Break
(Evermore Extravagant Disasters Resulting in an Unloosening of Fate: Number 38, Jason Gouliard)
By Jen Fabish

Into the vortex. Believe
we have control, belief
as strong as the cosmic particles
that made us, as old
as the time we've invented.
When was the first piercing
that lanced a heart, made it
clutch into a fist? Where landed
the first blow? Fist to fist, fist
to glass shattering
and in the shards
proof of control.
Destruction irrefutable
evidence of cause and effect
a repudiation of glass
with its daring fragility striking
at the bone of all things
filling the very air we breathe
with shards, impossible
to walk, impossible
to stand still without the cut
blue veins bleeding red blood
cells and fragments
defying the grid
filing time and space
pulled toward one fatal
point that is both the end
and a beginning.

Exhilarated Denial of Gravity #31, Jason Gouliard

By Mick Renner

Gravity denied, but there's a center.
Three colors on an orange field
Confetti is a denial of coherence
False balance
Swirls
Streaks
Two-color rainbows top and bottom
Or are they half targets?
Nothing quite parallel
Or aligned.
If anything, off rhymes.

But looky here:
All of this springs from
Or longs for
Gravity
Center of gravity. Without gravity, no center.
Experience of gravity is the beginning of coherence.
Up down lying sitting standing
Bodily coherence.
Walking yields alignment left right
But not exact, slight difference.

This is an exhilarant
Celebration of gravity.

Puget Sound Shall Have It's Revenge

By Paul Corman-Roberts

A dream zeppelin
not transparent on one side

but naked
exoskeleton exposed

to multicolored,
multilayered clouds

drifting in and out
of the structural latticework

no doubt bringing
a cool ethereal mist

down upon
the stupefied passengers

the zeps tail
looks nothing less than

the reincarnated vengeance
of a mud shark with wings.

Souvenir
By Paul Corman-Roberts

- *After "Another Folderol Discovered Inside The Nearby Sports Complex" by Jason Gouliard*

God is a grid
imposing itself
on your local
NBA franchise.

Confetti cuts
a cold razor
when still inside
their nebular form.

And every single
light inside this
one very large
gridded out gravity

well is but one light
all light derived
from the original
Tree of Light

and all of us
all 8 billion
of us are but
manipulators

of that one root light
in our sometimes cozy,
sometimes bitter
Christmas Tree of Babel.

O' hi there, yes, thank you, it really is great to be here altogether with all of everyone in here but we've reached that time where its time to flip the grid for tomorrow night's program, so what we're saying is you don't have to go home yet but you can't stay here, because I actually do want to go home and I can't go home until you go home or at least go somewhere else and everybody is supposed to know that when they buy the ticket to the show, it's in the fine print right there in your protein code…

Such is the price
of the lower frequencies
dear starshine, please
take a few of these

hardened confetti back
to wherever you're going
so you can show
all the other starlight

that you really were here
that we were all really here
and that we all
really existed.

Some of These Things Don't Belong
By Paul Corman-Roberts

That moment when I see
what you wanted me to see
and not what I wanted to see-

I was feeling the symmetry
of the gentle shift
in your erasure

the faded line between
worlds like purple dew drops
condensing on my cheeks

languishing in the space
between your edges
fog has its own pheromones

and when your parents
hand you over to strangers
saying "you'll be safer here"

the light shifts, familiar,
the river will slow, ominous
down here we sing to each other

sometime in the last generation
you subverted the sky god
acknowledged

there are forces
unconcerned
with your protection

the pyramid grew hazy
the singular eye fell lazy
as its serial numbered scrolls

became meaningless,
denied our way home
even at a moment's notice.

Sea Fare
By Luisa M. Giulianetti
(After Jason Gouliard's *Unfettered by The Minor Laws Of Ballistics: Number 53)*

The central Mediterranean is the deadliest migration route in the world.

The sea harbors meager mercy.
Ignores the roll call of hope, toil
resolute faith. 80 miles from Lampedusa's
white beaches—dotted with sunbathers
food stands and rainbow umbrellas—
thousands journey from Sfax, Tunisia.
Amulets clutched in dark palms.

The sea tosses dreams and dreamers
like confetti from its turquoise crown.
Upends smugglers' rusty dinghies
trawlers, makeshift rafts.
Swallows families whole.
Mothers/fathers/sisters/brothers
babies teethed on promise.

Lampedusa fisherman rescue
the drowning. Attend to scattershot:
life vests, sandals, wrappers, head
scarfs, phones, torn pages.
Bodies stiff-armed and silent.
Bodies tangled in nets.
Casulties of the doctrine of disposability.

Around their necks, the fishermen
pendant the Madonna of Porto Salvo
patron saint of the island, protector
of mariners and travelers.
They pray for plenty and safe return.
For lost souls coffined in seabeds.

