

# BlazeVOX 23

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# Spring 2023

Pamela Miller

5 Visual Poems



## Ghost Stories: The Navy Pilot

Local folklore calls me “Seaweed Charlie.” What kind of a silly sobriquet is *that*? I drowned in Lake Michigan, blast it, my plummeting plane yanked down by some gigantic unseen hand. I flew training missions here in my FH-1 Phantom so they could send me off to Korea like an aerogram. But now I’m crawling up the beach in Evanston, Illinois, my mottled hands clawing the rocks. I stagger across the road, cars swerving around my translucence, to where the cemetery welcomes me like a Gothic grand hotel. At last I can rest my waterlogged head, close my eyes and sleep forever. Then suddenly, like an engine bursting into flames, I’m flailing in the icy lake again.

## Ghost Stories: The Ebola Victim

Why do I look like this? Because everything inside me exploded like a supernova and the blood gushed out through the sluice gates of my skin. A week ago, I stood in line at the hospital for days, as doctors flitted in and out like bats. But when they finally saw my red-splotched eyes, they sent me back to my village like undeliverable mail. When I died, my husband held me, my mother bathed me, my child tried to suckle at my biohazard breast. Contagion rose from my corpse like a mushroom cloud. Now my family has perished too, and I don't know where they are. You can burn my body like a bloodstained rag, but I won't stay dead until I find them.



Photo by Kevin Escate on Unsplash

## Ghost Stories: The Fire Victims

They locked us in at the Triangle factory to keep union organizers out. They locked the exits at the Iroquois Theatre to keep folks from sneaking in. No wonder we claustrophobic ghosts keep bursting into the living world like a backdraft. They decorated the Cocoanut Grove with flammable phony palm trees. They shot off pyrotechnics in The Station nightclub, like dropping lit matches into a shoebox. Why do we haunt the old sites at night, our phantom hands accosting passersby? Do we want to tell you our suffocated stories and wail that it wasn't fair? No, we can't be bothered with that. It's just that *help us, somebody help us, don't let us die*, all we want to do is get out.

