

# Puffin Circus

November 2010  
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Dear Readers,

We have received many hits to the homepage recently so I can only assume that many of you are eagerly anticipating November's issue of Puffin Circus. We've gotten a little behind schedule, as we received some very good work at the last minute that we just had to include. I really hope that this issue lives up to your expectations.

I am so happy to see that the views of our first 3 online issues continue to increase, and that each new issue quickly out performs the last. It is a testament to the type of poetry that has been submitted to us. I am sure you will continue to surprise us with you work.

I am also happy to say that, as you may have noticed already, we have finally received some good art for Puffin Circus. I hope that this becomes a trend. If you are an artist and would like another showcase for your work, please send some to us. We are constantly in need of great art.

There are so many things to tell you. We would like to put out a themed issue very soon. We have scheduled December's issue for the very broad and simple theme of "Winter". If you have written any poetry that pertains to winter in any way then send it to us. If we don't receive enough "Winter" poetry for December we will just move it to January or February.

Before I let you read this issue, as usual I want to encourage you to buy literary magazines in print, and support your local poet or poetry organization. If you don't have an organization nearby then start one.

I hope everyone enjoys this issue.

Sincerely,  
The Editor

P.S. – Feel free to tell us what you think. If you have any comments please leave leave them on our Blog or e-mail us at [puffincircus@gmail.com](mailto:puffincircus@gmail.com) .

# MONOPOLY

*By Ben Rasnic*

was either the car or the dog, at times  
the wheelbarrow, always something with wheels  
or feet to maneuver around the board  
pass GO and collect \$200

but a hat? an iron? a thimble?  
had Parker Brothers merged with Doobie Brothers?  
no matter as every game played out the same always  
broke by midnight playing against my brothers

the three of us in matching plaid pajamas  
wired on ice cream floats, Oreo cookies  
and coca-colas whenever the snow would sock us in  
“No school tomorrow” meant Monopoly Marathon;

shake rattle and roll the dice  
take a chance card and  
a ride on the Reading  
or open up Community Chest & find  
a Get out of Jail Free card

I was always The Slumlord of the Purple Squares,  
Baltic and Mediterranean  
the estates of my Fiefdom;  
sometimes proclaiming myself the King of Marvin Gardens

but Park Place and Boardwalk  
were never in the cards  
except to land there at my brother’s hotel  
and lose everything  
and that’s the way it always was

and now finding myself  
down on my luck  
this comes to mind—

seems the die has been cast  
and I’m out of the game;

flat broke  
without even a thimble  
to my name.

## The Pool

By Ben Rasnic

Aqua blue absorbs  
the skin of an azure sky  
textured by long, slow  
summer days.

Brown bodies  
wrapped in wet towels  
on a concrete beach  
baste in ultraviolet rays;  
smell of chloramines and Coppertone.

An undulating jukebox  
spins black vinyl platters  
backwards over pulsing speakers  
at 45 rpms

ripples  
from the deep  
blue abyss  
wave upon wave  
swirling counter-clockwise  
into the fading light.

It's 1972 again,  
silhouette poised  
at the water's edge.

I lean in;  
It pulls me under.



*Ben Rasnic is originally from Jonesville, a small rural town in extreme southwestern Virginia, population <1000. After graduating from UVA-Wise, he migrated west and experienced a dozen years with an offset printing firm in Denver, Colorado. Currently, Ben resides in Bowie, Maryland and earns a paycheck as an accountant for a paper recycling company in Alexandria, Va. His poems have appeared in numerous online and print journals.*

## To Whomever Ripped Wordsworth's 'Daisy' from This Library Book

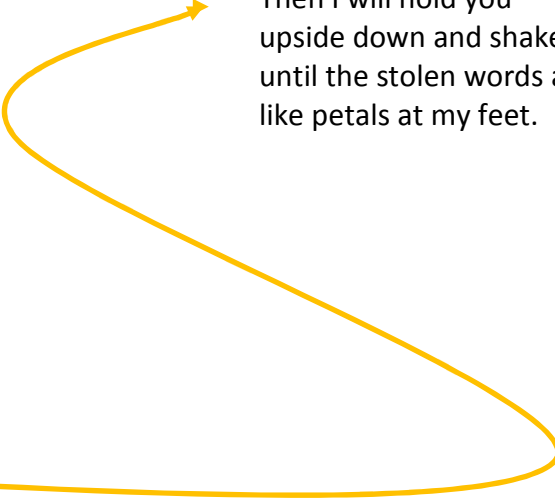
*By Laura Garrison*

I turned a page,  
and there it wasn't.

