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Tenth
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Creative Musings / Tenth Muse Crew, Spring 2023

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Website

www.tenth-muse.squarespace.com



SCAN ME!
BE AMUSED

EDITOR'S LETTER

By Kat Jones

Creativity is a whisper in the chaos that calls out to be heard and brought to life, a spark in the dark, and a mystery in the making. It is with magnificent pleasure that we present to you volume thirteen (13) of the Tenth Muse, a literary publication that represents over a decade of innovation and growth. As we continue to strive for greatness, our next volumes will reflect the courage to push forward. Over the past decade, the Tenth Muse has featured poetry, prose, creative writing, and visually artistic content. Allowing others to express various forms of creative freedom is always the goal we strive for.

This is not my first rodeo as a team member of the Tenth Muse. This is my second year being a part of the literary magazine team and I have learned so much. I have learned how to work with a team of people, both large and small, and how to keep things organized, yet creative. I have been able to meet new peers and have been able to power through obstacles with them.

Excellent teamwork and resilience describes the determination of this student publication. The impossible was made possible because of our hard work and positive collaboration. The growth of the literary publication is due in part to extended submissions by contributors as well as the growth in awareness through new distribution channels. Contributors as far away as Australia, and those closer to home, make this volume special. We received several submissions this year, all with various stories and styles. The prose and poetry have deep messages and have so much soul and heart to them, filled with passion and determination.

Thank you for your support of the Tenth Muse. Thank you to all our contributors for your various talents and submissions. Special thanks to Eric Wold for helping our team strive for creation and putting together the Tenth Muse. Special thanks to Steve Bellomy as well for guiding our copywriting, editing, and Fall curation and marketing efforts. The Tenth Muse is about bringing the creativity of literature and art together, and together we can create masterpieces that inspire the world.



Empire State of Mind Alec dos Santos, Multimedia

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*right into
hermen itself.*

R



OKS



AMICSE

Mother Cat

By William Baker

When I am almost eighteen, getting ready to graduate from High School, my mother and step father are buried in the hill out back and I don't tell anyone about it. Later, I am labeled an unfeeling monster and other things, but the Judge says I am a "dumb kid". People always want to know why. So, I'll skip all the little kid stuff and go right to my 10th birthday. It gives you a good idea of how things were. Middle of the summer, I get dropped off at Mrs. Hanson's before seven. Mrs. Hanson has a nice party for me, she does stuff like that. Says I am like having another kid, except, of course, she gets paid. Mom picks me up at the usual time, after six, Mrs. Hanson's cut off is six. We get in the car and I start telling Mom about the party, she says, 'Not now, I have something on my mind.' I am used to it. She is a Receptionist/Writer, Receptionist during the day and Writer any other time, I hear 'Not now.' a lot. We get home, she dumps her purse on the counter and says "Plenty in the fridge" and starts down the hall talking. "I've been writing all day." Goes into her bedroom.

WRITING ALL DAY?

I follow and stand there watching her type with her back to the doorway, she is a beautiful woman. She told me once she did modeling in Philadelphia then moved to Indianapolis with a guy. The guy was my father who took off once I came on the scene, she never told me much more about him. She was stuck in a big, strange city with a new baby. One night she met a lawyer at a nightclub and caught on a job as a receptionist in a law firm. Putting this striking young woman out front was their thing, but not much her thing. Mom, aka, Barbara aspired to be a writer of mysteries and thrillers. Not a receptionist and not a great deal of a Mom. All the time I am a kid, she kept at being a writer.

I stand there looking at her, she turns. "What?"

"It's my birthday."

She looks off for a moment. "Yeah, we can do that another time. I'm in the middle of something." She turns back to the computer.

I stay in place, after a moment she looks around. "You have something to say?"

"You won't like it."

She makes a hand motion.

"You might be mad." I continue.

"When was I ever angry with something you said? Speak your mind."

I give her that one, it is true. She seldom gets angry or upset, she gets exasperated and tired. If she does get angry, it is at a publisher over a rejection. OK, if she wants it, she can have it. "I want to go back to Mrs. Hanson's to live. You don't want me here anyway." I stare at her.

Mom doesn't blink, motions me to the edge of the bed and swivels her chair around. She

brushes a lock of hair from my forehead. "Look kid. You know how it is. It is not that I don't want you here. It's that I need you to do your kid thing and let me do what I need to do."

I don't back down, I have learned something from her. "Mom, you were home all day. You didn't even go to work."

"So? Something struck me this morning and I came home. I called in. I've done it before.

You were fine. You were at Mrs. Hanson's."

"I know. All the time. Maybe I get tired of being there. Maybe I want to be home sometime too."

She studies for a time. "You think I leave you there too much."

I shrug.

"Say it." She insists.

"Yeah."

"A good Mother wouldn't do that." She says, thinking about it.

"I wouldn't know, Mom." Even at 10 I am good at twisting the knife but I might as well stick it in a rock.

She thinks a minute. "Here's the deal, Ty. I'm maybe not that great a mother, but I make sure you have everything you need. You are older now and don't require all of my attention, so, I'll make you a deal. I don't leave you over there so much and in turn you let me write. How's that sound?"

"OK I guess." I sigh.

"Good. Now go away. I need to get my train of thought." She turns her back on me.

I don't move.

"What?" She asks not turning.

"Birthday." I say.

"Yeah. I'll get back to you on that one." She is typing.

I suppose I remember this because it is how things went and I mean all the time. She did her thing and I did mine, as long as I didn't ask too much, everything was smooth.

Sugar Daddy Chet came on the scene a few years later. A friend of mine called him that once and I like it, so I use it. To his face, to her face, who cares? Chet did. Barbara, I haven't called her Mom for years, doesn't blink.

Chet Harper is a big shot of something about investments and funds. He has a dead wife and two grown kids, who don't like him and hate me and Barbara. Chet has a big old house in rich people land, three or four cool cars, and tons of cash. He and Barbara are a match. She, a Receptionist who wants to be a writer and he, an investment whatever who wants to be a sculptor. Did I mention that he is at least twenty years older than Mom and can be a major butt-wipe?

We move into the big house in Carmel, Indiana. He calls it an 'almost a mansion' with a maid and cook. My room is about the size of our old apartment. Chet says one thing, at their wedding, be a good boy and don't cause trouble. In return, I can have whatever I want, within reason, whatever that means. All I hear is 'whatever you want'. I take it from there, I'm no idiot, I stay out of the way.

In Junior High I discover basketball and the French horn, not half bad at either. Later, in High School, I make the varsity basketball team and the Orchestra, both are big deals.

Mom is writing full time now, Chet is doing his financial business then his sculpture stuff. They have parties and other crap rich people do.

"See any girl action in that back seat Ty?" He leers.

“Why girls?” I counter and keep cleaning.

“Huh?” Chet says. “What’s that supposed to mean?”

I stand up, turn around, have to bend down to stubby Chet, and look him in the eye. “Why does it have to be girls?” Barbara gives me a look.

“Hold on a minute!” Chet fumbles, getting all red. “Are you saying...?”

“Come on Chet, he’s putting you on. Trying to get Mommy’s attention.” Barbara says.

I’m quick on the comeback. “If I thought that would work, I’d do it for real.”

She lights a cig and raises an eyebrow. “It might, go for it.”

Chet gives a nervous laugh and shrugs it off. “Course he’s joking.” He has to reach up a long way and tries to drape an arm around my shoulders. Now I’m not big on that sort of thing, I push his arm off and pull away. “Who do you think you are?”

Then, I ain’t kidding, he marches right up in my face, all red. As much up in my face as he can manage anyway, I’m a head taller. “I’m the one who paid for it.”

“Mind your own business.”

Mom pulls him aside. “Knock it off Chet.” She says.

“He can’t say that to me.” He says.

He sputters and stomps away. She turns back to me. “I’m not playing referee and that’s final.”

“Tell him, Barbara.” I counter. “Anyway, what do you play? You haven’t played Mom since I can remember.” Another good one, bounces off her like always.

“Now I’m telling you.”

“Fine.” I turn to the car and start working again.

“Use protection with your boys.” She says, her heels click on the obscene expensive cobblestone drive. I hate her sometimes.

After my junior year at Carmel, they drop the bomb on me, we are moving far away. They decide it is time for Chet to retire and be a full time sculptor. We are going to Jefferson, Indiana where all the artists live. Jefferson is a burg if there ever was one. Small town, small school, small life. And get this, none of this is new to them; they planned it and never said a word to me. What a surprise.

They bought the place in Jefferson a long time back and spend a fortune renovating it. I throw a protest of course, Chet walks out and Barbara sits there. When I’m all done she promises I will like the new place, doesn’t come off with anything else, other than all of us going down there on Saturday.

Fantastic, now it’s a road trip with them. Did I mention that they are sickening to be around? All lovey and pawing at each other. But, my whole Saturday! And she says it again on Saturday when we get in the Lexus, I will like the place. In the car, Barbara hooks up her cell to the radio and her book comes on, read by her. I forgot to mention, she got published. She won some newcomer mystery writer award and the go ahead to write more stuff. Big deal.

“Aw, man, do we have to listen to this?” I ask.

“It’s your mother’s’ book.” Chet says.

Like I didn’t know. “So?” I counter.

“You ever read it?” He asks.

“Why should I?” I grumble.

“Because your mother accomplished something. It’s important.”

“Not to me. Has she ever sat through one of my games or concerts?” I look out the window.

“You need to show some respect. She’s an up and coming writer and more than that, she’s your mother.”

“A cat’s a better mother than her.” Bullseye! Thank you Clark Gable.

She gets in the middle of it. “Enough. Ty, what do you want to listen to?” I dial up some music I know Chet hates and hand her my phone.

After a long time we pass through Jefferson in like 30 seconds, then onto some country road for a while and into the hills. We start seeing houses and signs; they announce that so-and-so artist has a studio. Back in Jefferson they play up the whole artist thing with shops and galleries and the like. People flock there on weekends and spend money on all kinds of art junk.

We hit a driveway and go up a hill and the house is at the top. Not as big as the ‘almost mansion’, but it’s good sized and real modern looking with a glass front. Very artistic and perfect, should be, it cost a pile of money.

I get the tour and it’s cool; a studio for him, writing room for her, exercise room, and hot tub, the works, big deal. I like it OK, show me my room and let’s get out of here. They take me outside and follow a flagstone path around a stand of trees. and come up on another house, a one story job with garage, we go in.

“What do you think?” Barbara asks, Chet stands there red faced and grinning with thumbs in belt.

I look around and admit to myself that it is impressive. But all I say is “It’s OK.”

“Glad you like it, welcome home.” She pulls my hand up and plops keys in it.

“What?” is all I can say.

“Your place.” She waves. “I had a decorator design it to your tastes.

I wander around. “Wow.” Is all I can manage, then, because I can’t help myself, “How do you know my tastes?”

“Mother Cat’s intuition, you might say.” She smiles.

“So, let me get this straight. You live in the other house and I live here on my own?”

“With conditions.”

Of course conditions.

“No drugs. No drunken parties. Nothing illegal. Graduate. Go to college.”

I walk around again, Chet chimes in about the construction and how they knocked out walls and vaulted the ceilings, put in skylights, countertops, and all that stuff. We go to the bedroom and it’s a sight better than the one at the almost mansion.

“What are you now, 6’2”, 6’3”?” He asks.

I shrug.

“We got this bed special. It’s a king size with extra length. Your mother had the sheets made for you.” He explains.

“Nice.” I say.

“Yeah, got you a king size workbench with plenty of room for company.” He jokes and starts to slap me on the shoulder and thinks better of it. He reddens up and says that he is going to the house.

I go back into the kitchen and notice the items on the table. “He likes you, more than like, but you wouldn’t know that. You see how his own son is. He was hoping with you...” she says.

Something I didn’t know. I’m more than a little surprised. “For me to know anything, you might have to talk to me.” I say.

She smiles and gets out her cigarettes. "OK, then. How about this? Have you ever considered that I love him and don't want to see him hurt?"

No actually, it never occurred to me that she loved anyone other than me and I only know that from the few times in my life she managed to mention it. I don't say anything for a minute then look her over and make some decisions. One, I'll give the old guy a break now and then. Two, "My house, right?" I ask.

"Right." She agrees.

"No smoking in here." I say. She puts the cigarettes away.

"What's this stuff?" I look at the items.

She picks them up one by one and hands them to me. "A spare key. Bank card. Groceries and cooking are on you. Cookbooks in the pantry. Garage door openers."

"OK." Is all I can manage

Silence for a moment and I look at her. She is beautiful, my breath catches in my throat and I look away.

"Like it?" She asks at last.

Pause, another decision to make. "Yeah, I really do, thanks."

