

# THE MASTHEADS X The Berkshire Eagle fold #10

Our final fold of 2019 is a celebration of the great creators whose work has been a part of the Mastheads this year. They include: **Historical figures of the Gilded Age Berkshires:** James Van Der Zee, Edith Wharton, Henry James, Mark Twain, W.E.B. DuBois, **Commissioned visual artist:** Felt banners by Megan Craig, **Writers in Residence:** Toni Judnitch, Rachael Uwada Clifford, S. Erin Batiste, Sam Max, James Davis, and **Fireside poets:** The Third Grade Class at Morningside Community School.

Thank you for participating in the Mastheads!  
Tessa Kelly, Sarah Trudgeon, Jeffrey Lawrence, Chris Parkinson



## TONI JUDNITCH

### Bird

If you're alone in the dark, there are things you can do. You can count to one hundred. You can look at the plastic planets glowing green on the walls and green on the floors because they fell down, the tape wouldn't stick to them. You can press your fingers into your eyelids until you see white splotches. You can. You can wait and wait and wait because you are alone. You are alone, and you can't sleep, and it's okay not to sleep sometimes. Jake says this sometimes, it's okay to stay up all night, and then you can sleep all day, and you are alone, and it all works out. It does.

Sometimes, when you and Vera wait, you ask each other questions. What happens to bugs when it rains? What does it feel like to be a crow flying in a thunderstorm? Does it hurt? What does it look like inside an anthill and if you pour water on it, what happens then? Do they all drown? Do their rooms fill up? What does lake foam taste like? Is it salty? What happens when the sun goes out and it's dark all the time? What happens then? How do we know it's going to rise anyway? And in the dark the questions feel bigger, they feel giant, and so you have to stop thinking about them.

You can count. You can count again. By twos. By threes. You can look out the window and try to see something. You can wait, and the sun comes up eventually, it does, and it's you and you are waiting on the bed with the crinkly plastic sheets when the boys come, and they say, breakfast. They say, mom is sleeping, and there she is, on the floor, her arms spread out like a bird. But you don't have a mother. Your mother is under dirt somewhere, and it's easier not to have one. It's easier, you know this now. And it's easy to let the let the boys lead you into the small kitchen and watch them shove hamburger buns into the toaster, and there is nothing to put on it, the tub of butter is growing green, and the hamburger buns have circles of blue, but you don't have to say anything, you can stand there and smell them burn. And when the smaller boy hands you a piece, and it's black, and he asks you, why don't you talk, you can shrug. You can eat what you're given.

You have a shirt that's not your shirt, and you don't know where your clothes are. You ask the boys, and they shrug. They say, maybe in the wash, maybe thrown out. Yeah, maybe they're in the trash, they say, and they step on a little button on the can in the kitchen, and you can look in there, but there's only eggshells and pieces of plastic. You can keep looking. There is a big pile of laundry in the other room on the floor, and somewhere in that pile is your clothes, and in your clothes the piece of paper sits crumpled with the phone number on it, and now it's lost. Now the paper is gone. You lost it.

## RACHAEL UWADA CLIFFORD

### Teeth

The sleeping began sometime in the last year—the members of the Nnaji household falling asleep without notice, at unusual times of day, in unusual and uncomfortable places. In their house, people sleep deeply and are almost impossible to wake. Michael, who is sixteen, falls asleep on the bathtub's edge or the back porch steps, hunched into himself, his mouth resting on his hand, like the Thinker. Easter, who is eight, falls asleep playing tea party in the scrubby patch of yard. Her back leaning against the oak tree while her dolls' careful triangles of bread go stale, are plucked away by birds. Mrs. Nnaji falls asleep coming home from work, after she parks in the street but before she unbuckles her seatbelt, her thin hands still gripping the wheel. In the mornings, after getting up and going down to the kitchen, Mr. Nnaji falls asleep standing in the quick, pale light, the wide pages of his newspaper enveloping his head. Peter is the only one who doesn't sleep.

Peter, almost thirteen, is a skinny, broad-shouldered boy. Eyes set wide. Each side of his long head is trimmed low, and a thicket of dark curls, shaped like tiny pen springs, rises from his crown. He has his father's jaw. Square, solid. And his mother's symmetrical, cavity-resistant teeth. (That was among the other strange things that happened, that year: A whole, beautiful, intact tooth fell clear out of his mother's mouth without warning one evening while she was drinking tea. An incisor.) His skin is deep brown, his lips an even deeper brown, except for a rosy flush just inside the lower one, which makes him avoid smiling. He tends to set his mouth in a line, as though he is walking in the cold.