Imagine, thief, my bewilderment  
at finding only ragged stumps  
jutting from the binding,  
pallid and dry as cornhusks.

I do not know your name,  
but I will follow your trail  
of shortcuts, plucked leaves,  
and trampled spines.

Then I will hold you  
upside down and shake you  
until the stolen words are piled  
like petals at my feet.



## The Night My Grandmother Almost Ran Off to Join the Circus

*By Laura Garrison*

Music and dancing lights  
drew her through the darkness  
over bare boards to the attic window.  
Strange chords thrummed,  
humming dissonant parodies  
of Sunday's dreary organ hymns,  
and colored lanterns bobbed,  
bright as anglerfishes' lures.  
Her fingers gripped the windowsill  
as she leaned precariously  
into the night, quivering with wonder,  
while the wind ruffled her sleeves  
with cotton candy breath.  
She imagined soaring above  
the cheering crowd on a trapeze  
inside an orange-and-yellow-striped tent.  
Afterwards, she would play hearts  
with the Siamese Twins, and let  
the Bearded Lady paint her toenails.  
But after a thorough search  
turned up only one of her shoes,  
she climbed back into bed,  
where her dreams were hot and dusty  
lions pacing in their cages.

*Laura Garrison grew up in Erie, Pennsylvania, and currently lives in Maryland with her husband Justin. Some of her other work has recently appeared or is forthcoming in Jersey Devil Press, Pig in a Poke, Niteblade, Enchanted Conversation, and The Legendary, among others. She likes jumping into piles of leaves and sprinkling nutmeg on hot apple cider.*



**IRELAND, 1992**

**(Powers Court)**

***Keith Moul***

A white horse  
wandered into this light,  
bowed to the grass's pull  
a moment before a gallop.

Many forces stir  
beneath a sultry peace  
(this is the Republic!),  
suitable for framing.

Battle scars lie buried  
behind eyes, in the sharp  
wit and loud voices  
ringing at the pubs.

Had I talent for song,  
I would sing here, in shade  
beneath the ancient green hills,  
with shining gardens at my back.

*Keith Moul has recently begun publishing pictures, but he has been publishing poetry for more than 40 years. Next month Blue & Yellow Dog Press will publish his chapbook "Grammar of the Mind."*

## Strategic Walk Out

By Karen Kelsay

It's a business decision—

leaving the rose bush your daughter planted  
for Mother's Day, and the little  
indentation on the sidewalk  
where the cat drinks sprinkler water  
every morning.

It's logical—

audibly saying good bye  
to the purple shawl of hydrangea  
you nurtured each summer; to hope  
no one erases pencil marks on closet  
doors where your children once  
measured themselves.