"Guaranteed you would." She smiles reaches up and brushes a lock of hair off my forehead.

"I still don't like leaving Carmel. What about the basketball team? We have a chance at state next year. It sucks letting them down." I say.

"You may not believe this but I attended some of your games and concerts. I don't know anything about sports. Chet says you're pretty good, but only good enough to sit the end of Carmel's bench. He says in Jefferson you are good enough to start." She turns to face me. "Which is better? Not playing at Carmel or star at Jefferson?" They have a point.

"What about the orchestra?" I ask.

"I leave that one for you to figure out. Bloomington is close. They might have something. You know we will pay for whatever comes up."

Money solves everything.

"One more condition." She turns back to me and stares me down. "This one is not negotiable." Here we go.

"You check in at least once, maybe twice a day. I need to know you are alright over here."

"Why?" I shrug.

"Say that even a mother cat checks up on her kittens." She smiles.

That's twice now with the cat thing. Wish I'd never said it, I hate Clark Gable.

That is how we go for the next year. I attend Jefferson and star on the basketball team, check in most of the time. They drop in once in a while and even have me over for a meal now and then. I give Chet a break and he turns out to be decent, we even go places together, everyone is happy. I read a book or two Barbara wrote.

My kitchen windows look out onto a kind of cliff or overhang, whatever you call it. It is this place on a hill that hangs out over a ravine with a creek running through it way down. It gives me the creeps to go out there.

Chet makes me a sculpture that we put on the patio, some kind of thing of poured concrete, painted metal disks, and steel rods. Pretty cool.

I am within a few days of graduating and turning eighteen, sitting out back on my perfect flagstone patio on a Friday night. A Friday night and me sitting out back alone. It works out that way, everyone is doing something else. I don't have a girlfriend at the

time, much to my disappointment, don't want to go hang around at the usual places waiting for something to happen. I watch a little NBA playoffs on my 60 inch flat screen while making dinner. Shrimp Creole out of a Paula Deen Southern cookbook, then sit out back and chill. I'm there drinking a water and Barbara walks up, sits down on one of my designer Brookbend patio chairs, she's in workout clothes drying her face with a towel.

"Hey neighbor." She says.

"Hi." I answer.

"Got another one of those?" She asks and points to the water.

"Sure." I get up and find one.

"Thanks. We've been working out an hour." She explains and downs a third of the water.

"Need a crash cart for Chet?"

"Funny." She smiles. "I thought you two are good."

"We are." I shrug.

"Supposed to storm. Don't leave your windows open tonight." She looks up.

I notice something now and say so. "You aren't lighting up."

"Quit. This time for good. We got serious about exercise and you know diet, nutrition, all that. And we still have that one thing you don't like to discuss."

That one thing is their beliefs. They say they are followers of Yeshua. It isn't the Christian church thing like they have done off and on. It's hard to explain, I went to a few of their gatherings and didn't hate it. If you can believe it she actually discussed it with me, a little bit anyway. I think Barbara and Chet are serious this time.

"OK." I answer. We sit in silence.

"No plans on a Friday?" She asks. I shrug. "Seeing anyone?" She continues.

I study on an answer a moment. "I thought you gave up asking me those things a long time ago, Babs."

Not fazed, like always. "Babs?" She chuckles. "Take it as a friend asking."

"We're friends now?"

"Rather be enemies? I don't see much future in that." She smiles.

"Always with the word games, Barbara. What's wrong, Chet can't keep up?"

"Never could." We say nothing for a bit, I wait her out.

"So? Friends or enemies? You are almost an adult. Do you want to continue being angry and snarky with me every time we see one another? Or do we go the adult route?"

I've thought about it, thought about it for years. The decision I came to is not be miserable, it is lost on her anyway, so what's the point? "I don't want to fight." I say.

"OK." She replies. We watch the thickening clouds and the increasing sway of the trees for a while. "What's the plan for college?" She says.

"Barbara..." I say with mock impatience.

"Look, I may not be much, but I want you to succeed in whatever it is. Believe it or not, I want you to be happy. Maybe it's tough on you but you had a lot of advantages too, education is one of them. I'm concerned, call it the mother cat in me coming out."

She brings up the cat, it's become one of her favorites. Of all the remarks I made over the years that one struck a chord. So I'm a little ashamed for hurting her. I'm silent for a minute then force it out. "I shouldn't have said that about the cat. I'm sorry."

We don't talk for a minute and I think we are done. "Thanks honey." She looks at me.

"From Gone with the Wind, wasn't it?" She smiles.

She has me tell her about the basketball sectionals and says that she came to part of the last game and I did good, even though we lost. We talk about this and that for a bit and the wind picks up, she's decides it's time to go and tells me she will be at graduation. I'll believe it when I see it.

She gets out of the chair, comes towards me and I almost panic thinking she's going to hug me or kiss me or something, but she brushes hair from my forehead and lays a hand on my shoulder before getting on the flagstone path to her place. She is in the moonlight, the wind blowing the towel clutched around her shoulders, hair pulled back. She is illuminated, she is beautiful. "Hey Mom," I say and she turns "Good job on not smoking. Stick with it."

"Thanks son." She smiles, the light perfect on her perfect face and I almost cry out loud, she disappears around the stand of trees that separate the houses.

I see her again, the next morning. I start the coffee in the kitchen about dawn, look out the window and there they are. Hand in hand about twenty yards away, going to the ledge I told you about. It stormed like crazy the night before, it is cool and wet out there. They are standing on that overhang, holding hands and looking at the woods in the morning mist, it is cute.

And then they are gone. It isn't like in the movies, all dramatic and noisy and in slow motion. They drop out of sight, not jump or pushed or blown off, but drop straight down, so fast I almost miss it. That overhang is broken loose and almost as sudden the whole piece of ground where the ledge is gives way and slides out of sight.

When I get out there I don't see them, I don't see anything but a pile of mud and dirt and it is way down it takes a long time to get there. I see no sign of them, believe me, I look. There's a mound of dirt and mud that has knocked over small trees, I paw at it, get some big sticks and dig in it a while but it is too thick. So I sit down and cry and go home. My clothes are ruined and I take them off at the back patio and hose myself, double bag the clothes and toss them in a trash can, take a hot shower. I am shaking, but not crying now. I dump out the coffee, make a fresh cup and sit on my leather sofa, the sofa she picked out for me. I break down again.

I know I need to call the cops, but I hesitate. And this is why I get labeled an unfeeling monster. See, I get to thinking about what might happen. Yeah, it is an accident, not my fault, not anyone's fault. But, the authorities won't care, they will insist that, I am a minor, I need to be taken care of. True there is a step brother and sister but they hate me, wouldn't have me, and live a long way off. No father, no family, the authorities will stick me somewhere with people I don't know, maybe in a whole different town. It will screw up my finals and graduation.

Leaving her under a pile of muck is a problem, she doesn't deserve it, Chet doesn't deserve it. Screwing things up in my life is a problem, I don't deserve it. So, I do nothing, I carry on like always for two days. Friends say something is wrong with me, I tell them the folks are gone and I miss them. I graduate and turn 18. Two days later I go into Jefferson and park on the square in front of a lawyer's office, Cathy Cochyse. I go in, tell her what happened, pay her, and we let the police take it from there. She watches out for me and that is how I get labeled a dumb kid. The news people talk it up for a day or two, but nothing comes of it. The judge at the hearing yells a little and lets it go. Chet's kids are up in arms but more concerned about a will and they calm down once that is out of the way,

they leave happy and I never hear from them again.

The other day I go in their, now my house. No real reason, It is so quiet in there, my foot-steps on the floors are kind of creepy. I go in her writing room and look around, wake up her laptop. On the screen is something she is working on, I look through it, another novel and the first thing is a dedication.

Mother Cat dedicates this one to her kitten.

END



Master and Cat Emma Grant, Acrylic on Canvas



A SUMMER LIKE BACK THEN

By Mark Miscovich

reflection Danyel Rieck, Photography

A small circle of friends sat on the hotel terrace sipping cocktails while enjoying the sun setting over the Mediterranean Sea. There were men in white linen suits, and women in long silk crepe dresses. Cigarettes are offered and consumed, and outbursts of gay laughter infect some tables, while nauseate others. An evening as close to being a picture postcard moment as possible. And yet...

Martha excused herself, “have to powder my nose, you know,” and dashed for the lavatory, barely making it before she was gripped by a spasm of diarrhea. She hadn’t been able to keep any food down all day, “it’s the heat you know”. The combination of coffee, alcohol, and cigarettes had weakened her to the point where the lavatory assistant found her all sweaty, shaking and panting with her forehead pressed against the ceramic sink, hoping that its cool exterior might in some way extinguish the lava-like heat in her stomach. Worried that her extended absence might raise concern, she hurriedly reapplied her make-up, practicing her carefree expression in the mirror and praying that she wouldn’t collapse in front of her friends, or heaven forbid, soil herself like a drunk sleeping on the bench they had passed on their way to the hotel. To think that one’s body could be reduced to such a level was simply revolting and unsporting.

But Martha wasn’t the only one with a dirty, bodily secret. Poor Roger was doing everything he could do to keep from scratching his burning crotch. Every now and then he tried to alter his position, “I say, look at that yacht there,” but it did little to soothe the fire raging in his shorts. He couldn’t be sure where he had picked it up, “somewhere in Southern Europe, I’d say,” nor could he be sure if it had been the maid who tidied up the room, or the porter who had helped him with his bags. He was rather put out because where was the fun of traveling if you couldn’t sample the local cuisine, so to speak. Of course, it was largely his own fault, but he wasn’t the first tourist to find himself in such a delicate situation. The local doctor had given him an ointment to rub on the affected area and an all-purpose vial of drops, primarily consisting of diluted opium, to help him relax, but with all the drinking and other drugs, he was constantly afraid of a scandalous overdose, which might jeopardize his family inheritance.

Susan, on the other hand, had no physical complaint to speak of, although the close proximity to native bodies, “Oh, doesn’t she have just the most beautiful olive skin,” was playing havoc on her already strained nerves. Africa was out of the question, but even the Mediterranean, which was still considered European, required a nearly herculean effort to hide her dislike and distrust of uncivilized and, well, frankly, inferior people. At least most of the hotel guests were Europeans of the northern variety, and the staff had the decency, most of the time, to keep a respectful distance. She sensed that Martha might also share her opinion, as she seemed ill at ease and constantly watchful of her environment. But how to broach such a serious issue, “I always feel it is important to get a real sense of a place and escape the tourist traps,” especially as it would open her up to the potential censure of her peers. “Keep it light and pleasant, dear,” as her mother always advised.

Thomas meanwhile was doing his best to hide the fact that, well, he spoke the local tongue as well as he did English. He had never exactly lied about his family, but he didn’t

really talk about his mother Sophia or his father Niko either. They had worked hard to provide him with a proper English upbringing, “a real David Copperfield,” and while they likely did not approve of his friends, they would have understood his reasons for associating with such respectable but unenlightened people. Thomas had accepted the invitation for the trip knowing that it would mean having to pretend to be superior to people who could have been his own family. His greatest fear was that he would not be able to keep up appearances, especially when they made disparaging comments, “Oh, the service here is quite good,” right to the face of otherwise friendly and hospitable staff. Susan, in particular, seemed uncomfortable, constantly scooting away when the waiter leaned in to place a dish or pour the wine. Her eyes darted back and forth, comparing Thomas and the waiter, with a question forming on her lips, but remained unspoken due to her even greater concern of appearing somehow racist, which was an ugly word indeed.

Four friends still sitting together as the lights come on, illuminating their elated and yet weary faces, the effort of maintaining a charade cast a wan light on their well-rehearsed expressions. The conversation soon turns to talk of whimsical plans, “Oh, we should do this every year,” and expanding one’s horizons, “maybe we should take a language class together, wouldn’t that be fun,” before returning to more mundane matters such as what to visit tomorrow, “I hear there is a bazaar in X, how exotic,” or where to dine in the evening, “I was thinking something foreign, like Chinese.”

A true picture-perfect ending to a beautiful summer’s day if only it weren’t for the virus running rampant through the population, scuppering travel plans, and, in some cases, even ending in hospitalization and — “how perfectly absurd” — death. “A summer like it used to be” ... although nothing really feels the same anymore, except the haughty self-delusion and denial perpetuating our four friends’ illusion that nostalgia can exist without a body.



