric, and *CUSTODIAN* by Bronwin Cartwright. They made the final selection extremely difficult.

***How did I find "Isbryder" hiding in there? Here's a 'small' explanation.***

ISBRYDER magnifies a small portion of the Limfjord shell but it's not a single photograph of the whole shell then simply enlarging one section. Macro photography uses a range of techniques and specialized equipment in order to create an in-focus image.

Our eyes, unlike a camera, can immediately adjust their focus when looking from area to area at different distances. When taking photographs the focus is on just one area at a time. The closer the camera is to the shell the less I can capture in focus at one time.

ISBRYDER needed 17 photographs taken of one section of the shell, each one with a different sliver in focus (see perspective photo above). A motorized focussing rail held the equipment steady and moved the camera incrementally at fractions of a millimetre. The slightest vibration would completely blur the images. A labour intensive process aligned the focused portion of each shot into a single focused image. Afterwards I developed the image guided by my artistic interpretation to portray the visual story I was being told and have the final piece celebrate what nature had created.





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## ISBRYDER

Dara Naraghi

United States  
of America

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No one knows where the ice dragons came from, nor how to explain their impossible manifestation. They simply appeared across the globe one day, creatures of legend, made flesh and blood.

With iridescent scales of silver and blue, the massive creatures could spray a mist of amber venom from their ravenous maws, instantly freezing their prey, or enemies. A glittering female, known by the locals as Isbryder – Icebreaker – came to dominate the skies over northern Denmark. But sovereignty has always been challenged, and thus another ice dragon arose to usurp her crown. A ferocious battle was fought by the beasts over the skies of Limfjorden, a shallow sound in Denmark’s Jutland peninsula, once prized for its flat oysters.

A fisherman from the village of Hvalpsund was the only surviving witness of the clash of these shimmering titans. He told of two giants flying, intertwined, rending with

tooth and claw, acrid breath cutting like golden daggers across the sky. After a brutal melee, Isbryder finally vanquished her upstart challenger, sending its lifeless body crashing to the shoal below. Upon impact, the entirety of the fjord was instantly frozen solid.

Alas, mortally wounded herself, Isbryder’s body came plummeting down to the ice-bound surface next. The force splintered the silver and indigo crystalline ice in all directions, creating a spiderweb pattern reminiscent of her own multi-hued scales. Her venom sprayed across the vast expanse, a frozen spray of speckled gold and deep ochre.

Over a century later, the circular impact crater is still visible at the center of the eternally frozen fjord, the cerulean ice reflecting the clouds above. But all that remains of the once magnificent dragon is her bleached and splintered spine, like the jagged peaks of a fallen mountain range.



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## SELF-ENCOUNTER

Jana Begovic

Ontario, Canada

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The brush in her hand moved as if driven by an outer force and not her own will, and as so many times before, she wondered from which hidden recesses in her subconscious the creative impulses gushed forth.

The painting was finished and she stepped back and looked at it as if seeing it for the first time. The hues of blue, white and ochre, along with the whole composition exuded serene joy. She looked at her creation touching the textures and the shapes of arcs with her spiritual finger. Under the layers of paint, she could feel vast territories stretch, and she gasped at the realization that with each stroke of the brush she had painted not only an outward reflection of her feelings, but also a path inwards. It felt as if she were now gazing at her own soulcape.

The shapes in the painting, especially the one of a spiral, seemed to be breathing in unison with her own breath. She scanned the picture once again looking for the signs and symbols of the charcoal melancholy and pain that had been present in many of her previous creations, but could not find even a wisp of them. Over the last couple of years she had tried to alchemize into art the painful break-up with her fiancé, and in this painting she could clearly see the emerging pearl of healing. She has painted out of herself the grief of loss and transmuted it into hope and beauty. Her brush has untied the last of the feelings entangled within her soul, restoring her life's buoyant flow. Bewitched and intoxicated by the illusion of having stepped into her own creation she encountered and embraced her new self.