It's prudent—

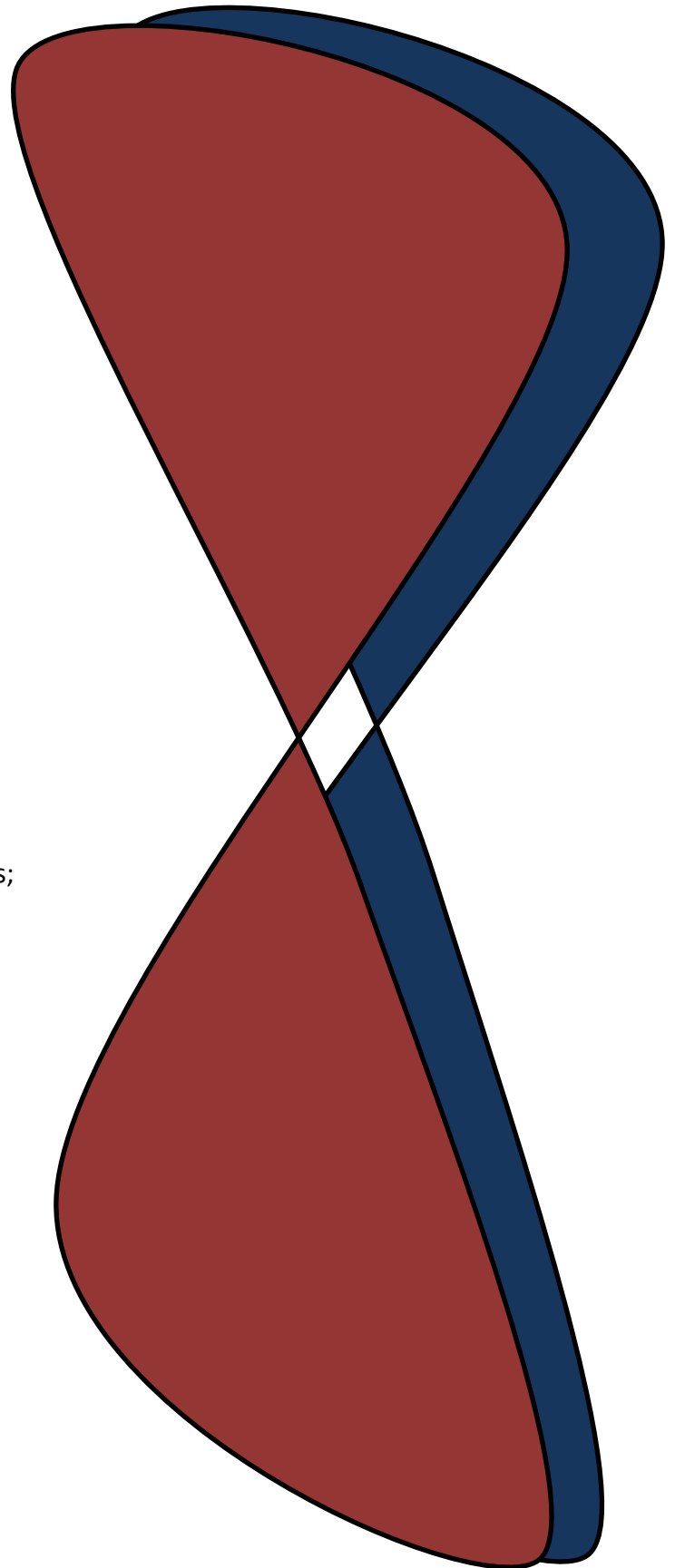
to relocate when the lack of equity  
is growing quicker than wispy spikes  
of red shrimp plants beneath plantation shutters;  
when a mortgage becomes heavier  
than the dead pine by the wall.

It's diplomatic—

to tell loved ones how  
the ceiling leaks in winter and the wallpaper  
no longer suits you; to joke halfheartedly about  
crabgrass, flaking stucco, and yard work  
throwing your back out.

It's character building—

lying outright to save a tear.  
Pretending not to notice your good friends'  
dismay; to be nonchalant and happy  
when you walk away.



## Leaving Sea World

By Karen Kelsay

Jacques Cousteau would have loved  
our living room, where Dad displayed his creepy  
collection of sea creatures inside the dark  
paneled den. In this grotto-shrine

there were no pictures of daughters  
in frilly dresses on the mantle—only a looming  
photo of an eel sliding from its cove,  
with a sheephead and giant grouper

making their debut over the sofa. By the door  
a parrot and dolphin fish were hung.  
Our coffee table had cork legs with shapes  
of crushed abalone embedded in the surface

and the glass lamp was filled with cockle  
halves, its shade was made from boat canvas.  
A hammerhead shark's teeth and sand dollars  
were wedged between diving books on the shelves.

At age three, Dad put a wetsuit on me.  
Each summer I joined a swim team, snorkeled  
and scuba dived. He helped make my surfboard  
and cheered me on when I caught a wave.