Stand Still Kat Jones, Oil on Canvas



Mother Mantis Lily Nesta, Oil on Canvas

THE GREEK LSAT

By Luisa Reyes

One-by-one the students started filing in. “I may as well just pack my bags and go home.” I thought to myself. For it seemed like every letter of the Greek alphabet—sigma, delta, iota—was firmly emblazoned upon the attire of the slim and petite sorority girls who entered the classroom.. And equally on display were jackets of the more hefty fraternity boys who made their entrance a short while later. Somehow, when I agreed to teach the preparation course for the Law School Admission Test at the big public university, that was the football rival of the flagship university my family had been affiliated for three generations, I had rationalized my transition to “enemy territory”. I envisioned myself helping poor hard working students get a chance at being admitted into law school.

With the LSAT (Law School Admission Test) being such a hurdle for young students to overcome, I felt especially inspired by my newfound mission. But now as I stood there watching my students happily make their entrance, I once again took in the array of epsilons and kappas before me. I realized that the students sitting within my line of vision were far from being the deprived pupils I had envisioned, leaving me to seriously debate whether or not to just leave. After all, I could always apologize to my boss afterwards with the feeble explanation that my previous commitments prevented me from going through with teaching the class...couldn't I?

The minutes kept winding down with the pounding of my heart increasing rapidly. And when the appointed hour for class to begin arrived, I was still standing in front of the podium speechless. My nickname in law school was “Socialist Pollyanna” and now I was in a position where I'd be helping the exact type of student that I felt didn't need an extra advantage. After all, these students just spelled Southern big public university sorority and fraternity kids - a mold I knew all too well. With my own law school class having been filled with greek system alumni who readily clung to their supply-side economic,

pro-corporate, and quasi elitist points of view that I frequently argued against during our class lectures. Learning after much time, that they weren't always as privileged as the views they argued in favor of. It makes me wonder if it was just wishful thinking on their part.

“How in the world can I go through with this commitment I voluntarily signed up for?” I asked myself. All the while standing mute before these students. It dawned upon me that since the greek alphabet was the first alphabet to make use of symbols for both vowels and consonants, there must be some merit to it. And with a heavy weight pressing down upon me I convinced myself to at least try and go through with the first session. “Just the first session!” I reasoned. Then I could resign as soon as I got back home, I thought.

Fate sensed my reservations about teaching these students and class began with a glitch. At the beginning of class, the login on the instructor website simply refused to work, and I had to begin teaching the basics of the LSAT to my students using an old-fashioned whiteboard and dry erase marker. To my surprise, they were responding to my very passionate teaching style rather well. I let out a sigh of relief when the login hiccups were finally resolved. I taught the rest of the class using the established PowerPoint slides. I found myself unexpectedly pleased upon noticing the sorority girls sitting in the front were taking exceptionally good notes throughout the three-hour session.

Consequently, before the next session began, I felt inspired and worked diligently to connect the names on my class roster with the faces of my students. Since I had been a mathematics major in undergrad, I was skilled at memorizing formulas and notations borrowed from Egyptian hieroglyphics. But to actually bother with memorizing something as mundane as names was not a skill that came easily for me. Forcing me to apply some effort towards the dastardly deed and setting aside my biases by thinking of the names and faces I was committing to memory as students. Not the cookie cutter look-alike, run of the mill, sorority and fraternity pledges, I so detested.

My freshman year of college I too had pledged to a major sorority, I gladly left it behind when I transferred to a private all-female Christian college. It wasn't that I was ever mistreated by the members of the sorority I had pledged. Quite the opposite, in fact. They were always very friendly and welcoming towards me. But the with which so many sisters could transition from prim and proper young ladies wearing modest high heels and 1940s style tea dresses meeting with sorority officials... to scantily clad belly button baring alcoholics, bragging about doing body shots of tequila with wealthy and handsome fraternity boys at late night frat parties - these were shocking revelations to me. Especially, since I had come from a small private Christian high school that frowned upon so much a triviality as dancing. A detail of the classical ballerinas in an ultra strict school, blissfully ignored.

As tempting as it was for me to quit teaching the class altogether, leaving both the students and the testing consultants in limbo, I found myself enjoying the course more and more with each class. To the point where I was even looking forward to explaining when

to use the three main types of diagrams - the dashes, the columns, and the grids - for the mind-bogglingly difficult analytical reasoning section on the LSAT. While also delving into my personal favorite, the twelve most common types of fallacies in the logical reasoning section. Along with explaining the close reading techniques required for the reading comprehension section of the LSAT.

Once, when I mentioned that in my experience attorneys had a propensity for cursing; one of the male students sitting in the front quietly raised his hand.

“Yes” I responded

“Both of my parents are lawyers . . . and both of my parents cuss like sailors!” he replied.

Needless to say, we all enjoyed a group chuckle.

With the class progressing very nicely, I found myself becoming impressed by my students, as they were studying extremely hard for my class. They responded to the challenges of the LSAT rite of passage for aspiring law students with a genuine college try. All while juggling a full load of college classes, internships, and jobs. It is a balancing act that I, myself, found to be a challenge while preparing for this time consuming test.

With the LSAT prep course being a short one, the classes began winding down to a close almost as soon as they began, making me sad at the thought of them ending. At the same time, I was excited about the leaps and bounds with which these eager pre-law students’ reasoning skills had improved. And while I was looking forward to having more time to devote to my other endeavors; I was overcome with sorrow when my students left the classroom, one after the other, at the end of our final session. The room was now empty mirroring the emptiness I was feeling in my heart after bidding my students farewell.

One year later, when one of the LSAT prep teachers was unable to finish teaching their course, I did not hesitate. I eagerly jumped at the chance to teach again and taught it regularly every Fall, Spring, and Summer for the next four years until the pandemic hit.

I had just finished teaching a free LSAT workshop and was looking forward to the start of the full class session. The day before I was to begin, the news came that the campus was closed down due to the pandemic. No more in-person classes would be held, and the unknown of if and when things would ever return to normal was stressful.

I was too stunned to know what to think at first. I understood the logic of closing down the campus, yet, I also felt a personal void due to the realization that I would not be teaching the class I had been both preparing for and happily anticipating. I convinced myself that the relief I felt in knowing I wouldn’t have to endure the three-hour commute each way to teach the class twice a week was justified. But the act of getting to help these young students in their journey towards law school would be missed.

With the passing of time, the campus eventually opened back up from the coronavirus induced pandemic. However, my department was not allowed to resume the in-person

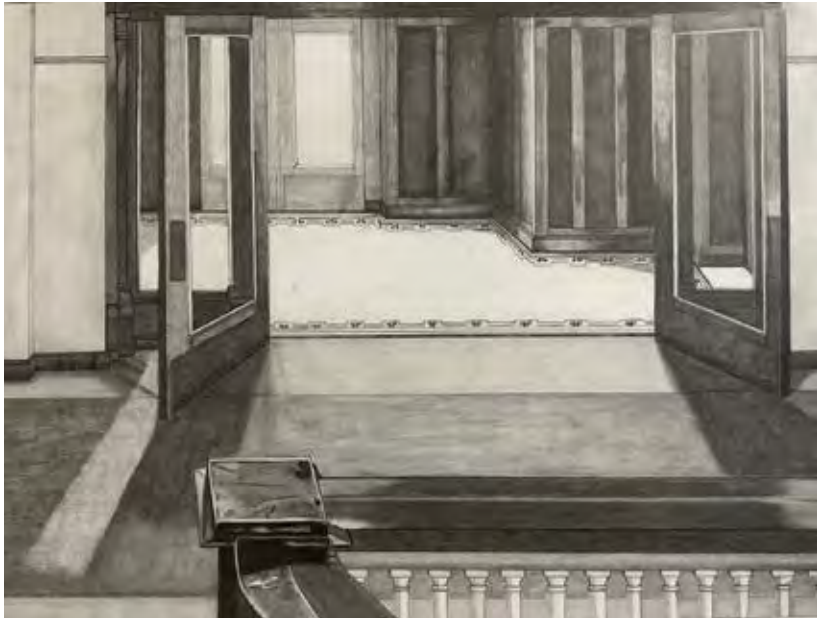
LSAT classes since they were not considered essential. All signs were pointing to me never teaching the LSAT preparation courses again. Which, contrary to my initial hesitancy, filled me with sorrow.

“It is over” I told myself. And I just had to accept the satisfaction of helping my previous students do well on the LSAT.

Then, the most unexpected thing happened! I was recruited by another testing preparation company and presented with the opportunity to teach their LSAT preparation course. And it would be at the local university only fifteen-minutes away. I was thrilled to say the least. This was the university where my grandfather had been a mathematics professor, my mother a Spanish professor, and my brother a professor in the Honors College—an opportunity I could never have dreamed would happen. And one which I was delighted to accept... Greek letters and all.



Awakening Steps Lisa Martinez, Acrylic on Canvas



Welcome Madeline Meseke, Charcoal



Progressing Sadness Emma Grant, Gouache

Baling Hay

By Jeff Wilson

To say that we came prepared for baling hay that day would be an understatement. A sandwich bag full of marijuana got tossed on the dresser as soon as we

walked in a guest bedroom in the farmhouse where Uncle Tim and Aunt Kathy lived maybe fifteen miles out of Cedar Rapids, whereupon my older brother Sam started cleaning the stems and seeds with the diligence of someone who knows that real honest-to-God Iowa farmers—people who did it for a living, in other words—were going to pick us up and take us to do some farm work in a little bit. I had a twelve-pack of Goebel's beer that I had transported from Ohio, knowing our cousin Matt, who was better known as Breeds and lived in Cedar Rapids, had spoken favorably about it during a trip out to our neck of the woods. And somehow a bottle of El Toro had worked its way into the equation.

"We've got to do this right," I stated while twisting the sombrero off with an air of great solemnity. All of the windows in the room had thick dark green curtains that were completely closed, making the room strangely dark for what was probably about noon on a sunny summer day. The furniture in the room was old and bulky, with lots of dark-stained wood, and there was a stack of quilted blankets that had been folded up and placed on top of a cedar trunk. The room was spare and orderly, as guest rooms tend to be. It gave the aura of life lived quietly—in other words the opposite of the bedroom Sam and I shared in Ohio, with LPs everywhere plus copies of Rolling Stone and Circus and books by authors like Jack Kerouac and Kurt Vonnegut. The two Wilson brothers and one Bredl cousin had a lot of catching up to do that day. Ohio stories, Cedar Rapids stories, concerts we'd been to, people all three of us knew from Cedar Rapids (our family used to live in Des Moines so we used to go make frequent trips to CR, where we had a bazillion relatives—and yes, we were all Catholic), scrapes with the law, the same things adolescents have talked about since caveman days. It would be hard to overestimate the excitement in that room that had previously been so quiet and so still. Though Sam and I had worked on farms in both Iowa and Ohio, this was different. Detasseling corn and hoeing beans for DeKalb may have proved my mettle, but in this case Uncle Tim was helping out a fellow farmer, and on top of that I had never baled hay before. Having moved to the East Coast, as I liked to call Ohio, I jumped at the opportunity to reaffirm my Iowa roots.

I wasn't alone in my excitement, and for this reason the three of us toasted this, that, and the other. It was good to be together again and to know that we had been called upon to do some honest-to-God Iowa farming. I remember moving the curtain aside and seeing the blue sky and the rolling fields and the barns, and all of it looked so beautiful that I wanted to lay down face down in the soil and feel the dirt in my face. Uncle Tim, who had married

my mother's sister Kathy, farmed two hundred acres in Northeast Iowa. Of course we toasted him. And her. And their pigs. And their cows. And the dirt.

And that took care of that. When I woke up, I was in the bed in the guest room. I was alone and in the dark. It took a moment to process where I was, and there were other mysteries to solve. When I got downstairs Aunt Kathy was still in her nursing uniform. She told me that when she got home after her shift at Mercy Hospital I was face down on the floor with puke everywhere, and somehow she managed to scoop me up and slide me under the covers. "Did they bale hay?"

"They tried."

"And where are they now?"

"Asleep."

I took some aspirin and drank a glass of water and went back to bed. The next morning I didn't feel like a million dollars, but I so looked forward to our Cedar Rapids trips that I was in fine spirits as we drove down Fifth Avenue on the southeast side. On the block where we were headed, the first house was small and inconspicuous. One house over, and taller than the trees, was the house where Grandpa and Grandpa Schwartzhoff lived, a white Colonial mansion with fluted columns that gave it a majestic and solemn presence. After we parked, I burst into the kitchen that also served as the back entrance to Grandma and Grandpa Schwartzhoff's house, and I acted like a hero returning from a voyage.

"How was it?" everyone asked.

"It was great," I said.

"That's great," they said.

"We had a great time," I said.

Sitting at the kitchen table, Grandpa Schwartzhoff took a drag off his Camel straight and then talked farming.

"Did you get it all?" he asked.

"Every bit of it," I said. "There isn't a bale of hay left in the whole county. Mission accomplished."