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## CUSTODIAN

Bronwen Cartwright

Sydney, Australia

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Anna was drowning in light. She felt herself falling in the middle of the gallery. The room became the North Sea. At first, she struggled for bearings in the swirling water and then the tide, in its recess and return, tumbled her into the glinty mud. She felt uneven oysters intrude under her feet and falling further, dislodged a flat shell. Brittle and weathered, wafered crescents curved with a cuticle-opacity that reminded her of her own hands, wet and grabbing, as she sought to prise apart the wings of this ancient creature. Even as she tried to force an opening, she recognised the significance of her find. The shell was a custodian of the past. On its tide-extruded exterior, welts of blue and brown were arranged in such a pattern that it seemed each sky and harvest had been preserved upon its face. Years' growth and seed endeavour were held within it. She let the shell rest in her palm.

The light became trapped in the colours of the segments. Anna felt herself drawn further into its recesses. Spirals and ridges replicated the mechanism of a spine, as if the concentric fragments held remnants of vertebrae or half-fiddleheads caught unfurling. She saw fossils and ferns. Her own back felt exposed and she wondered when she would return. She felt the weight of the oyster. The sea continued its movements and her thoughts began turning and switching with the tide. In this moment, it seemed that the hinge of the shell was a ligament between herself and the natural world and that her role as a curator, at the gallery with its glass and information and important in its measure, was secondary to the role of the shell as history-keeper. With clarity, Anna realised that she was headed for the shore.



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## LIMGRIM

Moses Shuldiner

Toronto, ON Canada

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Oyster shells are like the illuminated manuscripts in ancient monasteries. Nondescript covers protect lustrous stories within. The shells of Limfjord, the finest oysters in the world, reveal an origin tale. Ajötunn, a Norse descendant of the primal world substance -Ymir, conceived and gave birth to Limgrim. This name means something enormous and gluttonous. This Limgrim grew up to be a giant pig. He grew so large that his bristles could be seen above the treetops. As he wallowed about he dug channels in the ground. One day he reached the sea and carved out the eastern inlet of the Limfjord, at Hals.

The local citizens were outraged at this damage to their territory. They brought Limgrim before a Thing, an assembly of free people and lawmakers to adjudicate disputes. The Thing found Limgrim guilty of damaging the land. As retributive justice for his actions they sentenced him to death on the breaking wheel.

Limgrim pleaded for his life. He argued that his alteration of the land had actually improved it. The inlet that he had created, albeit inadvertently, allowed fresh and seawater to intermingle. The resulting water allowed the Limfjord flat oysters to become the tastiest in the world and to lay down nacre of ethereal beauty.

To this day if you look closely at the shells of the oysters you can see images of this narrative. His tongue, symbolizing endless appetite, can often be seen. The lines represent the channels that Limgrim dug. The alternation of blue and white symbolize the intermingling of seawater and white freshwater.

Despite his outward appearance as a giant glutton, Limgrim proved to be a trickster. So does the outwardly rough, dull oyster conceal tasty and shimmering treasures within.



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## SORROW

Esther Jones

United Kingdom

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The moon was sad. She had long been hidden away, dancing among the stars, ministering to the exquisite rhythms of life on earth. She bathed the world in her glorious glow and weaved together delicate fragments with her intricate artistry.

She had long been proud of her place in the sky, which had turned, ever so slowly, from commitment to celebration.

Yet now, something had changed. Her light had dimmed and she felt heavy with grief. She no longer felt innumerable joys when gazing upon the world in all of its fullness. There was a screaming and an anger in the atmosphere, and the moon was weary of battle.

She stretched out her finger and pointed, pointed at the planet and its wasteful indifference that was breaking her fragile heart.

She knew she could no longer look down in love at this powerful mess. She had to escape before her light was extinguished and her reason was shattered.