One July I noticed bikinis looked more  
appealing than a one piece— that I liked ice cream  
better than a salt water-itch and a sandy scalp.  
I gave up diving gear and tackle boxes,

decided fish have a disgusting feel to them and that freaky  
things lived in coral reefs. I realized jellyfish could sting,  
sharks were ugly, wetsuits were uncomfortable  
and people could run out of air using tanks.

I bought myself a little ruffled sundress and stretched  
out in a chair by the pool. I slathered Coppertone  
on my legs and put lemon in my hair. I stopped praying  
I would grow fins and that my photo  
would be hung on the wall.

*Karen Kelsay is a two-time Pushcart Prize nominee and the author of five chapbooks: A Fist of Roots (Pudding House Press 2009) Somewhere Near Evesham (The New Formalist Press 2009) Song of the Bluebell Fairy (Pudding House Press 2010) Buttercup Garden (Victorian Violet Press 2010) In Spite of Her (Flutter Press 2010). Her book, Dove on a Church Bench, will be published next year by Punkin House Press. Karen is the editor and creator of Victorian Violet, an online poetry magazine. She lives in Orange County, California, with her British husband and two cats.*

## Br'er Wild Man

By Ray Succre

Today it happens staring into my bathroom,  
through junk-stranded loose hair to my chest.  
I draw it aside like blackbird drapes,  
and throw my spear at the towel rack.

Thock!, and a wooden crash on damp linoleum.

Until sometime, if I wore a belt of neck-wrung pelts,  
I'd begin my alphabet with cramped low noise,  
but I wear t-shirts, boots. I orate.

My mate has seen the sad name of nothing  
and how brutish I can ghost in my young blood,  
how firmly I can lose my civil name,  
and she is too polite to interrupt.

The rack fallen to disarray and the porch navigated,  
its railing leaped and my grunt given,  
I crawl quiet into the brush of the backyard  
and take a screaming bird for my meal,  
while my mate sighs her best,  
refolding the towels in the bathroom,  
leaning my spear against the hamper.

*Ray Succre is an undergraduate currently living on the southern Oregon coast with his wife and son. He has had poems published in Aesthetica, Poets and Artists, and Pank, as well as in numerous others across as many countries. His novels Tatterdemalion (2008) and Amphisbaena (2009), both through Cauliay, are widely available in print. Other Cruel Things (2009), an online collection of poetry, is available through Differentia Press.*