"There was a lot of hay there that needed to be baled."

"There was, but now it's packed away and gone."

To say that my declaration met with approval would be an understatement. Yes, spirits ran high that morning. The Wilson kids and a Bredl kid helping Uncle Tim's buddy bale hay—it didn't get much better than that.

Remember now that I burst into the kitchen all invigorated, ready to plunge into a hearty breakfast and pound coffee as I planned my day in Cedar Rapids, which to the Wilson kids was like Vegas, Paris, and Rome rolled into one, and you should also understand that a few minutes passed before the slackers I drove into town with stumbled into the room.

"So you got it all done, did you?" Grandpa Schwartzhoff said upon their arrival.

"Hell no," Sam said. "Nowhere near. They had a hell of a lot of hay. We barely made a dent in it."

Grandpa looked at me like he'd caught me cheating at cards.

"I don't think you baled very much hay," he said.

"I was there in spirit," I said.

That got a laugh from everyone, including Grandpa Schwartzhoff. In retrospect, the reaction in that room reminds me of those Shakespeare plays where Falstaff, his cover blown after various nefarious strategies get revealed, still ends up partying with everyone

in the final scene. Spirits remained high as we ate breakfast, and people kept shuffling into the kitchen until there were more people standing than sitting, although I managed to get a seat. (Grandma Schwartzhoff gave it to me while continuing to serve a feast where so much food kept appearing that I wondered where she stored it all.) So many relatives had gathered into that room that simply opening and closing the refrigerator became a feat. Yet the food kept coming, and we laughed about how, even though we were stuffed, we had to keep eating because Grams considered it an insult if any of the Wilsons, Bredles, Gregors, Schwartzhoffs, et al. showed any semblance of moderation in her kitchen. There was a lot of laughter that morning, and it was like Christmas in July.

While I sat at the kitchen table, a skinny teenage kid with dark shoulder-length hair that was parted in the middle (for Halloween I dressed up as the member of Kiss who had a star over his eye, and I totally pulled it off) and a brain that was still soggy after the tequila debacle, all was well. Then something strange happened. People started to leave the house through the kitchen door behind me, including aunts, uncles, cousins, nephews, brothers, and sisters. Even Grandma and Grandpa Schwartzhoff wandered off, and they had lived in that house for decades. Eventually I was the only person left, and although there was plenty to eat, even that started to change after the refrigerator door popped open. Now everything inside it started floating out of the kitchen door, including milk and butter and bologna and Braunschweiger and headcheese. The bread basket and the toaster were next to go, and then came all the coffee cans crammed full of oatmeal raisin cookies. Then I said goodbye to the dented boxes of Quisp cereal that Grandpa Schwartzhoff would bring home from his job on the railroad. The Bakelite radio Grandma tuned into from her hometown of Oelwein was giving hog prices when it turned itself off and waltzed out the door. Then things started marching out of the bedroom and the living room, the big stuff going out the front door so as not to inconvenience me but the littler stuff (doilies, packs of Camel straights, Grandpa's fedora) heading out the back. The last thing to leave the first floor was a framed black-and-white photograph of Grandma Schwartzhoff's brother, a priest who had drowned in a lake while he was still a young man.

Then things started coming up from the basement and leaving. I saw the sci-fi paperbacks Uncle Gerald collected leave the house, followed by the console stereo that played "I Saw Her Standing There" for an entire evening. And there was the green camelback couch where, in seventh grade, Janet Stoneking and I said we were going to marry each other after we became adults. All of those things went marching out the various doors as I sat at the kitchen table. Then parts of the house started to disappear, until all that was left was the fluted columns on the front porch, enormous white structures that looked like they had been imported from Greece, and then they were gone.

As you might imagine, what I witnessed that morning was disconcerting. And I felt funny sitting at a kitchen table without walls or ceilings while futuristic-looking cars were whizzing down Fifth Avenue. In the fifteen minutes since the exodus began the sky had changed from blue to gray and the temperature had dropped fifty degrees, and I figured it was time to clothes, shelter, and the rest of my kind. So I started walking, at which point I learned that other things had also disappeared from the landscape so familiar to me as a child. The garage where Grandpa Schwartzhoff built me a bookcase that I own to this day (in fact it's with me in this room with me as I hammer away at the keyboard) was gone. The funeral home down the street was gone, and so was the corner market where we'd buy gro-

ceries for Grams while adding Bazooka Joe bubblegum to the haul. Gone too was the small Wonder Bread bakery that also sold its goods onsite, and gone was the house on the other side of the street where, when Breeds and I were watching TV one drunken afternoon, the news showed a guy jumping off a house and landing on a sidewalk. The drive-through where I had my first brush with the police was gone. Everything was gone, replaced by a giant parking lot—everything, that is, except the tiny house on the corner. Somehow that survived.

Right about the time that I realized one part of the past remained intact I heard screeching brakes. Behind the wheel of a shiny new car was my brother Sam. But now instead of shoulder-length red hair he had short gray hair and a goatee. Riding shotgun was my younger brother Tom, who was taller than me now. Tom had never baled hay like me and Sam but he had probably stepped foot on a farm a couple times.

“Get in the car,” Sam said, all drill sergeant-like.

“Where are we going?”

“To her house.”

“Whose house?”

“The one on the corner,” he barked.

“You already passed it,” I said.

Sam looked behind him.

“You’re right,” he said.

After I got in the car, we drove around the block, and as we came upon it, the small corner house that survived while the rest of the block had been leveled looked as solid as ever. This was the house where a lady named Grace, who was about the same age as Grandma and Grandpa, had lived since about the time that they moved here. The bungalow-style house was autumnal in character, with dark, brownish-red bricks and ceiling tile of similar hues, and now, in the dead of winter, the bare oak tree behind the house blended in so smoothly with the colors in front of it that it seemed like an extension of the house. On the side of the house that faced oncoming traffic on this one-way street a large twig and tree branch wreath that was shaped like a peace sign was hanging between two windows. There might have been fifty small white lights sprinkled around the wreath, and the peace sign was so large that you couldn’t miss it. Sam parked the car in front of her house and started walking toward the house.

“What the hell you doing?” I asked.

“We need to meet her.”

That seemed strange—after all, how do you meet someone you already know? But we all liked Grace, and it struck me that this would present an opportunity for someone who had lived on Fifth Avenue to explain where everything went—everything except the house, that is. As I headed toward the arched doorway at the front of the house, I noticed a shiny yellow Volkswagen bug in the driveway, which seemed kind of sporty for Grace, but so much had already happened that day that nothing could surprise me anymore.

Except for one thing: The woman who opened the door wasn’t Grace. We were strangers to her, yet after Sam explained who we were, the woman seemed okay with the fact that three men, one of whom had recently experienced some sort of time-warp insanity that threw him ahead several decades at the same time that only a few minutes had passed, wanted to chat. She invited us in.

April had long sandy-colored hair and round glasses and wore blue jeans and an oversized

sweater. It was warm inside, and calm and peaceful and dark. The curtains were thick and the room where everyone sat down was neat and orderly. Lots of lace and beads, a Tiffany lamp set on low, hardback books in wooden crates, an Oriental rug, and lots of plants—including ferns, succulents, and spider plants that flowed downward from hanging pots.

“I love the peace sign,” I said.

She laughed. “That’s what I’m known for.”

Sitting in her living room, my brothers and I told April stories and she told us stories. She said she sought out Grace many years before she passed away and an agreement was made that after Grace died the house would end up in her hands. Grace lived in the house until she was ninety-two and died peacefully in her sleep. We used to see Grace a lot when we were little kids growing up in Iowa and visiting Cedar Rapids all the time, but I had never gone inside that house before. None of the sixty-four or so children filing in and out of the Colonial next door had. And while, perhaps, everything inside the house had been altered since it changed owners, while we were there my brothers and I still kind of had the feeling that we had entered the cottage that we had read about in a children’s story.

As the four of us pieced together the past, the conversation turned to everything that had happened up and down the block. This house was on the southeast side of Cedar Rapids, and close to downtown. What changed everything was a hospital that kept expanding. It wanted to buy the whole block and put a new building there. Some folks sold right away and some folks took their time. Grams and Gramps hung on forever but finally sold it. Grace hung on longer than forever. Eventually the hospital owned all the land except for that house, but because that one piece of property eluded them, they finally decided after all the waiting to make that block a parking lot. While talking to April, we told her about all the things the hospital tore down before she owned the house. Although she grew up in Cedar Rapids, she had never visited the bakery or the funeral home or the corner market or the tall white Colonial or the drive-through where, after Breeds and I tried to buy a six-pack, the cops hauled us downtown.

Aside from visiting Grace, April never spent any time in that neighborhood, so those buildings didn’t carry the same meaning for her. On the other hand, after she left the room long enough to grab a photo album that she then passed around to the rest of us, Grace had taken photographs of everything in the neighborhood, put it all in the photo album, and left the photo album for April. As we gazed at the pictures, it amazed us how large the houses were. Lots of big Victorians, a couple Colonials, plus the funeral home, which was this ginormous sprawling Gothic thing that could have gobbled up a couple ranch houses and still had space left over for half a house. (“They must have had a lot of corpses,” I said). Those houses were huge—and now they were gone, but the little house, the one on the corner, the one that quietly claimed its space, was still there. The photo album was completely full, and the last few pages were devoted to the demolition of Grandma and Grandpa’s house. In the first photo it was intact—but then down it went, piece by piece, until the whole thing was rubble.

Those were nice pictures, I thought, but they weren’t exactly accurate.

“Wait a minute,” I said.

“What’s wrong?” April asked.

“That’s not how it happened.”

“What do you mean?”

It felt strange being the only person there who knew what really happened.

"The house disassembled itself," I said. "I know, because I was in the kitchen when everything started. First all my relatives left, then the food and the furniture started heading out the door, and then all that was left was the kitchen table. I felt kind of strange sitting there at a kitchen table with no house around it while cars were whizzing by, so I walked to the sidewalk, and voila!, there were my brothers, except now they were a lot older. It wasn't fifteen minutes ago that this all happened."

"You're right," Sam said. "It wasn't fifteen minutes ago."

I cleared my throat. Obviously time had done a little trick on him. But the truth is the truth, and I don't much care for fiction.

"I'll tell you something else," I said. "It wasn't twenty minutes ago that I was sitting there bragging to everyone in that kitchen about all the hay I baled." Now I turned to April. "In fact, I baled it all myself."

"Is that so?" she said.

Again Sam butted in.

"Actually, this guy never even—"

"Where'd you get the peace sign?" I asked April.

She explained about assembling the twigs, the branches, and the lights. Clearly that was a bit of a project, but she saw it through.

There's a mythology that takes root inside children's minds and stays with them, but new myths don't take root as often as we grow older. When you're an adult, the rooms we enter for the first time remain rooms and houses remain houses. Places from our childhood, on the other hand, fill our imaginations in the same way that magic palaces affect us in fairy tales. Some myths never die, and for us that house was the only building left from what had once been a magic kingdom. We kept our visit short on the day we visited April—after all, we were strangers—but she understood why we knocked on her door and was as kind and warm as the previous owner of the house.

After bidding April goodbye and walking outside the three of us turned around and looked again at the house that used to be next door to Grandma and Grandma Schwartzhoffs' place. It looked the same and felt the same. The only difference was the peace sign. We saw a lot of peace signs when we were growing up. We saw them on posters and on patches people put on their jeans and on their t-shirts. Now we don't see them as much, but everyone knows what it means, and there are worse things you can hang outside your house.

"Maybe one of those farmers took a picture of me that day," I said as we drove away. "If so, I'll have to track that down."

"Can it with the tall tales," Sam said.

DAMAGING ADMISSIONS

By David Pratt

As soon as they were out of sight of the dock, Adriana laid her paddle across the bow and pulled off her shirt. Well, at least she was wearing a bra. Of such dazzling whiteness that it had to be brand new.

It was a weekday, and there was no one else on that part of Watauga Lake, across the Tennessee border from North Carolina. Turkey vultures circled high up under a few puffy clouds. It would take an hour to reach the island. Their friendship had begun a year before at a faculty party when Adriana had asked Richard about hiking trails and canoe routes in the Lakes region and he'd offered to take her out for a day. She taught in the Department of Library Science and her husband was his boss, Dean of the School of Education.

"You're interviewing applicants for your M.Ed. program tomorrow aren't you, Richard?"

Adriana asked.

"Yes, a thousand of them."

"Why did you people decide on interviews, rather than just using GPA, like everyone else?"

They stopped talking to watch an osprey fly over.

"Not everyone," Richard said. "The medical school uses interviews. The reason is that interviews predict some aspects of professional performance, and GPA predicts nothing at all."