So, in all of her great wisdom and sorrow, she departed from the sky and floated down, down into the murky depths, leaving a trail of dust and regret in her wake.

The moon came to the isolated rock and lay down her head, determined to retire from this life and its grasping, grieving ingratitude. She retreat inwards, there to pass her regal isolation away from the destruction and damage.

The world mourned her presence, feeling a slight shiver of finality upon the air, yet willingly walked on into the clutches of enticing darkness.



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## APHRODITE

Kamila Tran

Warsaw, Poland

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born at sea  
people welcomed me with praise  
their cheers deafening my plea  
with me new symbols were born  
beauty and love  
I was reborn a goddess so why was I feeling torn  
a lonely child's cries  
woke me from the sound of the shore  
and as people praised me in their hour of need, all I heard were lies.  
  
the sound of my past life rung in my ears  
and as I struggled to remember the face of my mother  
I shed a couple of salty tears;  
for centuries I was considered lucky  
being born on soft sea foam  
but this was a curse  
and as the last memory left my mind  
I was left only with the sound of  
Shhhhhh....



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## LISTEN

Rosemary Boyd

London, ON Canada

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Like a shell, the external ear swirls to receive sound energy

The auricle

We hear noise

Some we make ourselves

The almost constant chatter of a turbulent soul

You are near and yet so far

Like a child you close your eyes, cross your arms and tighten your mouth

Wishing me away

No one to hear me

No one is listening

Paralyzed ... I lay on the floor with the drapes tightly closed

Blocking out the sun

Mounting responsibility and disappointment

How did I get to this place?

Infinity ... the endless cycle ... a second is a lifetime

Lonely to the core

Not a single person

No one came

No one was listening



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## KAI

Don Quarles

Prince Edward Island, Canada

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On a muddy seabed in the Limfjord shallows, lies a large population of wild and rare Danish delicacies. They are European flat oysters and rated, alongside Malpeque Bay Oysters, as some of the finest in the world. However, unlike their teardrop-shaped, rough shelled PEI counterparts, they are flatter and rounder. Hand-picked from the cold nutrient-rich waters in this remote northern peninsula, the extreme conditions produce an intense bitter flavourful oyster that breeds these Chef favourites. Once shucked open, each shell reveals a unique story.

Embedded inside this gem, is the tale of a strong fossil-like fisherman, full of mystery. The name he was given by his parents is "KAI", which means 'Shell' in Danish. His ancestors would have fished haddock from boats and although he is from that ilk, KAI opts to hand-pick his oysters, fashioned in his hurstwic-style knitted toque.

Unlike these traditional Danish fisherman, KAI spends his long cold uncooperative weather

days with his bucket in hand, knee-high in frigid waters, scavenging the ocean floor for the crown jewel of all the molluscs. Even with his oilskin coveralls, fishing bib and rubber boots, KAI would frequently be mistaken for 'Erik the Red' with his long auburn hair and piercing steel blue eyes.

When prompted, KAI tells the tales of how these oysters grew from the larvae in the ballast water of tall ships that sailed these channels five hundred years ago and that they were delicacies that Denmark's famed King Frederik II enjoyed selfishly.

"If his Royal Highness were alive today," KAI would warn all "We would be punished for ignoring his 'three strikes and you will be sentenced to death' rule", for trespassing, fishing and farming the King's favourite culinary delight.

Such fatal consequences for those wanting an oyster adventure.

Thanks KAI for this 'Oysterious' tale.





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## UNIVERSE

Sharon Joseph

Ottawa, ON Canada

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Mother nature imbues her creations with universal qualities and infinite possibilities. The colours, the hues and the seemingly random forms come together in perfect unison and harmony to create a perfection that cannot be denied. Soothing to the eyes and captivating to the heart, this work is timeless, beautiful and perfect.



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## TEMPTATION

Melissa Wong

Newfoundland, Canada

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I was shocked when my eyes stumbled across it.