## Contemplating Clearing the Woods

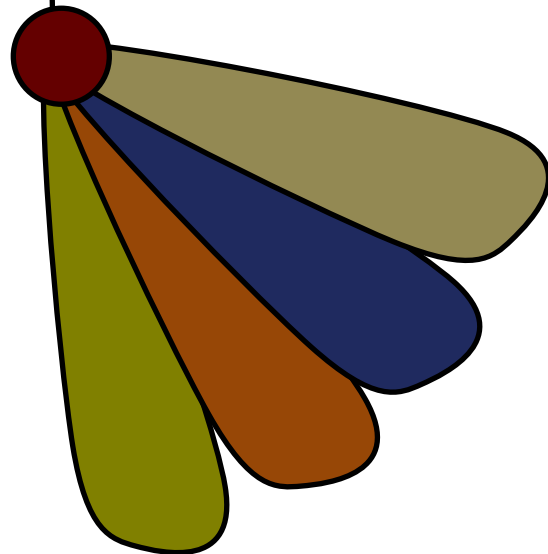
By Glenn Irwin

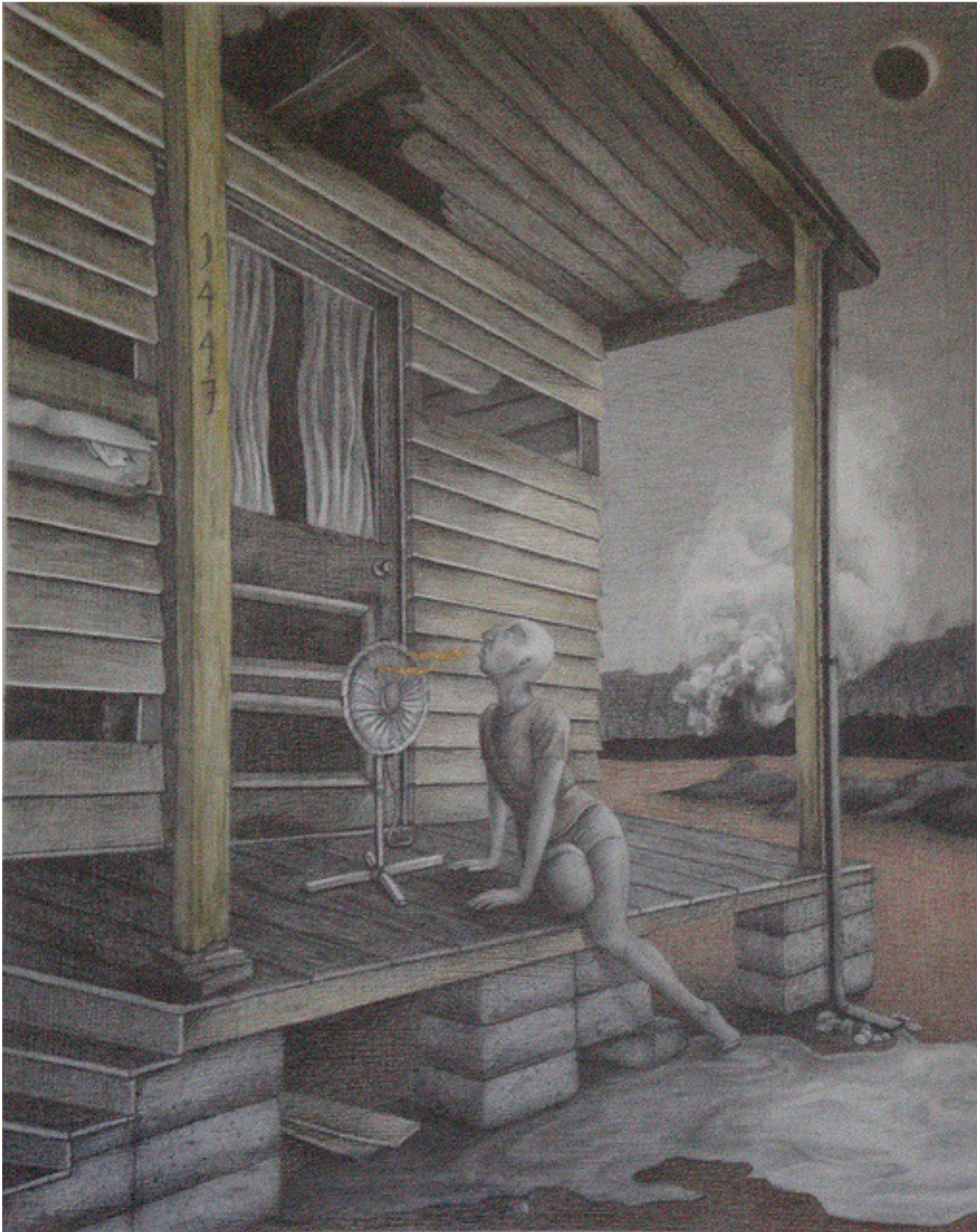
As I walk the hill, black snow birds shoot  
from the brush as if, by striking the earth,  
I've created them;  
they flutter and disappear, dark sparks in this  
new November air.

A woodpecker cleans insects  
from a downed sassafras that smelled  
like spiced wine when I first cut into it.  
She circles the trunk into the void  
between the tree and the ground;  
her tail feathers touching silver grass.

I would still like to section that tree,  
split it for steps leading down the hill  
into the woods, rough steps that  
wander through wild roses, honeysuckle,  
under the poplar tulip.

*Glenn Irwin lives in St. Louis and teaches writing and literature at the University of Missouri.*





Man with Fan - Jenny Starr-Busch Johnson