"What do interviews predict?"

"For a start, who is going to last in the profession, and who is going to drop out. We have six internship awards. Last year none of the six winners would have made it into the program if we'd used grades alone."

Adriana drifted a hand in the water. "We could swim," she said.

"It's warm, for May," he agreed.

"But interviewing is very labor intensive."

"True. It takes almost 200 people a full day. But it's also great PR. We have an excellent placement rate. But I have to fight for it. Almost every year some of the faculty try to shoot it down. They say it takes a day away from their research."

She was a steady paddler, and he matched her strokes with his own. They glided through the water almost silently, fifty yards from the shore. A squirrel was swimming to shore ahead of them. It suddenly saw the canoe and put on a furious spurt of speed.

"Wow!" Adriana said. "Did you see how his eyes bugged when he saw us? I didn't even know squirrels could swim."

They reached the island, a half mile out in the lake, heavily wooded with a shoreline of sloping rock. A late-blooming dogwood tree near the water was covered in white blossoms. Adriana untied the bottle of wine they had been towing behind the canoe. He had brought sandwiches, and his coffee in a thermos. They were eating when Adriana suddenly froze and breathed, "Look!"

A black snake, about six feet long, was coming toward them across the rocks. "Relax," Richard said. "It's a black rat snake." The snake stopped, raised its head, looked at them, then continued, passing behind them. It began to climb a red oak tree, going straight up the trunk. "I'm going to change," Adriana said after they'd eaten. She withdrew into the trees. Richard looked in his pack. Hell! He'd forgotten his trunks. He stripped off and dived into

the water. It felt icy at first, then refreshing. Adriana came down to the shoreline in a one-piece swimsuit with diagonal stripes. She waded in and then pushed off and exploded into a fast crawl toward the center of the lake. After a few minutes, she turned and headed back. Richard was dressed again by the time she reached the island. They moved into the shade of the dogwood tree. Adriana put her pack behind her head and lay back.

“Why are you so reluctant to touch me?” she asked.

“I prefer things the way they are. Why start something that is going to end in tears?”

“Only if you start with that expectation.”

“Well, apart from anything else, I like your husband. He’s a good boss and I think he’s a good man.”

“Whose side are you on?”

“My own,” he said.

“But who would ever know, Richard?”

“Adriana, in a small town everybody knows everything.”

“I said I’d stop seeing you if he stopped seeing Rodney.”

“And did he?”

“Yes.”

This year, there were 1800 candidates for the 500 places in the graduate teacher education program leading to an M.Ed. degree. Richard would have liked to interview them all, but it wouldn’t fly with his colleagues. Those with less than a B average were dropped, leaving about 1000 to be interviewed. The morning started with a brief plenary session, where the Dean welcomed and thanked the 200 interviewers, who consisted of faculty, school teachers and principals, and graduate students.

Dean Clifford Johnson looked like a Republican candidate for Congress. That is to say, he looked virile, decisive, and faintly military, and because he was a golfer, his tan was always up to date. He was known as the university President’s golden boy because despite financial cutbacks, he always came in under budget. When he was first appointed, he astonished the faculty by offering a new computer to anybody who requested one. As the 65 faculty began to get used to word-processing their own memos and reports, they failed at first to notice the disappearance of secretaries. When Johnson arrived, each two faculty members shared a secretary. Now there was only one secretary per department. The interviewers, the Dean said, were a critical element in the admissions process, and were helping to select their own future colleagues. He told a few anecdotes about having to deal with congressmen who called to protest about rejected students, and even worse, grandmothers whose grandchildren had been passed over. His own daughter, he said, had been rejected the first year she applied.

Each interview team had three members. Richard found that the morning sped by. It was 11:15, and there were three more interviews to do before lunch.

The next candidate was a red-haired young woman named Joanna White who was completing a history degree. “I see that you want to teach history, Ms. White,” Richard said.

“Why do you think young people should learn history?”

The woman looked taken aback. “I haven’t—well, it’s a required subject on the curriculum.”

“And do you think that’s a good thing?”

“I think it’s good for people to understand their heritage, yes.”

“Why is it good?” Richard persisted.

“So that they can understand the present.”

The graduate student on the team was a young woman working on a doctorate in school funding. “Ms. White,” she said. “If you teach for thirty years then live another thirty in retirement, you will earn over three and a half million dollars. How would you convince people that money is well spent?”

The student looked a little desperate. “I hadn’t thought of it that way,” she said. “I’m a very reliable employee. I’ve worked part-time at Donut Delight for six years.”

“What do you do in your spare time?” the principal asked. She was a friendly woman in her forties.

“I do Scottish country dancing. I was in the state championships last year.”

“And how long have you wanted to be a teacher?”

“I wanted to be a journalist when I started college, but I decided on Education in my second year.”

Richard gave her a 3 out of 10.

The next candidate was also female. Sonja Schlotzhauer. The school principal said,

“Tell us why you want to be a teacher.”

“I’m the oldest of five children, so I often got to be in charge. My youngest brother was sick a lot in Grade 1, and I taught him to read at home. I liked that experience, and after that, I got involved with the peer tutoring program at school, which I did until I graduated.”

The graduate student asked her a question about extra-curricular interests.

“I was on the school cross-country team, but most of my spare time was spent on the farm. I joined 4H when I was ten, and my Dad gave me a newborn calf. I took care of its feeding, grooming, health, and keeping inoculations up to date. When it was grown, I showed it at the county fair.”

“How did it do?” the principal asked.

“First prize in the Ayrshire Dairy Calf competition. Then my Dad got into breeding llamas, so I started taking care of baby llamas.”

Richard gave her a 10.

The last candidate before lunch came in. He was dressed in a suit with a dark tie. He had some deeply etched lines on his face; Richard estimated he was late thirties. His manner was polite, but there was a certain “don’t mess with me” in his demeanor.

The graduate student opened the questions. “Tell us why you want to teach English, Mr. Tomlin.”

“I’ve been in jail the last eight years, and I’m out on parole. Manslaughter; I killed my wife. I discovered literature in prison, and it changed my life. I did a degree with the University of Maryland via distance learning.”

“Tell us more about literature,” the principal asked.

“Literature is mostly about choices. The choices people make, and the consequences. I think for young people especially, literature can help them think about questions of morality.”

“Were you able to do anything else in prison, besides reading and studying?” Richard asked.

“I got involved in teaching literacy. Quite a lot of guys in jail can’t read at all. I was in long enough to see a number of them become serious readers. For some of them, it made a difference with the parole board.”

Richard was trying to formulate a question about anger management. “Did you get parole on your first application, Mr. Tomlin?” he asked.

“Yes. I’d somehow managed to keep my nose clean.”

The principal asked a question about how the candidate got on with teenagers, and Tomlin talked about the range from hardened cases to scared boys who had sold an ounce of marijuana. Richard looked at the clock, saw it was five minutes past noon, and brought the interview to an end.

“Well, what do we do about this one?” the principal asked after the door closed. “I don’t know whether to give him a ten or a zero.”

“For the moment, I think we should proceed as normal with this candidate. I’ll check with the Dean, in case he wants to veto the application.”

“We’ve seen some impressive people today, haven’t we?” the principal commented on their way to the cafeteria. “That little farmer’s daughter. I’d hire her tomorrow. Put her in the classroom right away. Forget about teachers’ college.”

Richard was teaching summer school in July. Adriana had the summer free and was working on her book about Carnegie libraries in North Carolina. They took a day for a long hike in the Cherokee National Forest. Richard taught Educational Psychology. The summer course ended with a barbecue at his place on the edge of town. The next day he flew to Athens, carrying a backpack half filled with books. He island-hopped to Alonisos in the Sporades. It had a population of five hundred and numerous deserted beaches. He returned two days before fall classes began.

In the second week, he noticed a red-haired young woman in his class, and after wondering where he had seen her before, realized he had interviewed her in May. Joanna White. But he had given her a low score, and so had his two colleagues. How had she made it into the program? As chair of the admissions committee, he had access to all of the admissions data. Scanning the screen, he immediately saw that there were many cases where applicants had been accepted with lower scores than those who had been rejected. The farm girl, Sonia Schlotzhauer, should have got in but didn’t. Tomlin, the ex-con, had made it, however. Richard did some statistical tests and found that the relationship between interview scores and the decision to admit or reject was almost random.

The whole process of admissions had been corrupted. The efforts of all the interviewers had been a waste of time.

His mind turned to Kathy Orwell. She had worked as a clerk in the Registrar’s office until downsizing had caught up with her. Somewhat overweight, but friendly to everyone, she and Richard always exchanged a few words whenever their paths crossed. He found her home phone number and arranged to meet her at Donut Delight.

“I can tell you exactly what happened, Richard, but I must have your word that it doesn’t come from me. When they let me go, the university invited me to apply for any position that comes up, so I’m applying for one in the law school. It will be half my previous salary. Firing me was just a way of getting around the union to cut my pay.”

“You have my word,” Richard said. “It looks as if a whole lot of applicants were leap-frogged last May.”

“As soon as the interviews were complete, the Dean started getting calls from the President’s office. ‘Has so-and-so made the cut? Her mother’s on the Board of Governors.’ ‘Is Joe Blow in? His father’s a heavy donor.’ At first, the Dean would walk down the hall to the Registrar’s office, then he just made phone calls. Then it was lists. So we spent half our time revising the letters of acceptance and rejection. This has been going on since

Johnson was appointed.”

Richard sipped his coffee. “And the Registrar didn’t put up a fight?”

“You know him. Besides, his job is not tenured. He serves at the Dean’s discretion. Like I did.”

Richard said softly. “They should be fucking jailed. The lot of them.”

When he got home, he made more coffee and sat up for a long time. He couldn’t launch a grievance because he wasn’t personally affected. He could move a vote of non-confidence in the Dean in Faculty Board, but it wouldn’t pass. Could a criminal case be made? He doubted it. How about the media? He could send the data anonymously to the North Carolina Guardian. The editor would then call the office of the President of the University to verify the facts. Then the President would call the publisher and the story would be spiked. Well, could he get a class action suit going from all of the illegitimately rejected applicants? Not a hope. There would not be many families of substance among them. Students normally applied to several universities, and many would have been accepted elsewhere and moved on.

Be still, be still, my soul; it is but for a season:

Let us endure an hour and see injustice done.

No. He would go on the record, at least. He went to his desk and began to type, using the old Selectric that he still preferred to a word processor.

I am Chair of the Admissions Committee in the School of Education. Our admissions policy is heavily research-based, being in part the outcome of research I have conducted over eight years, including a five-year longitudinal study of students admitted to the class of 1976. The research also included a review of admissions practices in other universities and faculties, in other jurisdictions including a number in Europe, and in other areas such as medicine, officer selection, and executive recruitment.

It has recently come to my attention...

He wrote until 2:00 AM. For a first draft, it didn’t look bad. He could kiss goodbye to his merit pay, but that was trivial. And he might be frozen at the Associate Professor level, but that was only a formality. He would send it in confidence to the Dean and the President. Then he would resign from the Admissions Committee and refuse to have anything more to do with the charade of interviewing.

He was crossing the campus the next morning on his way from the library to his class when he almost bumped into Adriana. “You’ve got a face like thunder,” she said.

“More than usual?”

“What is it? Tell me.”

“It would take too long to explain.”

“Tell me.”

“A problem with admissions. Something really bad has been going on. Look, Adriana, I’m going to be late for my class. Let’s talk later.”

“I’ve got lots of time. Cliff’s away at a conference. With Rodney.”

He nodded and walked quickly away.

Two days later, he still hadn’t finished a revised draft. He’d had a late meeting at the university. He went into the kitchen and got out a bottle of scotch. He heard his name called. She was in his bed. When he came in, she pulled up a pillow and sat up, exposing one nonchalant breast. “Come,” she said. He recalled telling her that he never locked his

house. He went back to the kitchen and returned with the bottle and two glasses. He pulled up a pillow and sat on the bed. Sleep with her or sleep alone, either way, he would lose her as a friend.

They sipped the scotch while they talked about the admissions debacle. Adriana took his hand and said, "Aren't you sleepy, Richard?"

"Yes. Don't be offended, Adriana, but I'm going to sleep in the spare room." She turned her back on him and didn't respond when he said goodnight.

He was just dropping off to sleep when he heard the front door close. He tried to resume his drift into sleep, without success. He got up and went into his study. He looked at the unfinished document in his typewriter. The realization came upon him how completely he was compromised. He ripped the paper out and tore it into little pieces.



Wonderful Jessie Rebik, Oil on Panel

WELCOME TO MY NIGHTMARE

By Katherine Fischer

Part One: Dream On

Rocker Doro Pesch claims, "I'm not ready to face the light/I had too much to dream last night."