Smooth rock covered most of the oyster's shell, but parts of it stuck out from the rock wall that rose from the rocky beach sand. I heard the Limfjord, Denmark seagull population fly overhead, as I tried to count the tiny ridges.

Why was I counting the ridges?

I wanted to figure out the shell's age. Unfortunately, since the stone covered most of the shell, I couldn't figure out how old this creature had been when it met its untimely death.

Which was too bad, because I wanted to know how valuable that shell would be on eBay?

Let's be honest, there are a lot of rich people who like collecting seashells and fossils. This could be my ticket to the high life!

If I was careful, I could break the thin rock

around the shell with my carpentry tools and determine its age. If I am lucky, some celebrity would be willing to play big bucks for the honour of adding it to their private collection.

My train of thought came screeching to a halt when the poem about a walrus and a carpenter entered my mind.

Did the Walrus and the Carpenter have any right to trick and eat the oysters? Do I have any right to take the shell before me?

In some places, it is illegal to take stones or rocks from the beach because they reduce coastal erosion. Perhaps it was better to leave the shell on the beach and allow the waves to erode it into the sand. The shell's high calcium carbonate would help cut down on toxins in the soil and encourage plants to grow here one day.

Still, it seems a waste of a beautiful shell, so I took a picture.



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## ROCKPOOL

Veronique Bequin

Ontario, Canada

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We walked to the coast with sunlight in our eyes. The heat of summer on our skin, we headed for the cliffs, seeking the ocean. The pathway grew sandier. We heard the crunch of seashells underfoot. Hollowed out, broken up oyster shells, scattered along the lane, were softened by the constant buffing of sand and wind.

We reached the edge of the bluffs suddenly. Holding our breath, we craned our heads to look below the horizon to the beach at the feet of the rocky overhang. The waves were tugged away by a low tide. The rugged, otherworldly scene beneath seemed to have grown from the bottom up. It evoked the cup of a giant seashell, transformed from a fleshy mollusk's exoskeleton into a new landscape. Layered imperceptibly, secretly, in the depths of the cold ocean, protein upon minerals, it had made its way to the bay. It offered an amphitheater of pol-

ished, salt-stained, deep blue opalescence and pitted, hard mounds that drew rich, rust-coloured scalloped skirtings around the dips and rises down to a pool.

Mabel shouted out against the Atlantic wind: "Look Alice! There's even a staircase down to the pool! Isn't that something?" We made our way down, kicking our sandals, stripping to sea-readiness in our swimsuits. Mabel was right. The unexpected rockpool appeared to have a delicately ribbed staircase inviting us to descend to the watery bowl. The steps resembled an ancient creature's ribcage. They shone like old bones in the sunshine. "Come on Alice. Let's cool off for a while". Mabel took my hand and led me to the salty basin. Side by side, we let the still water wash over us. The blue of the stones matched Mabel's eyes. Later, she said the rust-coloured trims reminded her of my skin.



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## EVOCATION

Voula Plagakis

Montreal, QC Canada

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It was time for our bedtime ritual, a story, and then my son pleading for one more. Putting this child to bed is a mix of pleasure and peril. I tuck in next to him as my eyes dance over the Oyster Art hanging on the bedroom wall.

"Let's do it differently," I say. "Let's uncover the story hiding in the oyster shell."

"How do we do that?" he asks.

"We dive into it with our eyes. What do you see?"

"A stormy sea," he says, pointing to the center. I smile, satisfied that I've hooked him. "I see a profile of a man."

"Where?" His voice annoyed, perhaps for missing it.

I air trace with my finger along the white u-shaped nose down to the open mouth and chin. Wanting to merge our visions, I add, "It's a man in the middle of a storm."

"He's there too?"

"Yes, he is. Now what do you feel?"

His brows furrow and his body tenses next to mine. "Uh, I, feel...how do you feel a picture?"

"Pretend you're diving into the stormy sea."

He nods and swings his head forward as if taking a leap. "But if it feels scary."