Peter doesn't sleep. He tends the sleepers. He carries Easter and her dolls inside, feeds the forgotten tea to his father's plants. He gently pries his mother's fingers from the steering wheel and reclines her seat. He holds Michael's shoulders and walks him from the bathroom to the bedroom. He folds his father's newspaper and eases him into a chair. Sometimes, in all of this, the Nnajis speak their dream-language—they mumble dream-words to Peter. But they never wake.

## S. ERIN BATISTE

WANTED:

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BDDQ-4-FVRFS

Bed dwelling drama queen now hiring forever friends on a full-time basis. Veteran thrifters and enthused brunchers are encouraged to apply. Must have experience in dealing with an extroverted introvert. Contradictory as a sunshower. Showy. Possessive. Weepy. Prone to loneliness, even at a crowded party or poetry reading. A penchant for dresses, oversharing, making lists and tea recommended. Trained to gracefully tackle trust issues and social treasons as dainty, as delicate as lace. Never forget her birthday or the death anniversaries of anyone who ever loved her. Able to steel themselves against gossip, pettiness, and manipulation. Though these days she uses her powers for good, mostly. Tracking trines, squares, sun and moon cycles, early warnings for every retrograde are prerequisites. She is her own time zone. Willingness to work bewitching hours, overtime may be necessary to charge, channel, align crystals and chakras alike. Competitive salary consummate with companionship.

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WANTED:

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HPYPSMT-4-SS

Once-in-a-lifetime soulmate, sturdy. For a happy pessimist but polite Sunday-everyday-dresser and good enough hostess if she'll have you inside awhile. A pillow princess, sure, please indulge her: fussy lilies fresh with spring, bubbles, butter, rich truffles are said to stir her interest. Loyal to a fault. Hates all small talk but desperate to be known. Secretly sensitive, easily wounded, cries over the littlest of losses. Closets her miseries in bad tempers and repertoire. Craves sharing meals but also space, sleeps alone. Craves a reliable, consistent, brick house gentleman. Age in light years. Must ask about her day daily. Skilled in actually listening. Must tolerate stubbornness and stanzas. Who will still allow her room to grieve her father: mortal, martyr, myth near perfect now, now saint man, canonized in memory. Longs for warm arms. Longs for softness. A candlelit classic sweet tea man. Must have a strong heart. *REFERENCES REQUIRED.*

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WANTED:

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DLD-4-RMGGG

Doll seeks replacement mother, grand or great to tend her yesterdays. She has amassed each hurt into her own galaxy. Must not mistake this shimmering sadness for beauty. A soothsayer who specializes in the area of repairing auras. Provide unseasonably sound structure. Quilting a plus. Said surrogate must be expert nurturer, certified. Stitch insecurities and nurse betrayals leftover from the era of afterschool television. Carefully handle episodes of rogue locomotive chatter and scalding, volcanic tears. Can manage late blossoming. Teach her to lessen grudges, and control. Prefers a baker, whose desserts and buttery essences will exorcize her laziness and love of linens, their spiced cinnamon laced cakes coaxing and causing her to forsake all foam and comforter fortresses. Velvety midnight spirit, whose lavender speak restores.

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## SAM MAX

*Natural History is a play that follows four teenage boys who were involuntarily grouped together to complete a school project in the woods. Excerpts:*

*Silas speaks to the audience.*

SILAS

So you're on this road trip in 2005, right?

It's you and your sister and your mom and your dad. All four of you are driving through the Midwest to your aunt's house in Kalamazoo. You've been sitting on your asses for like five straight hours. The end credits for the first Spy Kids is playing on the in-SUV DVD player. And what really starts to horrify you is that someone's paused the video on the name "Alan Cummings." It's not the name that's scary, it's the fact that the screen's been stuck like that for a full century. The name "Alan Cummings" looks like it's supposed to be in motion, but someone paused it right at the moment his name is supposed to sweep across the screen, finally transitioning to a different godforsaken name.

Over the past two hours of the film everyone has become permanently damaged. Your family is wilting. And no one cares to actually shut the movie fully off. No one even wanted to watch the movie in the first place. But here you are. You finished it. You swallowed it whole, like a programmed fucking automaton, while your mom pawed at her Blackberry.

"This is not what winners do" is a thought you have. "This is not what being a winner feels like." Something has seized your body, and you've wasted your life, but you can't do anything because you're stuck in a car that smells like a congealed carton of milk, and it's hurdling through space, and if you get out, if you just roll your body out the door and onto the highway like a dumb log, the consequences will be much worse.