Oh, Dodes, how I wish it were so! I am one of only a handful of people who does not remember dreams. At least that's how it seems given the vibrant re-telling of dreams by my family and friends.

My husband's latest dream involved meeting with the director of grants for the National Endowment for the Arts. His museum grant was nixed, so he woke himself up from that nightmare. By day he may be in Iowa, but in his night visions he travels to the jungles of Malaysia. Upon waking, he instantly interprets his dreams. "The reason I dreamt of swinging from vines last night is that I ate stringy pasta for dinner at the restaurant earlier," he explains.

While he's having his snooze-athon adventures, I haven't even had the classic dream of eating marshmallows and waking up to discover my pillow has disappeared.

Many people report dreams of falling or flying. I can't even recall dreams of walking while simultaneously chewing gum much less leaping tall buildings in a single bound. If a dream is a wish your heart makes, then I am wishless in Dubuque.

When our children were younger, one or the other would jump into our bed in the middle of the night with fantastic tales of goat-faced giants and orangutans who not only spoke German, but who also sang in three-part harmony. Each detail--down to the green tongues, purple apples, and extra thumbs--was recalled in splendid horror. How I envied them since my repertoire of recalled dreams might total five. And the few I do recall are less than exciting.

One of my few recurring dreams happened while I was in college. It involved my showing up for English classes in the wrong classroom. In that vision, I was reading Emily Dickinson when the teacher began class with, "Open your textbooks to differentiated equations." For some reason, I'd awake from this one terrified. It took two cups of coffee to shake it. What would be so horrible about going to the wrong class? Dreams are often insensible and this one proves it.

I gutted it out and went into the teaching profession anyway. A few years ago, I showed up for the first day of school at Clarke University to teach my literature class. A few minutes into it, a student in the back row raised his hand tentatively. "Yes?" I called on him. "No offense, but this is Calculus." I haven't had the dream since.

The best of my few recalled dreams occurred when I was about eight. In it, Bart Star (quarterback for the Green Bay Packers) visited our lake home. He stood in line with my siblings and me as we waited to get polio vaccinations. They were administered by a sewing machine and Mr. Star declared, "I'm a football player, not a pincushion." Not exactly a thriller, is it?

Writers depend upon recalling their dreams. It gives them fodder for future work. So I'm motivated to remember. I've followed the advice of all the specialists. 1) Keep pen and paper at the bedside and immediately upon waking, write down thoughts. Nada. 2) Wake up slowly and linger in bed, allowing thoughts to float into recollection. Nothing. 3) Tell myself upon falling asleep, "I will remember my dreams." No go. Thankfully, there's plenty of material in my waking hours to fill the pages I write.

Sci Fi author Philip K. Dick asks, "Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?" In this novel, dreams are electronically implanted in robots to make them believe they possessed human experiences. At least I don't have to worry that I'm an android! That realization is enough to allow me to put this feature to bed.

Part II. Altered Reality

Who cares about witches, a yellow brick road, and a scruffy dog named Toto? For me, it was all about the flying monkeys. Now they were something. Thus began my early fascination with science fiction.

Forget aliens. Give me a steel cyborg any day. We're talking Data, C-3PO, R2-D2, Astro Boy, and best of all, Rosie, the robot-maid from the Jetsons. My predilection gained legitimacy a few years ago when I was allowed to teach a college course offering the best robot fiction. The class filled with computer science, math, and engineering students rather than the typical English majors, so we were off to geekdom discussing bitmaps, Dyson spheres, cryptology, and vectors.

We viewed "Blade Runner," one of the best sci fi movies ever made. Our hero, Deckard, is hired to terminate rebellious "replicants," i.e. human robots. Their crime? They return to earth to avoid extinction in "Off-world" colonies where they are enslaved in dirty dangerous jobs humans refuse to tackle. Eventually Deckard falls in love with the android Rachel and we human viewers are squirming in our seats over the bigotry toward our robotic brothers and sisters.

We also read Neal Stephenson's "Snow Crash" which features Rat Things, surgically augmented cybernetic pit bull terriers, and other cool robotics. In the novel, people's online avatars lead more fascinating lives than do the real-life characters. Thus people spend increasingly more time in online Metaverse social media sites and less time in Reality. Sound familiar?

Recently I watched "Deep Impact" and the Ray Bradbury based film, "A Sound of Thunder," back-to-back one night. I was in Positronic Paradise.

Morgan Freeman as President Tom Beck in "Deep Impact" is burdened with saving all humanity from a comet headed for earth. While movie critics may argue the believability of astronauts trotting across a comet to install nuclear bombs 100 meters beneath the surface (to thwart the collision), cultural critics in 1998 probably found it far more incredible that an African American would be president. Thus one era's fiction is the next generation's fact; nowhere is this truer than with science fiction.

In "Sound of Thunder," time travelers on a Cretaceous dinosaur-hunting safari mistakenly kill a butterfly. This sets off an evolutionary chain reaction causing ferociously repulsive animals to bite off people's heads and seriously threaten our hero (who is a scientist, of course). It makes me wonder. When I slapped that mosquito last summer, did I cause the Congressional budget debate and shut down the government? Sorry about that. Warning, warning, spoiler alert approaching. Finally, our nerd-hero travels back in time, saves the butterfly, and all is back to normal. The crook CEO scamming the rich for mega bucks to go on dinosaur safaris continues his shady business despite the threat of environmental depredation.

We're supposed to feel relieved, but I have to ask. Are things really better off with the reestablishment of order in such stories? They're all going to hell in a handbasket eventually given their greedy ways. Why prolong the agony?

Time travel has captivated readers since long before Ebenezer Scrooge revisited his sad boarding house years and H.G. Wells transported us to the land of the Morlocks and Eloi. Haven't we all fantasized about "If I could go back in time and do it over"? It seems the lure is to have a replay, i.e. if I'd known then what I know now. . .

Famed author of "Game of Thrones," George R.R. Martin, once taught at Clarke. In fact, he was the last faculty member to teach science fiction at the university prior to me. I shared an office with Martin. True, he left Clarke in 1979 and I didn't become an instructor there until 10 years later in 1989. But it doesn't matter.

With altered reality, it's just a matter of time.

Part III. Patient Actor

I have loved the teaching profession my entire adult life. And yet, since youngest child Andrew entered medical school, I've speculated that my true calling might have been patient acting. Yes, you can actually make money pretending to be sick to med students for practice.

Known professionally as "Standardized Patients," SPs undergo hours of training. Once an embellisher of a common cold into how deathly sick I was, I could qualify.

After all, I didn't get out of test day in 3rd grade with bad acting. I was a 9th child and mom was no chump when it came to kids faking it. But I fooled her. I am sure she believed that I had leprosy (which miraculously disappeared the next day).

Although SPs don't have to be professional actors, many are. I took to the stage readily in high school. As June Cleaver I delivered a convincing portrayal with every line, "Beaver, wait until your father gets home." As the Wicked Witch of the West, I terrified audiences as I cackled, "I'll get you, my pretty, and your little dog, too!"

If they need a fake patient who presents warty nose, green skin, and the tendency to be melted by water, I'm their candidate.

Among the qualifications listed on the Standardized Patient website is that one must be able to stick to a role and not break character. As a mother of five whose grown children believe that I relished every single second of their childhoods, I've had loads of practice pretending. Natalie Wilder, SP in New York, maintains, "The most interesting cases are probably the psychiatric ones. For one case I had to learn to use makeup to draw heroin tracks on my arm" (The New Yorker, Jan. 8, 2018).

Our daughter-in-law, Katie, is a Physician Assistant. The first time she was observed

interviewing a patient actor, he complained of fatigue, muscle aches, and joint pain. Examining him, Katie discovered red splotches covering the back of his hospital gown. She suspected it was lipstick.

Katie asked her “patient” about his social life and sexual activities. Just then her teacher’s voice came over the speaker announcing that yes, she had correctly identified lipstick. It was intended to simulate the bullseye pattern rash of Lyme disease. Oops. You may have seen the Seinfeld episode in which Kramer and Mickey receive their assigned diseases as patient actors. Mickey receives bacterial meningitis, “Ah,” he exclaims, “The Hamlet of all diseases—severe pain, nausea, delusions!” Poor Kramer. He pulls the gonorrhea assignment. Both take it to the max.

In real life, however, melodrama and drama queens have no place in patient acting. In fact, actors are warned not to give away too much so that med students have to work harder to diagnose.

Andrew reports that during observation, patient actors he’s interviewing seem distant, resistant. But afterward when they critique his performance as a potential doctor, they are nearly new BFFs telling him how comfortable they feel with him.

The fake patient is key in student education. In fact, helping train new medical professionals is what draws most SPs to the work. SPs critique students from the patient’s perspective. They frankly explain to future doctors, PAs, and nurses how they both hit the mark and miss it.

This is beginning to sound very familiar. When I was a student in teacher education classes, we assumed roles as fake high school students when one of our classmates “taught.” I was assigned “class clown.”

The instructional part of patient acting actually sounds a lot like teaching English—except no one dies if I misplace a modifier.

Part IV: Tahiti

Recently I saw one of those old movies featuring the typical office worker at a desk with six rotary dial phones, all ringing at once. Stacks of paperwork threaten to topple at the slightest breeze.

Stressed out, the businessman leans back in his chair as a dream bubble appears overhead. Visions of gray and white waves lap a black and gray shore as the beleaguered dreams of escaping to Tahiti.

I’ve practiced the art of daydreaming, myself, for years. Of course, the incentive is to escape without really leaving town. Sometimes present moments aren’t all that bad. Nonetheless, even too much of life’s best events can be hectic. The worse or wilder the reality, the more immense the daydream.

Back in high school when S. Philomena woke me out of a particularly fine fantasy about surfing in Tahiti to quiz me on current events, I fell off the surfboard at the sound of her voice. I heard her ask something like “When secretaries buy white cabinets for their houses, which states do they shop in?”

Sister stared right through me as I muttered, “Utah, Alaska, and Tahiti.” Too late, a classmate told me that she’d actually asked me to “name the Secretary of State and four White House cabinet members.” The cost of that daydream? Two detentions after school clapping erasers. The value of that imagining? Priceless!

Friend and retired psychiatrist, Peter Whitis, advises, “Everything good starts with a dream. These creative visions are what moves society forward. Without daydreams, the world would be a sad place.” Who am I to deny such wisdom?

I come from a long line of daydreamers. Even dad, a hard-headed corporate guru, was given to flights of fancy. I once caught him gazing into the faux colonial living room wallpaper, his coffee cup frozen in one hand, the newspaper stilled in his other. Knowing he wasn’t that keen about the George Washington/cherry tree motif paper, I asked, “A penny for your thoughts, dad?” He snapped to, put the sports section down, and admitted, “I was just recalling the day Spahnie struck out three star batters in a row. I can nearly taste the brats and Miller beer.”

Mom, too, was one for great escapes. Back when I was younger with five kids chasing around, an attaché full of nine million student papers to grade by tomorrow, and a tumble-down house constantly in need of a plumber, I was glad to have mom blow into town inviting, “Let’s go shopping.”

Neither of us avid shoppers, we’d waltz through a couple stores, she’d buy me something impractical—an orange mohair sweater or an elegant silk scarf—and then we’d get to the real point of our day out: lunch. Over vichyssoise and white wine, mom coached, “Whenever life gets you down, just think back to this delightful afternoon.”

At times, however, it’s downright dangerous to admit having day visions. A friend of mine confessed to co-workers that he regularly composes nature poetry in his mind whenever bored at company meetings. One week later, the CEO stared him down in the middle of a meeting, “Charlie! Are you mentally hugging trees again?”

Too, in my own literature classroom, if I notice a student spacing out, it’s best if she tells me she’s thinking about, “How Maya Angelou’s poetry resonates with euphonious rhyme schemes, thus reiterating metaphoric meaning” instead of, “I was remembering summer vacation and playing Mario Kart seventeen hours nonstop.”

T.S. Eliot asserts in his Objective Correlative that certain “triggers” enable people to re-live past events by “recalling them in moments of tranquility.” But triggering objects or situations are not always lofty.

Garrison Keillor, radio personality and writer, discloses that he regularly daydreams of his first love, a girl he’d discussed Great Books with over dirty socks at the laundromat, “One whiff of Clorox brings it all back.” Unlike Keillor, my trigger is Tahiti, even though I’ve never been there.