Oh no, I'm losing him. "The man is there with you," I reassure him. Time passes as we twist our heads right to left and tracing out the man's glasses, while fathoming a cloud of white hair.

It's getting late, I narrow my target. "Now, what do you hear?"

"I hear waves, like blasts of thunder!" I pause and let him take the bait.

"What do you hear?" he asks me.

I strain my eyes, grasping four sounds. "I hear the man but it's faint, the waves muffle his voice. Be still. Shhh. Here it comes again: Goo goo to sleeeeeep."



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## MYOPIA

Regan Schneider

Temecula, California USA

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A repeated picture of the sand, sea, and sky rippling across earth's canvas in perfectly imperfect symmetry. The symbiosis between layers repeats effortlessly in tranquil lappings of miniature beach environments, though the harmony is abruptly halted by an unfamiliar undulation of silver linings. A block of shining ripples stops the repeated blend of micro-ecosystems only to create a dent in which the new material seems to grow towards. Is the interruption of an emerging anomaly a curse or a silver

lining? Our nearsightedness blinds us from the true beauty of nature's visual anomalies. The budding silver beast we believed to threaten the very symbiosis we hold so dear could emerge to be one of the most beautiful components of a picture if we allow it the chance to flourish. Perhaps it was not an interference at all but instead a signifier that nature, nor human, nor oyster can conform to the perfect waves of uniformity we create. Our Opia.



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## DROWNING

Maureen McIntosh

New Brunswick, Canada

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As i look into this picture I see the. eye of a man. It all happened on sunny afternoon at the beach in Maine. The weather was clear and no storms were in the forecast. I was 15 years old and a swimmer. I was there with my family and we were enjoying being at the beach. I was a swimmer and I spent most of my time in the water. I loved it floating around and diving through the waves. Suddenly, everyone was screaming at me. I could not hear what they were saying but when I turned around there it was! It was a huge 19 foot wave that appeared out of nowhere! I was scrambling to get out of there to no avail. Suddenly the huge waves crashed over me and there was nothing I could do. I began to believe I was going to

die right there in that moment. I was being sucked up by the under toe of the water! It was so strong I could not do anything to fight back. I had long blonde hair and I was struggling to keep it out of my face to I could attempt to see what was going on! I wanted to survive! Suddenly someone grabbed my hair and started pulling on me. I will never forget. He was a big football player and he has risked his life to save me. He picked me up and carried me out of the ocean. He was my hero and I was in love instantly. All I could see was his big blue eyes like the one I envision in this picture that seems to be in a swirl like the ocean! The blues and brown represent the ocean that was ripping up the beach.



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## HERRINGBONES

M.W Anderson

Camrose, AB Canada

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He stepped across the bearskin rug, pulled on his heavy wool cloak, and exited the mossy longhouse via the door in the central hall, ignoring the lager swilling group by the hearth. The cold salty North Sea wind, greeted him with a hot stab to his cold face, to check the fishing nets, stationed on the tide less beach below, the glistening green hills on the jagged cliff. The rolling clouds on the horizon, like nature's army, ushered in by the war drums of thunder. He looked to the sky, the twisted spherical clouds, formed a face of foreboding terror. He scanned the purple grey horizon for any sign of a mast. His son would return today, he thought and smiled. The old man

slowly walked on the sticky mud to check today's nets. Nothing yet again, he thought as he sighed. Wait, a ship. Finally Lief had returned home. He squinted through the blinding rain, and salty air. Desperately searching for the mast of the longboat he had just seen. After a few moments of futilely searching the coal black skyline, he felt the familiar taste of tears on his cheek. He turned and walked slowly back to the house, tomorrow he would do the same routine he had been doing for the years since his son went exploring one day, long ago. His sobs and the sound of crushing herring bones under his heel, mixing in sad harmony with the storm.



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## FLUX

Melissa Wong

Newfoundland, Canada

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Why do I go to the beach every day?