The Michigan-bound-hell-machine glides on. And everyone is breathing through their mouths. You're not hungry but you could consider being hungry.

But your sister? Well, she passed out halfway through the movie, and now she's woken up and she's licking her teeth. She just decided she's ready to murder someone with a pair of rusty fingernail clippers for some food.

And what's worse? There aren't regular restaurants for miles, and your sister is threatening to rip out every single one of her head hairs if she doesn't eat soon. Your whole family quickly realizes that you're all going to have to bend to a tiny person's forceful whims. The only way out is to feed your parasite.

The birds on the telephone wires peter out. They give way to an enormous yellow sign. And that's it.

That's when you realize you're going to have to eat at the Golden Corral.

*A pause*

There's nothing as depressing as being strung along for something you don't want.

...

*In the woods, Adam stands naked before Silas.*

ADAM

All four of us were building a diorama. You were in charge of making the animals. Gabe was in charge of making the trees. Caleb was in charge of making the labels. I was in charge of making the grass. We were all sitting at the same table, I don't know where.

*Adam sits on a stump across from Silas, looking into Silas's eyes.*

You were drinking a glass of just coffee creamer. The rest of us were drinking pop. Then some other stuff happened – and then all of a sudden you started freaking out. Your scissors weren't working or something. You were screaming about your scissors not working, but everyone else was already using theirs. You kept begging for our scissors. You said you needed us to finish your job.

*Silas looks at his lap.*

We couldn't figure out why you were screaming And then inside the unfinished diorama, there appeared this little tiny figurine. Almost like it crawled out of the cardboard. None of us could remember making it. And then we heard this tiny sound, like a fly darting too close to your ear. The figurine was calling up from the mess of shredded construction paper and spray-painted sand and shoddy trunks of trees that hadn't been glued down yet. And it said:

*Adam puts his head down.*

SILAS

Hello?

*Adam brings his head up.*

ADAM

(tiny voice calling up)

"There's something about the feeling of being watched when you're completely alone! There's something about how your actions come from people who have been watching you, even when they're not watching you! Even when you're all alone in your bathroom!"

*Adam puts his head down. Lifts it again.*

All of us heard it. The tiny voice. But we all just got up and left, man. You stayed at the table, staring at the haunted figurine. I don't know why.

## JAMES DAVIS

Bo

"a pal" –  
*The Official SCRABBLE Players Dictionary*

An oh short of honey, my friend-zone bo.  
A why short of youth, my good ol' bo.  
An all-American homey-nym, my unromantic bo.

A ho short of homeless, my sheltered, privileged bo.  
A gum short of creole, my bland, Yankee bo.  
A les short of queer, my cisgender, hetero bo.

*Au naturel*, my crunchy, granola b.o.  
Not Hollywood gold, nor silver-screen b.o.  
A Craigslist compromise, my \$25 o.b.o.

A terrible dancer, my jangling Mister Bo.  
Kind of a schmo, my so-so, bobo bo.  
We see each other, though.  
Good peeps—my dude, my bro.

Do

"the first tone in the diatonic musical scale"  
"to begin and carry through to completion" –  
*The Official SCRABBLE Players Dictionary*

See "ho." See "mo." See "am" and "be" and "is." See "up" and "go."

See "fag." See "luv" and "law," "how" and "cum," "why" and "you," "out" and "now."

See "echo." See "here" ("hear.") See "kiss" ("tell.") See "home" ("poof.") See "done" ("gone.")

See "major," "sharp," "panic." See "drone," "yearn," "alone."

See "prayer" and "closet" and "church" and "family" and "fucked" and "futile" and "future."

See "honesty." See "abandon." See "goodbye." See "forward." See "through."

See "beginner." See "finisher." See "discrete" (not "discreet").

See "complete."

from Ta

"an expression of gratitude" –  
*The Official SCRABBLE Players Dictionary*

Ta, my depression,  
for the days off work  
for teaching me to appreciate k.d. lang  
for slowing my roll, as the kids say  
for disinterring my live-buried childhood, brushing the soil off its body,  
pumping air in its lungs, and making it speak the terrible things it  
had been led to believe:  
love never lasts  
not even the other faggots want you  
you are not beautiful, nor do you deserve to be beautiful  
you have been left for dead  
for leaving me at a loss for words  
for needing more than words  
for needing sobs and wails, screams into throw pillows, bawling and  
puling, snot, silent tears in grocery aisles, on hold with the  
insurance agency, on the Free Mall Ride, on therapists' couches  
and yoga mats and gay-church pews, crying until my throat was  
sore, crying until my tear ducts bubbled  
for not being *about* anything  
for raising your voice loud enough for me to acknowledge you  
for shutting the fuck up