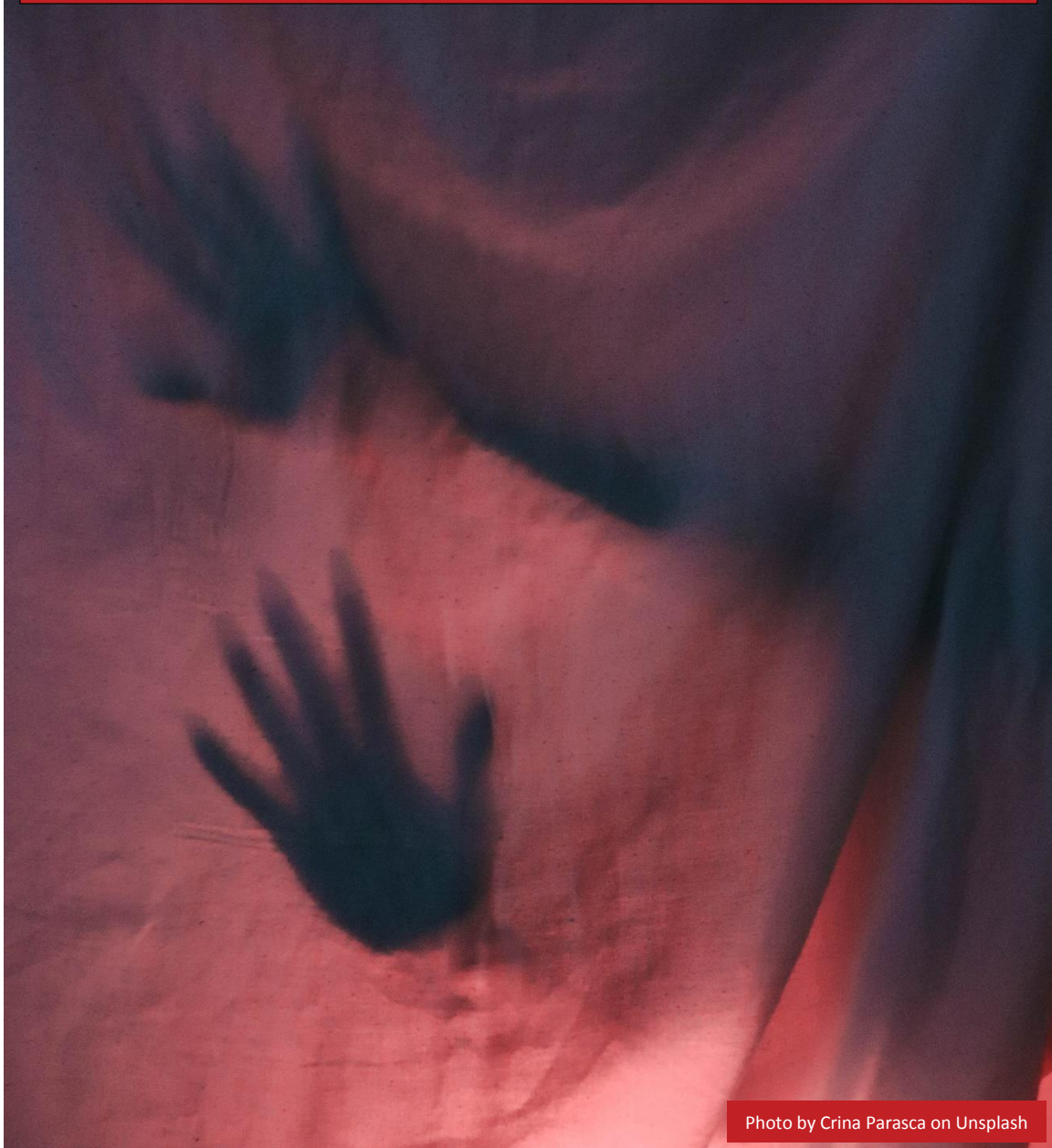


Photo by Crina Parasca on Unsplash

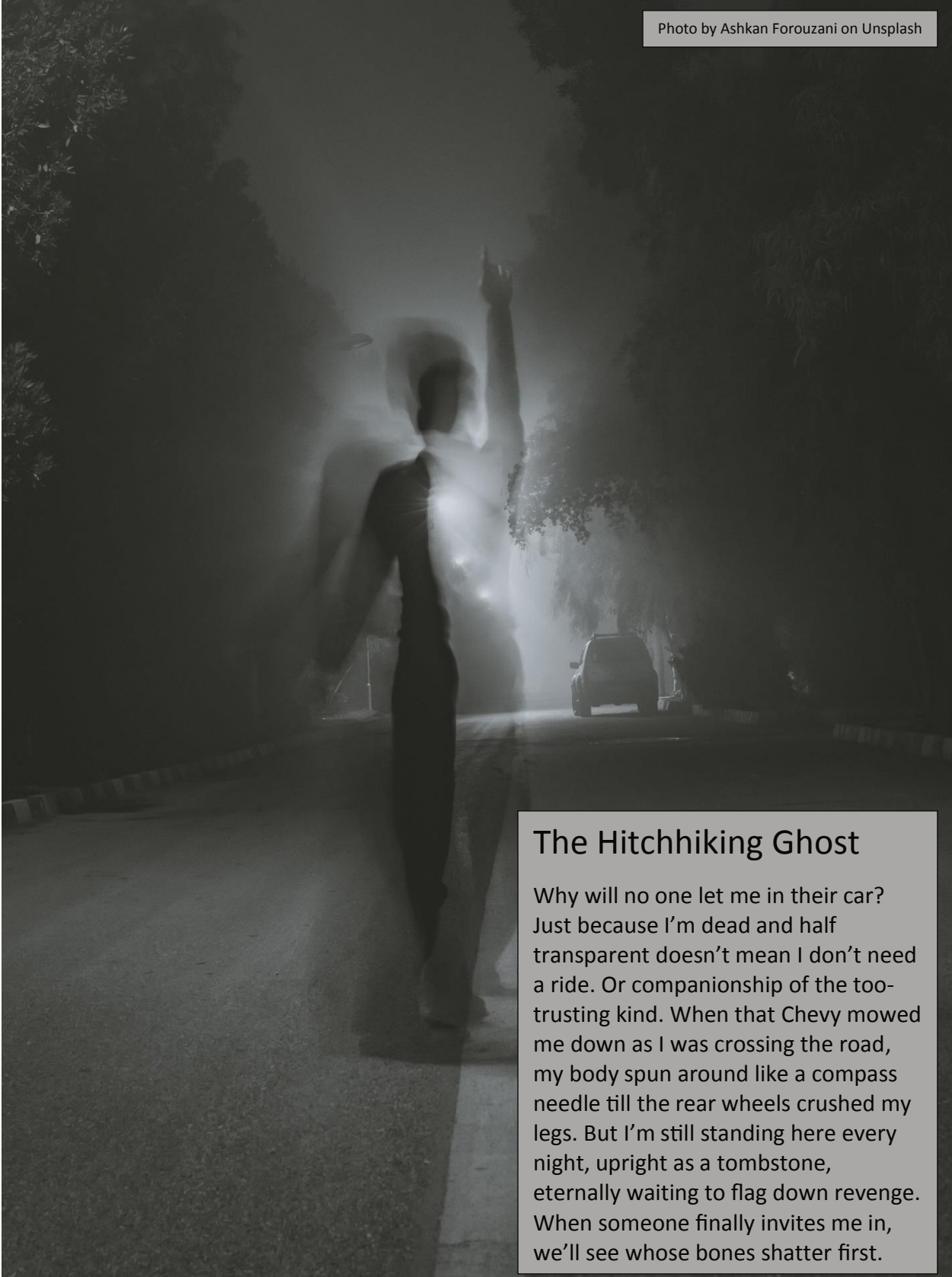
A dark, atmospheric photograph of a ghostly figure standing on a road at night. The figure is semi-transparent, with a bright, glowing aura around its head and torso. The figure's right arm is raised, pointing towards the sky. In the background, a car is visible on the road, and the scene is framed by dark trees and foliage. The overall mood is eerie and mysterious.

Photo by Ashkan Forouzani on Unsplash

## The Hitchhiking Ghost

Why will no one let me in their car?  
Just because I'm dead and half  
transparent doesn't mean I don't need  
a ride. Or companionship of the too-  
trusting kind. When that Chevy mowed  
me down as I was crossing the road,  
my body spun around like a compass  
needle till the rear wheels crushed my  
legs. But I'm still standing here every  
night, upright as a tombstone,  
eternally waiting to flag down revenge.  
When someone finally invites me in,  
we'll see whose bones shatter first.



## Talking Back on My Seventieth Birthday

Yes, I see you, smoking that cigarette. I know who you are: You're my very own death, bidding your time with all those others, like a stack of bowling balls. I know you're labeled **PAMELA MILLER**, with worms crawling out of the P. "Why won't you ask me any questions?" you whine. Well, I don't want to hear you flop your chops about what it'll feel like, when you'll burst in, or what shawl of disease you'll be wrapped in. Go haunt some other house for the next twenty years. When I'm ready at last to beckon you like Lauren Bacall, you can come and track your filthy boots in here.