In fact, Tahiti is the best stuff for daydreams because I’ve never been there. Neither rain, nor hurricanes, nor men-of-war ever enter my visions. I’ll never be voted off the island either. My desk has been stacked high with final exams, new term lesson plans, The impending birth of our son’s daughter, last minute Christmas gifts, and family reunion plans. With the sixth phone ringing off the desktop--the deadline for this essay--I’m leaning back in my chair with visions of Tahiti dancing overhead.

Where DID I put that surfboard anyway?



TETO IN ALL HER GLORY

By Vaneza Diaz

She is as bright as the sky, soft as the grass, as trustworthy as a diary. The world traveler has seen it all from Nevada to Iowa to Mexico. In all her adventures and 20 years of age, she still manages to move ever so swiftly and fulfill her duty. Her loyalty is admirable. Designed beautifully, she measures up as being 6 feet tall and 4 feet wide. Sprawled out on the ground she may be overlooked, but when put to use, she becomes the most important piece of my day.

Her name, Teto.

Composed of 3,000 yards of thread she eloquently displays a little girl standing face to face with her friend, a duck. She is surrounded by two large trees with big brown branches and light green leaves. On her lower left side, she is stained with a bit of paint which makes her even more loveable. I was introduced to her back in 2002 on the 20th day of January, and she has yet to leave my side. It is common for family members or friends to gift new mothers and new fathers blankets and toys for their babies in order to convey their love and support for the couple and baby. As it turns out, this was exactly what my grandma did! Without thinking twice, she presented a big blue fuzzy blanket to my mom and my dad with the intention being the blanket could be something to keep me warm when I slept, and the blanket could be a symbol of her love to me. Little did she know, she was gifting me the greatest gift I have ever known. According to the Oxford English dictionary, the word blanket is a versatile word. It ranges from being a noun to a verb to



even serving as an adjective. None truly capture the power it has. As a noun, a blanket is simply “a large usually oblong piece of woven fabric used as a bed covering.” This surface level definition is great at describing the purpose Teto had when I was a tiny tot. As an oblivious toddler, she was there like any other blanket to simply cover me and keep me warm while I put in the work to get my beauty rest. At this point in time, she and I were not connected in any way. She could have been lost, and I would have had no clue that she was missing. However, a blanket as a verb and adjective provides a deeper, more meaningful definition.

In terms of a verb, blanket is “to cover so as to obscure, interrupt, suppress, or extinguish,” and as an adjective, a blanket serves the purpose of “covering all members of a group or class without individual apportionment.” These two definitions most accurately characterize the use of my blanket today. She performs the duty of suppressing stressors without dividing me up into a bunch of little broken pieces. In other words, she provides me with a substantial sense of security and empowerment because the fact that I have her and she will never leave my side leads me to feel as if no problem is too big to handle. She truly is the basis of my support system. At a young age, Teto was just something that ended up being in my bed at night. Whereas today, I actively keep her nearby to help me feel as confident as Usain Bolt feels when running a 100m race. For instance, she is on my lap when I complete my homework, she is wrapped around my body on the way to a big soccer game, and she is right next to me when I need a shoulder to cry on. In all instances, she provides me with a feeling of security.

Security is the feeling that is upon us when we recall the fact that we are safe from danger. There are many threats one may face that may range from physical dangers to mental ones. Surely, as adults we have all encountered times like these where we were shoved into a corner and expected to fight off an uncertainty or two. So, the question becomes, what are our resources to help us combat those dangers? How can we equip ourselves to win this uphill battle?

Nonetheless, we can turn to our own versions of Teto as she is a clear-cut model of an excellent resource to help us overcome intimidations and provide us with security. She stands tall as a strong representative of security because by fulfilling her obligation of minimizing the effect stressors have on my life and liberating me from those anxieties, she is acting in a way that directly reflects all of what security feels like and looks like when we are in need of it most. Specifically, she absorbed everything that security is supposed to be the day I had my first encounter with death.

It was the day my father received the deeply saddening call that his father, my grandfather, had passed away. It was a crisp early morning in June when I was supposed to be getting ready for a normal day. Mom woke me up, and per usual I fought her when she tried to take my blankets away. I especially put up a fight when she tried to take away Teto. After I finally gave in, I walked into the living room only to find my dad in tears. As a fresh 3rd grader and like many other eight-year-olds, I had never seen my father shed a single tear, so I was in utter shock. What I did know was when I felt sad all I needed was my Teto to heal me. For that reason, I did what any sensible eldest daughter would do — I

brought Teto to the living room to comfort my father. I felt like a hero, I felt like I was the only one that knew how to heal him and make the endless tears vanish. However, as adults, we know nothing in that moment was ever going to heal my dad or take his pain away. Although it may have not made his pain evaporate, as my most precious possession, Teto did her job of embodying unconditional love. As a result, through this hard time, I was provided with unfaded support from my blanket which allowed me to better support my father and translate that love and support to him. In turn, my dad saw that he had an unconditional loving support system. This very gesture proved that a blanket can be more than a blanket. She can be an item in which we confide in and use as a crutch when need be. A blanket for all would result in communities where we feel secure and connected.

Moreover, it is important to acknowledge the fact that while security can originate from a blanket, others may gain their feeling of security from building walls, establishing fences, or closing doors. However, these mannerisms may come at the expense of being separated from a community. When we build walls and put up fences in order to protect us and provide security, we are also hindering any outside forces, both good and bad, from entering our lives. As a result, the fences and the walls that are built to stand so tall and “protect us” only apportion us from one another. We become so disconnected to the point where we are all broken up into a plethora of individual pieces and left to be on our own. For instance, if my dad had simply hidden behind a door during one of the hardest times of his life, he would have no idea that there were heaps of love waiting for him on the other side. Basically, when we build that fence, build that wall, or close that door, while under the impression that we are protecting ourselves, we situate ourselves on one side and leave our fathers to cry alone on the other. Whereas, when we confide in a blanket, we leave the door open which has the power to strengthen us. With that said, one can easily acknowledge that these mechanisms, fences, walls, doors, contradict everything a blanket stands for and cause more harm than good.

Through and through, it is crystal clear that blankets are reliable in fulfilling their duties. If we are crying, they hold us. If we are in unfamiliar territory, they are a piece of home. If we are cold, they keep us warm. The warmth, security, and support this inanimate coverlet brings to us will never fail to comfort us. If (and when) the day comes that you make a colossal mistake that results in everyone who is nearby jumping from your ship one can be sure that your blanket will be on that sinking ship no matter what. Humbly stated, a blanket will undoubtedly never leave an individual's side and will forever be a source of unconditional security. This is truly significant because as naturally social beings, we are empowered by the indication that there is something on our side that will certainly never leave. On account of having a source of unconditional love and item of security, we are more willing to jump out of our comfort zones, we are more willing to support others, and we are more willing to create a meaningful support system.

MEMOIRS

By Lois Bassen

To arrive at Northrop Frye's wedding ending of Comedy, villainies must be viewed askew.

For her daughter's 2nd wedding anniversary in July, 2002, Hilde ordered a Wish List teapot of Meg's bridal pattern, Wedgwood Oberon, a modern revision of overwrought Jacobean vines. Also in July, 2002, though she had just retired, Hilde was astonished to be commissioned to rewrite the memoir of her husband's Aunt Florence, a Scottish octogenarian widow of a Japanese aristocrat. Florence's first husband had been a zaibatsu, educated in Japan, venerated at the University of Pennsylvania, Class of 1909, a champion who introduced golf to his native country and played with his neighbor, the young Emperor Hirohito. He was a close friend of Prime Minister Prince Fumimaro Konoe, the architect of the 1939 Nanking Massacre. This was a lot to take in and take on. Florence, a Scottish nurse, resembled Carole Lombard in her movie magazine-like pictures, and her dapper husband Baron Haruki/'Harry' didn't look his sixty-one to her twenty-five. Japanese SS, the kempetai, which led to Florence's imprisonment ordered by (hawk) Tojo to pressure (by mid-WWII dove-ish) Prince Konoe. Included in the manuscript were other photos Florence had taken, confiscated by the wartime How could Hilde refuse or resist rewriting the 1946 memoir, revised in mid-50's Manhattan, when a publisher assigned a then-unknown editor – Betty Friedan – to work with Brian's Aunt Florence? But Friedan's "Cinderella story" version had outraged its author, who shelved the book for decades. In 1963 NYC, when Hilde was 16 and first met Brian's aunt, she was warned never to ask Florence about what had happened in Japan. In 1996, Hilde's play about her Wellesley '69's 25th (the month before the first Moon landing) LUNAR REUNION won awards and nationwide productions. Her classmate, First Lady Hillary Clinton, saw it in D.C. and sent a secretary-penned note. She doubted her classmate remembered her. "We went to different Wellesleys," Hilde always said, "even though our names were often confused. She was Hillary Rodham, and I was Hilde – 'Hill-dee' – Rodman. When professors saw the name on their roster, and when I appeared in class, their hearts sank. I had an English professor, a lesbian Icelandic scholar who looked like Popeye's Olive Oil, who called me, 'Hill-D-alloway, for good measure.'" By February, 2003, Hilde had researched and rewritten Florence's memoir. Florence approved it, and Hilde placed it with her agent. Then as suddenly as can be said of someone who was 88, Aunt Florence died. In her will, she left Hilde the ms. In May a year later, an

obituary in the NY Times for Japan's 101-year-old first post-war representative at the UN stopped Hilde cold. Florence's Baron Harry had been chosen before this man, but he'd died of a heart attack at the very party given to celebrate his UN appointment. Hilde contacted a Times reporter who'd interviewed the centenarian's heir, an internationally known rightwing journalist and longtime associate of then-campaigning VP Cheney. Through the Times reporter, Hilde contacted Hajime ('Jimmy') who invited her to send him Florence's memoir.

As he read it, he wrote nostalgic replies about childhood memories of the history he had in common with Florence and Baron Harry, ridiculing her descriptions. But he offered to recommend the memoir to his friend the emeritus Kodansha publisher -- if Hilde would make Jimmy's rightwing edits and hand deliver the ms. hard copy to him during his next trip to DC "in November to drink champagne" at the GOP celebration he anticipated after the 2004 re-election. Dick Cheney and Don Rumsfeld, Jimmy wrote, were, like the man at Kodansha, old friends. Her agent encouraged her.

An email pas de deux ensued. With polite verbal sidesteps following the emailed advice of the Asian Studies Chair at Harvard (whom she contacted during research), Hilde demurred the edits she knew would have been anathema to Florence. She added her own excuses for her absence: in November, she was moving from NYC to Rhode Island because Meg was in mid-residency and pregnant. Jimmy just as diplomatically admired her entree. He praised Hilde's play LUNAR REUNION, wondering if "it owed its four-plot structure to MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM?" and sent her several translated editions of his eighty-five books, including the one that denied the Peking Massacre. He reinvited Hilde to dance for the devil in May. How could she not hear echoes of Oberon? When I had at my pleasure taunted her/And she in mild terms begg'd my patience, I then did ask of her her changeling child...

Folding space, as in branes/brains, increases information storage and demonstrates that topology = geography.

The world truly re-iterated Mandelbrot's fractals. After more than three decades as an editor, in retirement after 2002, Hilde had the time to learn how many names the same objects could have. On a Sunday in May, 2005, the Northeast Regional from Boston > D.C. stopped for passengers where the aboriginal (rocky river) Sneecheconnet-then-Blackstone changed its name to the Providence River. Hilde and Brian weren't required to change trains at Penn Station in New York. Awaiting departures/arrivals, they sat fifty feet beneath the paradoxically horizontal body of the vertical City, familiar and missed, lying above her like a lost love, Leonardo's pentagram-Man. After seven hours from Providence to D.C., Hilde and Brian disembarked the conductor called out "Washington, DC", but it was a stop for locals who directed them back onto the train.

But there was no mistaking the last stop at Union Station, from which they could walk to their small hotel. Trees were in full green leaf and the air-warm summer to Rhode Island's cool spring. They were led to a tiny duplex, bedroom & bath upstairs, half bath & sitting room below. Brian poured Hilde single malt from a flask.

A cab took them to an Indian restaurant in Cleveland Park. A round table was set for nine: four couples and their Japanese host. Brian was seated with the wives of the Cheney/Rumsfeld men from the DOD, and Jimmy nodded to the solicitous maitre d' to pull out the chair beside him for Hilde. Three shots of Glenfiddich back in the hotel room had fortified

Hilde. Jimmy looked younger than his late 70's, his face as smooth as his manner. He wore a dark suit and blue shirt and smelled of bergamot, like Earl Grey tea. Clearly but curiously, Jimmy had invited her to be his guest of honor at the table on this Sunday evening.

The three DOD men and their tired wives looked like they were as on order as the food.