From her shrine, the Madonna
hears thick cries from the thins
of life: seafarers' prayers, swells
smashing vessels, ripping spines
ribs flying like arrows.

Arms grasp debris.
Mouths grasp for breath.
The sea ebbs and heaves
another missing child ashore.
A chorus of flies buzz. Reminds us
that there is no peace for the dead.
Or the living.

The Sunbathers
A monoprint by Donna Brown
By Ken Stram

Went to the beach with Stanley.
The beach in our case is the
bank of the Susquehanna River, in York, PA.

A case study of pollution in the 60s and 70s,
today, the Susquehanna makes for a pleasant, afternoon escape—
just ignore the graffiti and overturned trash bins.

Stanley isn't much of a beach person.
Pasty-skinned, he turns red in a flash.
Me, I love the sun.
Wore my bikini underneath my t-shirt and jeans.

Stanley and I met in elementary school.
We went to the same church, sang in choir together as kids.
We've been friends all these years.
We watch football together, "Go Steelers,"
text each other most days,
attend church on Easter and Christmas eve.
Stuff like that.

Once, we decided we should date.
We went to the movies.
Afterwards, Stanley came up to my apartment.
We had a glass of wine, stripped down to our underwear,
started kissing, and then

I started giggling.
I couldn’t help myself; it was just so awkward.

I think we both suspected that while
we’re completely compatible as friends,
we have nooo chemistry as lovers.
Stanley relaxed, eventually, and then
he started laughing, too.

We put our clothes back on, went to the bar down the block, and played pool.
Honestly, we’ve been much better friends ever since.

Ekphrastic Poem based on an untitled 2023 Chine Colle mono-print by Janet June Tharp
By Jamie Wings

On bright parachutes

one orange,

the other broad white and yellow horizontal stripes

Two bombs descend

Their shark shapes float earthward

Jaws leading

The moon is black

The sun a jaundiced eye

looking away

It might be raining

Or the mountains are weeping

Whatever is on the ground

will soon dissolve

the bright colors

will blend to

a burnt bloody black

In the moment

before the bombs land

let's dance and remember

what it means to love

I see us there

you in a green dress

turning and smiling

your skirt billowing.

A Print in the bin:
Silly Animals
By Louise Moises

Who gave this awkward bird,
big flat blue feet, color
coordinated with his beak?
Who's wild imagination made
the blue footed booby squeak?

What marvelous God stands
before a palette with wild brush
paints a white bird's legs orange?
Was this God in a terrible rush?
Whose joke was it to make
the cheetah elegant,
then splash him all with dots?
Was this a God that cared a lot?

And why a fox with pointed ears
and pointed snout, and why cats
that lurk and sneak about,
with eyes that see into the dark
giving mice an awful fright?
and who invented meow and bark?

How comes this marvelous variation?
Who is it responsible for creation?

Three white snowboards,
By Louise Moises

dreams of three young men
moguls and mountains
In their nightmares
snow turns red
smooth slopes
peppered with geometric
obstacles, points of danger
no smooth ride on these boards
all challenges
a game to be played
the board handy
Go ahead my sons
take a chance
your lives interlocked
cross hatched
connected without
your knowledge
Judge carefully your
downward journey
Pick the right trail
the one with
the with the fewest
obstacles.

Birth of Chaos
By Louise Moises

I stood still and gazed up at the sun
until my eyeballs exploded
Vulcanism born of insanity,
I witnessed the center of the universe
the narrowing to one
specific point of origin
flashes of light
pain of birth
moments of death
random explosions.
I witnessed Pandora
with her box
I saw her make the wrong
decision, I saw good and evil
layer upon layer escaping
I stared into her eyes
like my staring at the sun,
we both had made a mistake
chaos released
beating hearts found
among radioactive waste
She tried to gather
it all back, but it would
no longer fit
into that innocuous box.
I know Pandora begged Zeus
to take pity, and he did
Inventing geometry
and perspective
to superimpose on all
that primordial confusion
He added sunrises and sunsets,
But all too late.
Like Pandora,
I want another chance,
Next time I'll not stare
at the sun. Next time
I'll be guided
by soothing water.

Chimera
By Louise Moises

You are a figment of my imagination
my longing
golden feathered
half bird, half man,
My wishes
float before you
like gilt-rimmed bubbles
blown from a mysterious hand
In the fountain
I make my sacrifice
an offering
I bleed for you
At midnight, dark moon
unnatural as my love
Eagle eyed man-bird
your evil eye casts a stream
of light, your armored
coat of mail,
I cannot penetrate
You tread the street of gold
avarice spirit
ignore my pleas
for peace
I've seen those legs
for eons and eons
the march of men
hiding beneath a cloaks
of gold and feathers.