Ta, God,

for existing and not existing  
for being non-binary that way: real and fake, a quantum  
for being way cooler than church  
for the baroque art of blasphemy  
for the Bhagavad Gita  
for the Tao Te Ching  
for the Bible, its many horrors and absurdities and ditties and arcana  
for *Paradise Lost*  
for Leibnitz  
for Nietzsche  
for Flannery O'Connor  
for, believe it or not, *Game of Thrones*  
for the beauty of men  
the meadows of their stomachs and legs  
their thick, bosky eyebrows  
their stupid pouts and exaggerated repose  
their cubist chests and cocks and posteriors  
for the word *callipygian*  
for shutting down heaven  
for shutting down hell  
for the sound of tangerine wedges as they separate

*The following poems were written by 3rd graders as part of Fireside, the Mastheads' poetry-in-schools collaboration with Morningside Community School.*

### 3RD GRADE COLLABORATION

#### Poetry

Poetry is a candy bomb  
Poetry is a flossing baby star  
Poetry is a bird singing across the water  
Poetry is a word that means a lot of things  
Poetry is stars which are cupcakes  
Poetry is a meerkat jumping over the school  
Poetry is a birthday  
Poetry is my home  
Poetry is a fish in a pool of lava  
Poetry is a collapsing building  
Poetry is a cyber crystal  
Poetry is comedy  
Poetry is anything  
Poetry is a tree  
Poetry is a pencil in the ocean  
Poetry is ice cream with a cherry on top  
Poetry is music to my ears  
Poetry is the brightest star in space  
Poetry is a blooming flower  
Poetry is like the grass swaying back and forth  
Poetry is like 1,000 people cheering  
Poetry is a castle  
Poetry is my favorite song

### BRENNA ELIZABETH AHLEN

#### I Love Orange

Orange Orange Orange I love oranges  
I love orange I love the crisp ginger orange  
on a tiger I love the sweet orange  
on a peach pie.  
I love the orange on my favorite butterfly scarf  
I love the orange ginger on Ms. Garcia's cute little mice  
I love the orange on the meerkat's fur  
I love the orange on a sweet mango  
I love the tint orange on my dog's fluffy fur  
I love the orange on my favorite bow.

### DOMINIC UNDERHILL SANTIAGO

#### The Mountains

A mountain is a dinosaur in the ground that's covered in grass.  
The mountain is cheddar cheese. The mountain is a Fortnite victory royal.  
The mountain's sounds are the Roblox oof sound. The mountains come to life at night.  
The mountains are Godzilla. The mountains are frozen bears that come to life in summer.  
The mountains are me dying to a default skin. The mountains are humpback whales banging their tails.  
The mountains are me on a crazy hair day. The mountains are sad when it rains.

### AMOBEA GYAN AKOSUA

I am like a blue shining sky  
and I am like a shining moon  
I look like my sister

### ISABELLA CORTES MENDEZ

#### Repeat Lies

I am a sun my heart is water and  
I am in a pollen flower.

The universe is purple the stars are white  
and the earth is lava.

My garden is blank paper my house is a book of princes  
and I am the king of the universe.

### LESLIE METHE-DAVIS

[untitled]

When my dog barks it sounds like a horn.  
When my alarm goes off it sounds like someone is calling me.  
When I hear the garbage man come it sounds like crushing a soul.  
When I go to school I hear annoying sounds.  
When my friends chat it sounds like they're in a little world.  
When I go to the fridge it says, Eat me all.  
When I do my homework the paper says, You will get a good grade.  
When it's recess it sounds like someone is dying.  
When I go home when the baby cries it sounds like a child got kidnapped.  
When my brother has friends over it sounds like someone just got hurt.  
When I am at my dad's it sounds like an angel.  
When I am at poetry it sounds like everyone is filled with ideas.  
Over the summer at Kids 4 Harmony when we are playing instruments it sounds like I am in heaven.  
When I am at home and my mom is cooking it sounds like sizzling angels.  
When I go to bed that's when it is quiet.  
And my brothers yell they sound like a little girl and when I brush my teeth it sounds like a waterfall.

### JACOB KRATKA

#### UY Scuti

UY Scuti is a huge ball of fire never going to be put out.  
UY Scuti is a giant bomb that can destroy Earth.  
UY Scuti is a plate that can hold the sun and the first six planets.  
UY Scuti is an orange ball never going to be played with.  
UY Scuti is a giant orange too big to eat.  
UY Scuti is a glow stick almost never gonna be not glowing.