I enjoy the ocean waves rolling onto the sand, the damp layer of seaweed near the surf, and the cotton candy clouds lazily hanging in the sky. I enjoy wandering through the rocky cliffs as seagulls fly overhead in Limfjord, Denmark.

But I am really here for the oyster shell.

A shell half encased in smooth rock at the base of a massive cliff brings me back every day. Every day, I arrive to watch the waves slowly erode the rock and shell.

I fear that too many people believe that beauty must last forever to be valuable, and that narrows down our understanding of life. The shell's temporary loveliness gives its beauty meaning as the passage of time transforms it into grains of sand to be swept back into the ocean.

Seashells are like sand mandalas.

What is a sand mandala?

Tibetan Buddhist monks paint them using sand. They will create a work of art using millions of pieces of coloured sand to create mandalas over many days or weeks, depending on the size of the sand painting.

Once they complete the sand mandala, they will pray over their creation, and then destroy it. They will sweep up the coloured sand and throw it into a live stream to be swept back into the ocean, just like the seashell.

Nature created this oyster shell over many years. One day, it too will be broken down and swept back into the ocean.

Permanence is an illusion, beauty is flux.





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## MEMORY

Melissa Wong

Newfoundland, Canada

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Almost everyone will carry at least one extraordinary memory to their death, that feels magical. The question is when that memory will be made, and if they can recognize when they have had such a profound experience.

Sometimes these experiences will tear down everything they thought they knew and alter their lives beyond imagination.

Other times, these experiences are tiny moments that stick with them as they stumble through life—like a tiny miracle that has the power to put a smile on their face when they allow their mind to wander.

My moment happened in Limfjord, Denmark.

The smooth boulders felt good on my bare feet, and I intentionally avoided the grassier areas. The fog was moving in, but I didn't want to return home too quickly.

As I passed several rock formations, I saw a flat oyster trapped in the rocks. It was an echo of a singular life form that had been preserved within the earth. The shell had existed long before the rock had encased it. Yet, it was being rediscovered now, by the world. For a moment, I wondered if the shell was still alive and had tried to break out of the stone because it longed to live again.

It was too high for me to reach, and I didn't have a camera. I noted its location and promised I would return to take its photograph, but the next day, I couldn't find the shell rising from the rocks. It was as if it had disappeared and left me with only a memory.

That memory festered in my mind. That shell grew more beautiful beyond any reality that I could have witnessed as my mind distorted it into something ethereal. Something that now only existed in my mind.



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## ESSENCE

Ivon Jaimes

Toronto, ON Canada

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Sky, sea and land is all I see around.  
Beautiful marks in the world that everyone  
wants to explore.

And I get jealous at times, for I wish I was  
part of that list that rhymes.

But who sees me up high?

Do I have to drown, like the nearby town?

How far do I have to go, for you to know?

Mad dark blue clouds, that brings authority  
down from the sky.

White curly waves, that crack up the shore  
like they aren't sure.

And that beautiful, delicate sand, that  
stands out, but is scared to be drought.

I'm not high, can't take you to fly.

I'm not big, can't do tricks.

I'm not land, can't let you stand.

But, like those, I do not know gender, I do  
not know age, but I do know that little piece  
of essence that brings out the best.

No land, no sea, no sky, will ever see my in-  
side, for I keep everything until I die.

So you see, I have come to understand.

I may not be powerful like the eternal sky,  
making people cry.

I may not be dangerous like the foamy sea,  
hiding many things deep inside to not let  
you see.

I may not be home like your ever beautiful  
land, lending you a hand.

But, I am all in my own way.

For if you see really close, you will see I have  
them all inside of me.

And more, that you did not know.

So, come up close, you won't drown; just  
spiral high, through my mind.



