

We the Firefly

Today: We are all unraveled, our lives pulled, exposing the accordion that blooms from the fragile bonds of our paper doll folds. We realize we are time travelers, lovers and killers, telepaths and dumb-luck dreamers. I am my father and my unborn son. I am the woman on the bus, the child in her arms, the driver cussing to himself as his pancreas flinches against each pothole.

And the universe reveals to us how we are the most unlikely of every fat truth, and the walls we climb daily are laden with false bricks that can be pushed in like a button, unlocking doors that lead to new space, but even there we get the feeling We have been here before over and over and over.

Somewhere in a run-down apartment there is an ancient prince. He's on his seventeenth life. He doesn't understand where he is, the noise in the street, or why these colosseums are dripping from his eyes.

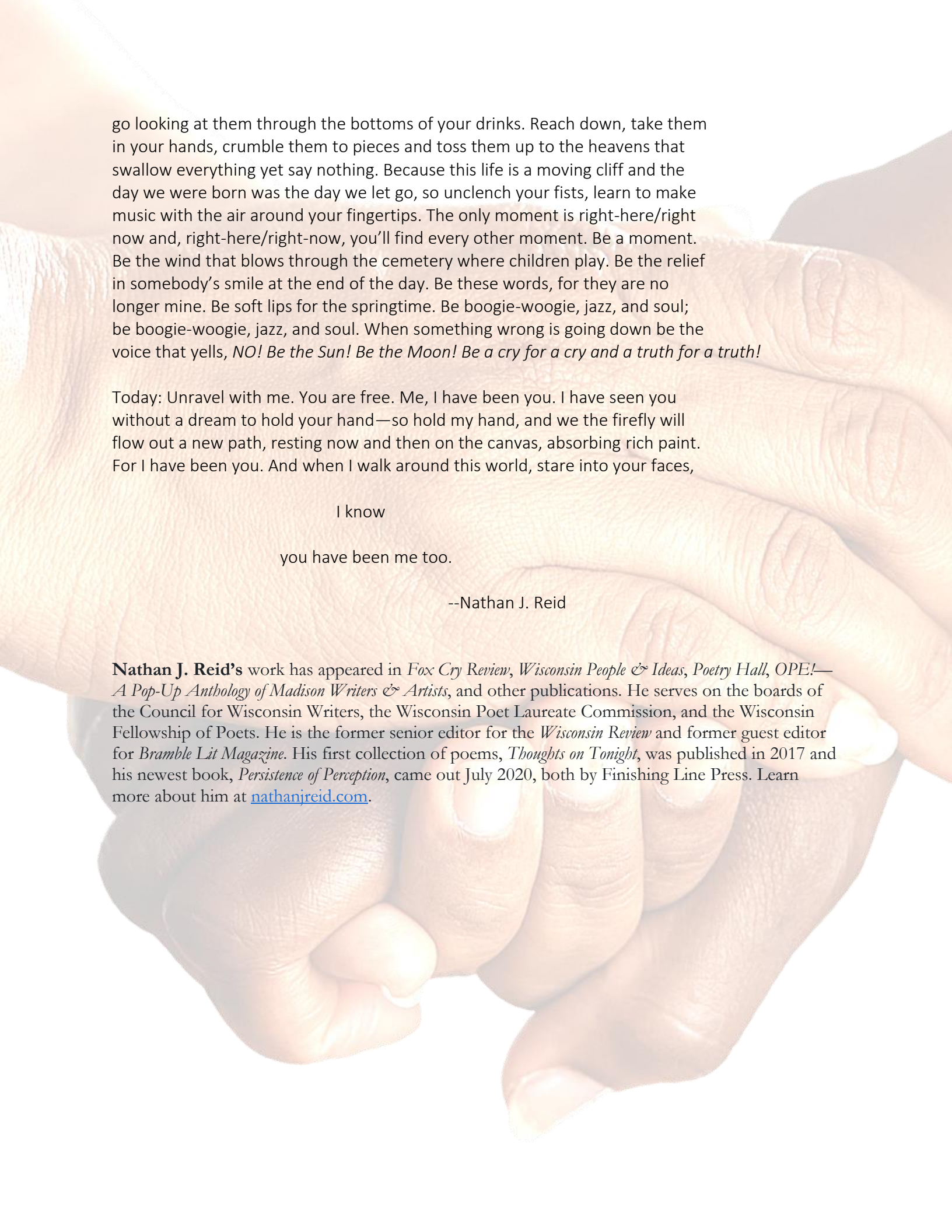
There is a sparrow resting her wings. She's the embodiment of short and sweet and every day she's pretty sure that you and I and this whole damn world are something she dreamt up last night in her sleep.

We are loopers, rabbit hole divers, matrix upon matrix. There is the illusion we are each an individual essence, when in truth we share one soul. It is a firefly caught between the canvas and the paint and it floats across this portrait of existence, filling each life as it does so. Meaning someday, somehow, you will be the person sitting next to you. Someway, somelife, you will see yourself from across the room.

Trust me, for I have been you. I have smiled all your smiles. Your hearts pump my blood. Our pulses are the waves, humanity the moon, I have been you. You are loners and regretters. Heavily you sit without a dream to hold your hand. I have seen you trying to crawl back through the rooms you have already walked through. As if you could rewind, cut, copy, paste, and create anew. As if that were some kind of miracle. But tall and glowing and tall and alive you have already walked through, I have seen you, you starlight, you midnight wanderers.

Don't worry about the phone calls from family you ignored, they have already forgiven you with hugs and pot roasts. Don't worry about the dead friends who visit your dreams again and again, they are not tormented or lost, it just means you love them so much more than the time they were given, for you are them and they are you. I have been you.

Do not fester in a heap of sour love gone wrong but rise above it so opportunity may find you. If you have hurts at the bottom of your heart, do not



go looking at them through the bottoms of your drinks. Reach down, take them in your hands, crumble them to pieces and toss them up to the heavens that swallow everything yet say nothing. Because this life is a moving cliff and the day we were born was the day we let go, so unclench your fists, learn to make music with the air around your fingertips. The only moment is right-here/right now and, right-here/right-now, you'll find every other moment. Be a moment. Be the wind that blows through the cemetery where children play. Be the relief in somebody's smile at the end of the day. Be these words, for they are no longer mine. Be soft lips for the springtime. Be boogie-woogie, jazz, and soul; be boogie-woogie, jazz, and soul. When something wrong is going down be the voice that yells, *NO! Be the Sun! Be the Moon! Be a cry for a cry and a truth for a truth!*

Today: Unravel with me. You are free. Me, I have been you. I have seen you without a dream to hold your hand—so hold my hand, and we the firefly will flow out a new path, resting now and then on the canvas, absorbing rich paint. For I have been you. And when I walk around this world, stare into your faces,

I know

you have been me too.

--Nathan J. Reid

Nathan J. Reid's work has appeared in *Fox Cry Review*, *Wisconsin People & Ideas*, *Poetry Hall*, *OPE!—A Pop-Up Anthology of Madison Writers & Artists*, and other publications. He serves on the boards of the Council for Wisconsin Writers, the Wisconsin Poet Laureate Commission, and the Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets. He is the former senior editor for the *Wisconsin Review* and former guest editor for *Bramble Lit Magazine*. His first collection of poems, *Thoughts on Tonight*, was published in 2017 and his newest book, *Persistence of Perception*, came out July 2020, both by Finishing Line Press. Learn more about him at nathanjreid.com.