### IVANA AYALA

#### Stars

Stars are in space they're moving everywhere in the sky.  
Once they stop they crash to the ground like hail.  
The stars are no longer stars anymore they are just dust that has fallen from the sky.  
When it's night you see no stars in the sky just the moon.  
Then the moon starts to rumble like thunder then all of a sudden the moon starts to fall out of the sky.  
It's falling and falling then it hits the ground like a big rock hitting the earth so hard the ground cracks.  
Then the moon starts to turn into dust like a handful of sand it's so soft like a blanket too.  
Stars are everywhere they are the world.

### EMMA THOMAS

[untitled]

I love my Dad he makes me happy he has Black hair and Black skin he is nice caring he has Black eyes and he is tall he pranks my mom he chased her with a snake and he teases my mom for fun and he has a big gap in front of his teeth like me.

### ELLA ISENHART

#### Mountains

Mountains are ramps for bikes.  
Mountains are chairs for a lot of small people.  
Mountains are picnic tables for a big family.

### KWEST KODUAH

#### The Performer

I am a stage performer. It's warm where I am. I was a performer acting on the stage. If I was a king I would be the acting king.  
I dreamed last night that I died 50 different ways.  
Beyond the picture frame is another picture frame.  
My dream last night was that I died 50 different  
My dream last night was that I died 50 ways.

My dream last night that I died 50 times.  
I am looking at a picture of me.

### LEANNA JAMES

#### I Wish I Had and I Would

I wish I had slime. I wish everyone was my friend.

I wish I had Elmer's glue.

I wish I can live with my friend.

I wish I had a thousand dollars.

I wish I can go to the lunch lady's house that I know here.

I wish I can get ice cream but my dad said no.

### MORGAN GUZZO

#### My Wishes

I wish I could see my mom. I wish I had super powers.  
I wish I had a million dollars. I wish my sister was nice to me.  
I wish I could do whatever I want. I wish every day it was my birthday.  
I wish every day it was Halloween. I wish I owned the school. I wish I owned Walmart. I wish I owned Target.

### KYRA MARIE DAVIS

#### My Big Sister

You make me feel safe around you, kind of like a bodyguard.  
You are funny like a clown.  
Your light brown hair is like smooth milk chocolate.  
Your bluish gray eye color is like the fog that's hard to see through.  
Your hugs are warm like fire.  
When you help me spell it's like you're a teacher.  
When you play with me it's like it's recess and you're the only one that will play with me because we are friends.

### JAYDEN CULPEPPER

#### I Remember

I remember I broke my arm and it hurt like snake eating a cat.

### TOBIE TARJICK

[untitled]

You are like my best brother but I can't see you that much  
I saw you like 5 times but when you died I felt like I was empty.

### KAMDYN DIPIETRO

#### I Remember

I remember when I got my first cat I was so happy.  
I remember my first day of Morningside I was so scared but then everyone was complimenting me and I wasn't scared anymore.

### NORA TIERNEY

#### Blue

The color of sadness.  
My color of love falling out of my heart.  
The color of all my pants. The color I see you were every day and I try to fix it.  
The color of all my newborn bunnies. The color of waves that are about to kill me.  
I dream of the sky and the sky is this color. This color is one of the colors in Roy G. Biv!  
This color explains the way we act when we are together.  
I remember when you gave me a card this color and I loved it.  
This color makes me happy. This color is the color of my cozy slippers.

### LENNY MANON

#### Cringey Head

I'm a cringey head. It is cold where I am. I got mad at Medusa and turned to stone.  
I dreamed I was a cat. My body feels kinda stony and rocky.  
Beyond the picture frame is white. I'm a cringey head. I'm a cringey head. I'm a cringey head.

### SORA KNIGHT

#### Black

Black like a shadow going dim though I can reach the fire through my veins.  
A dramatic tale that goes down like a tear of pain and discouragement.  
Black like me breaking my only guitar and me being alone and depressed in a dark ally or bathroom.  
Black like a burning and screaming hot chicken wing. Like a sad song of silence.  
Like fire burning down someone's fingertips. Black like a smoke gust from the oven.  
The dust blows like a black mope of a pup. Like lightning fizzing down.  
My favorite movie is hosted in black film.

### AAVAN MATOS

[untitled]

I am a tree  
It is windy  
When I dance I am wavy  
I dreamed of being a poet that writes about trees  
I feel strong  
I feel strong

### JADEN LORA

[untitled]

When I go to my cousin's house I feel happier than a monkey eating a banana sundae on a Sunday.