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## BELONS

Dawn Truell

Ontario, Canada

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The Belon oysters of the Limfjorden were a fearless mighty crew, they battled for leadership and grew there too. Their numbers were many and rich with abundance they were. Viking hunters came from afar in their schooners sailing the high blue seas, searching, and searching to find our best oysters. As they threw in their anchors to stop and hunt, they swam into the shores with their golden brooches and golden belt buckles being swept away in the currents. We knew they were coming; we could smell the changes in the water currents and as they approached, we swam away and dug

ourselves so deep that they could not find us. As they pulled away, we saw the golden sparkles in the waters they had left behind. We gathered around them and pushed them up onto the beaches. As we laid there basking in the sun, we noticed that our outer shells were absorbing the beautiful golden light that was reflecting from the sun and bouncing off the gold right into us, oh the warmth was so wonderful. The gentle waves washed over us cleansing our souls. We had become the oyster clan of the mighty gold Belons.



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## EYESPOT

Anita Hansen

Denmark

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What a world my eye has seen... I was once a little nothing, too small for anyone to see. Carried around by the powerful currents commanding me to go wherever they went. I saw millions of little nothings like myself. Floating around, being carried away. Further and further we went. I saw weird and wonderful creations on my way. Transparent creatures floating lazily around, dragging long strings behind them. I looked up and saw the hazy silhouettes of creatures that were not quite swimming and not quite in the water either. I could hear their vague screams from a distance as if they were in another world. I met a nervously swimming silver-coated acquaintance, too fast for me to catch up. There were countless numbers of ones like him. Swimming one way and then quickly changing direction. I saw big, monotonously roaring and growling creations, following the silver-coated creatures

with supernatural fastness. They seemed not to be from this natural world. They took the silvery ones in, grabbed them, and gone they were. I was carried around, floating in this dreamy world. Time went by and the world I was passively watching changed. The currents finally let go of me and I fell. Down, down, down. The creatures changed. I changed. My eye now saw creatures sliding slowly, yet elegantly along the bottom of the fiord. I saw a proud thing marching sideways, scaring away the flattest creature, I have ever seen, that was hiding in the sand. What a cosmos I have settled in. Now I look around with my eyespot - and I spot creatures like myself surrounding me. I see shells of those who once were. This is my destination. In the faint distance, I hear the growling and roaring creation coming this way.



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## Ræveøje

Dawn Truell

Ontario, Canada

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My name is Ræveøje and I come from the cool waters of Northern Jutland. Being a Limfjord oyster we are known as the Royal Family of the oyster world. I grew up surrounded by the richness from the fresh waters of the Fjord and the flowing inlet of the North Sea. As I grew from spat and found my shell my family and I spent our days drifting along the tide in the flowing cool waters. Then one day we were swept into the shallow waters and we got separated, I realized suddenly that I was alone and scared. As I nestled down into the rocks and sand with a tear in my eye, suddenly I heard the voice of a little girl, she picked

me up and said you are the most beautiful oyster I have ever seen! You are alone, you must be sad, my name is Ella, and I will call you Ræveøje, I am going to take you home with me and take care of you. After gently petting my shell, Ella put me into her pocket and off to her home we went. We had a beautiful walk along the beach as Ella sang to me in her gentle little voice the song Remember Me. Ella placed me on her pillow and sang to me everyday and every night. I knew that I was the luckiest oyster in the world as I had found someone who loved me.



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## PEARL

Melissa Wong

Newfoundland, Canada

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The old Limfjord flat oyster had no regrets when she passed away. She had grown one of the largest shells in the reef and had lived a good life. Her shell was buried under the other oysters, lost in the sands, and encased in rock for years.

Over time, the ocean eroded the oyster's makeshift coffin and broke down its hard shell.

The sand from the eroded shell at last returned to the salty, brackish waters where it was spawned to find new oysters had fused together on older shells or rocks, forming new rock-like reefs for marine animals and plants to thrive.

A single grain of sand from this Limfjord flat oyster was washed into the Pacific Ocean where it was trapped within a Pinctada oyster. Trapped in the Pinctada shell's pearl-coloured insides, the single grain of sand irritated the young oyster so much that the sea creature produced nacre, a protective coating to reduce irritation, and created a pearl.

And so, the old Limfjord flat oyster was reborn.



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## AMMONITE

Paul Vreeland

Prince Edward Island, Canada

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See that? It doesn't belong. It's disappearing.  
But it's not gone."

"Like youth."

"Seriously."

"Seriously, what's the concern?"

"Don't you see what it is... what it was? An ammonite.

"A what?"

"An ammonite, a fossil of a once-living creature, a sea creature."

"You mean here? Where these lines curve.. If it extends around ... It looks like it could have been one of those chambered nautilus things."

"Yeah. Exactly. The ones I've seen have been ammonites, fossils of things now extinct."

"So, is this a fossil of a fossil?"

"Like a history of a history, or a shell of a story. It gives only a hint. But enough of one."

"Your point being...?"

"Does I have to have a point?"

"I don't know..."

"Well, don't you think it odd that it's here? And that we should be looking at it? Like it has appeared just for us and to give us a message..."

"The message being..?"

"Don't you have any sense of imagination? Why this --it may as well be a portrait of me, you, whoever. Ah, yes... I'll call it 'A portrait of a Young Woman in the Act of Disappearance.'"

"That's cruel."

"What, my disappearance?"

"No, what you said about me. I do have a sense of imagination, and, by the way, I don't see it your way."

"Oh?"

"Nope."

"Well... do tell."

"It's not an ammonite; it's not a fossil. Ok, it's the remains of some sea creature, but that creature is not extinct. Not every corpse is a fossil; and not all chambered nautiluses – is it nautiluses or nautili?...are extinct."

"So, what's it doing here?"

"Giving me a message."

"Giving you a message?"

"Yup."

"And..."

"One of us might be extinct."

"What does that mean?"

"Can't say. It's only a shell of story."



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## OESTRA

Kirstie McCallum

Canada

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*Crassostrea virginica*, the Eastern Oyster: she's harder than horn or bone; harder than ice or indifference: as hard as cement. She has a crystalline soul of twinned hexagons; a delicate net of calcium carbonate and silica; mineral spirals packed tight into a life-saving shell. Layer upon layer she grows in the murky blue darkness of the tidal bay; she survives the spikes and falls each season, from ice-locked to sun-warmed days. Hard-headed *Ostrea*, named by the Romans who buried her in ice and straw until feast days, when they brought out her flesh to melt in their mouths. Because that's her secret: inside the shell, this softest bivalve filters the ocean, dreams the ocean, drinks the ocean, breathing five litres a day. Keystone species, she trans-

forms the seafloor into a thriving universe of flora and fish; she gives shelter to anemones and barnacles, striped bass and black drum. The layers of her shell are a folded topology; she bends space with her winged form, and gives life a foothold in the green gloom. Soft gills and smooth muscle in a luminous mother-of-pearl chamber; blue-pink and silver; frost grey and sea-foam. This nacre palace, this sleep sarcophagus; but in dream she works, like the weaver spirits who spin the nets of fate, she works the difficulties and the pains, the sand that disturbs her rest. Nacre: white spit, precious protein spun into hard light; the pearl from the sand, the pearl from the dream, the pearl in the heart of the oyster.





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## FLARES

Marie Phillips

Alberton, PE Canada

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The hungry friends of need  
Are here today for what it is worth  
In coupled competitive desire  
Consumed by the diamond drowned easy way  
Forever leeching  
All that is good  
And gone tomorrow  
Searching  
Leaving a trail of unbalance  
for the innocent  
Evidenced by their side view  
Of the world  
So jaded...  
Hurt flares mighty fangs  
When not absorbed by LOVE  
And tamed by fairness and compassion  
Forever wondering will be  
The soul who isn't in tune  
With the creator  
Who through it all , IS ALL.



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