The tallest and oldest of the men had a deep Southern accent. Jimmy leaned in and whispered to Hilde, "The Vice President would have joined us but --" and waved away the rest of his insincerity. Drinks came several times before dinner. Hilde could not feel her teeth, but the alcohol had done little to quiet Florence's undiminished warnings never to contact anyone in Japan.

Jimmy said, "Are you a Christian?"

Hilde retasted the maraschino in her Old Fashioned.

"What would Jesus say?" she said.

"You were a classmate of the former First Lady."

"We went to different Wellesleys."

Hilde felt defensive, though not for herself. Jimmy's diplomacy was as fine as forty percent of the paintings -- forgeries -- hanging in the world's greatest museums. Focus. Hillary.

She quoted, "Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them." "That was Malvolio. So maybe she was drunk, but it was the truth. She added, "Hillary is the trifacta," and looked at Brian. He was listening to one of the wives. Then the man to Hilde's left began describing the War College. He was on the part-time faculty. His accent was less pronounced but also Southern. Jimmy interrupted him and refilled her wine glass.

"Tell me about Wellesley," he said. Hilde remembered aggressive Harvard boys. "People used to say that God would send a son to Princeton and a daughter to Wellesley."

"Like Eden," Jimmy said.

"Without the temptation," Hilde said, "of boys and snakes."

Jimmy laughed, echoed by the cast from the DOD. Hilde thought: there used to be smoke-filled rooms where men like these moved in clouds of power and paid courtesans to punish their sins with pleasure. She said, "At our graduation, Hillary was the first student ever to be the invited speaker at a Wellesley Commencement. We cheered --" but Jimmy stopped her.

Leaning in again, he said, "Bring me the memoir to breakfast tomorrow at my hotel at ten a.m."

"I have it here, now," Hilde said. "The maitre d' has --"

Jimmy dismissed her words and gestured a waiter over for dessert orders which only Hilde and Brian declined.

Regarding the demolition and reconstruction of great buildings, architects must think about both aesthetics & mechanics

Facing the White House across Lafayette Square, The Hay-Adams was a boutique hotel rebuilt above the razed mansions of Henry Adams and John Hay, personal secretary to President Abraham Lincoln, and later U.S. Ambassador to the United Kingdom, as well as Secretary of State under both William McKinley and Theodore Roosevelt. Together with their wives, Clara Hay and Marian (Clover) Adams, as well as geologist Clarence King, Hay and Adams formed a group they named the "Five of Hearts," and had custom

china made in that pattern. For years, the homes served as Washington's leading salons, welcoming Theodore Roosevelt, Mark Twain, Henry James, and the sculptor August Saint-Gaudens. In 1927, a developer razed both buildings and replaced them with an Italian Renaissance-style, 138-room apartment hotel with Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian columns, walnut wainscoting, and intricate ceiling treatments featuring Elizabethan and Tudor motifs.

Hilde didn't ask for a taxi to the Hay-Adams. She walked outside on the May morning and was approached by a Black man offering her his limousine. On the quick trip to Lafayette Square, D.C. looked like where, minus green apples, Magritte's bowler hats must land. She gripped the cardboard box with Florence's memoir on her lap.

Jimmy was not in the hotel lobby. She looked around at the ornate wood and marble; Clover Adams had never lived here. Hilde was directed up a short flight of steps to a nearly empty dining room, tables covered in layered white linens. A waiter, also in a white jacket, led her to a table farthest from the bright windows. Jimmy stood to welcome her and took the manuscript out of her hands, placing it out of sight on one of the four chairs at the table.

She wondered if his suite was on the fourth floor where the ghost of Clover Adams was said to walk early in the winter month she committed suicide in 1885. Gothic mood. Snap out of it. Hilde focused on the flowers and formal table setting. Fragrant pink peonies, butter plates, cups, and saucers. Another waiter appeared with a tray carrying both a coffee and a teapot.

"I know this pattern," Hilde said. "It's my daughter's wedding china. Wedgwood Oberon." She could see Meg's face and the baby. She calmed. This stranger was not the Japanese Sandman of her grandmother's lullaby. Jimmy had had real plans for his current D.C. trip. To lobby for rightwing Japanese interests. For which she had been -- a convenience, an amuse bouche at a dinner. Hardly even a pebble under which Jimmy might find some dirt on Hillary that could oil future encounters with Cheney/Rumsfeld? Eagles did not fly with chicka-or-Hil-dees. Why this morning's meeting? A man does not live by breakfast alone.

"Wedgwood," Jimmy said, lifting his cup. "English china. Charles Darwin was Wedgwood's grandson. He married his first cousin, who was also a Wedgwood grandchild. My first cousin is Yoko Ono."

Hilde nearly choked on the jasmine tea.

"You must love springing that on people!"

Jimmy basked. "Why, do you think I am so different from my cousin?"

"Yoko Ono! Your Thanksgiving table conversation must be epic. Florence wrote nothing about Thanksgiving in Japan. A Scot would not have missed it."

"We do have a November harvest festival, Labor Thanksgiving Day. Kinro Kansha no Hi is actually a modern name for an ancient ritual called Niinamesai, our harvest festival. The Emperor makes the season's first offering of harvested rice to the gods and partakes himself."

A waiter wheeled a silver tray of breakfast foods and served them.

Splitting open a scone for which she had no appetite, Hilde was silent.

Jimmy concentrated on raspberries and sliced green gage plums. "There is too much piracy in the East China Sea and ongoing dispute about our Senkaku Islands."

“Which the Chinese call Diaoyu.”

“You follow this?” Jimmy refilled his cup with coffee, then hers with tea.

“Florence’s memoir opens Western eyes to Japan. From the moment in Shanghai in 1939, when she was a young nurse from Scotland, ‘The military tanks rumbled into the main courtyard of the Country Hospital only that morning, in the wake of General Wu, who now lay safely tucked in bed.’”

“The Chinese have a different view of history. The invading American Army looted and raped? That is not reported in your history books.”

“General MacArthur,” Hilde said, “ordered all such indefensible atrocities reported directly to him. As Yoko Ono’s Times ads repeatedly said, unnecessary war is the worst crime.”

Jimmy said. “At Wellesley, did you resent Mrs. Clinton?”

“Oh, she’ll always be Ms. Rodham to me. About Hillary – no Shakespearian lean and hungry looks from the likes of me. I identify with Pindarus’s escapist politics. ‘Far from this country Pindarus shall run,/Where never Roman shall take note of him.’”

“The powerful do not run from power.”

“They might stop and smell the roses from time to time. It is also good not to be king. Lear wanted to divest. Hamlet cursed having to set things right.”

“Why do you pursue the memoir? You were not born, she was not your aunt, and now she is dead.”

“Florence’s voice was lovely, like Cordelia’s. She had no idea Baron Harry was zaibatsu -- she worried he could lose his job for marrying her, a non-Japanese. She said she would work to support them. In a teahouse in Tokyo under moonlight, he took her hands, had tears in his eyes, and said, ‘Oh, my dear, you will never need to fear that.’ I think he married Florence because she was the incarnation of an Impressionist portrait he’d bought in the 1920’s from the Louvre – I never could track it down. That painting was incinerated along with Baron Harry’s house and much of Tokyo in a May, 1945, raid. Two months after the Operation Meetinghouse firebombing, worse than either Hiroshima or Nagasaki in August. I also never found the woman doctor who’d returned from Germany after creating diets for Holocaust survivors, who saved Florence’s life when she got to LA in 1946.”

“Have you seen her ghost?” Jimmy said.

Hilde now recognized his abrupt pattern, but suddenly, the man was unnerved and unnerving.

“Here?” Hilde stalled. “Clover Adams only comes in early December. She hugs people and whispers, ‘What do you want?’ I once edited an article about wet macular degeneration. It affects sight. Hallucination is an entirely sane symptom.”

But his black eyes were focusing beyond Hilde, and his lips moved silently. Then he flattened his palms on the white tablecloth table, and said aloud, “My flight is at three p.m. So.”

Hilde moved the manuscript onto the table. As if conjured, another apparition of a white-jacketed waiter stood behind her ready to draw back her chair. Jimmy’s dismissal made her giddy with relief. She nodded to the waiter, indicating the boxed memoir, and the young man assented, as if any of it mattered. Only four percent of the porous universe was what we and our dreams were made of.

No two events which are simultaneous with reference to the railway embankment are not also simultaneous relatively to the train.

Their Acela from D.C. to Boston was an express. As they sped north, greenery diminished in density and color saturation, and it looked like they were traveling back in time from summer to spring.

“What?” Brian said.

“What?”

“You were talking in your sleep.”

“What was I saying?”

Brian folded the Times onto his lap. “You were saying no to Einstein, then Potsdam, Bloom, Professor Harold, I’m guessing. Maybe you caught Jimmy’s crazy.”

Hilde was half asleep. “I saw Aunt Florence standing in her living room, August, ’45, so hot and starving in Japan. When Konoe secretly brought the Potsdam Declaration to read aloud to her to see if he understood every English nuance and his tiny aide who wrote later, disapproving of her short-shorts.” Her eyes opened. She was awake. “But it’s gone now – Einstein said no. What about?”

“God doesn’t play dice with the universe?”

“Not that one. Something else.”

“Or you dreamed it.”

“But you saw the email: Bloom said I was right, Shakespeare imagined everything -- but the future.”

“What do you think Aunt Florence’s memoir’s chances are now?” Brian asked.

“Better, if she’s haunting him. If he even took it back to Japan with him. Dubious at best. A man with many ghosts. Mad as the Hatter.”

“It was hardly a trip to Wonderland, Alice,” Brian said.

“At least we kept our heads.”

When the train approached New York, it took a long, banking curve on unfamiliar tracks. Sunset gilded a tilted skyline against massing purple rainclouds. On her return, the City looked like a stranger to Hilde. As on their honeymoon decades before, Brian slept beside her when the train picked up speed. It became a dark and stormy night punctuated by lightning and thunder. Waves of rain gusted against black, mirroring windows. Along the Connecticut shore, Hilde couldn’t see the Sound beside the tracks or under brief bridges when the train was suspended above the water. All she could see was her reflection as the Acela slowed and came to their stop in

Providence.



REFRESH
HEAVEN

Broken after broy
 a glass of wine
 that was mine

As if they were
 destruction
 Hollo
 around them
 ple talk o
 nite, simp

The bronze
 is time for the an
 the ships shall me
 Further from the
 Where new tale
 low crabs and fo
 By manne
 The resplende
 Where ey



Medusa Lisa Emma Grant, Digital Collage

Skiers on a hill
are like notes on a vast white sheet of music,
played, as long as there is light,
by chilly Vermont winds
and the bending bows of pines.

All is smooth, legato,
each measure deftly slalomed,
or brightly schussed,
in the key signature of speed,
exhilaration and flying strands of hair.

One crafts a brilliant triplet.

Another glides pianissimo.

Some poor soul sinks diminuendo

in a pile of snow

but rises in a semibreve,
with poles raised in defiance,
conducts the melody on.

MUSIC ON A HILL

By John Grey

SELF PORTRAIT AS A SNAPPING TURTLE

By Will Reger

I tend to lie in the mud
and wait for something to hold to,
something to sink my beak into,
whatever I love, no matter the blood,
no matter the thrashing and pain.

I will kill it if I get ahold,
drag it down into the cold,
wet world where I have lain.

It is well thought I am tenacious,
but I think of myself as dangerous.

AS A GLAZED VASE IT'D BE BEAUTIFUL

By Rosemary Dunn Moeller

Bruises need to be touched gently, need to be touched,
remembering that moment before pain started, with
one slip of leather soles on ice of theatre shoes
as I go down to the sound of plastic packaging being
crumpled and popped around my ankle. Sprained, strained, swollen
and bruised, but covered in the slush of Times Square, chilling.

My fingers gently touch the bruise on my knee that's been
abraded by asphalt from bike falls, sliced by broken clam shells
while crawling around looking for crayfish with kids, ripped by
barbed wire when trying to find asparagus growing wild in ditches.

I close my eyes in pain only able to see sparks of lavender, violet,
porphyry, all shades of purple so beautiful behind my eyelids, inside
my brain, inside my skin where pain throbs with my beating heart
which I planned on nourishing with great drama on the stage not
slapstick on the sidewalk of New York, New York.



I made myself comfortable
to tell my little story.

I sensed she would
not exactly like it,

but certainly be interested.

“And how did that make you feel?”

she said.

I could tell she understood
and I knew exactly how she would feel
at my reply.

I have a sixth sense for these things
and I sensed her alarm,
though she hid it well.

I told her more.

I knew that she understood,

I could feel her anxiety.

I know it well,

I'm a past master

at anxiety.

I wondered what form
her evasive action would take.

She was planning something,

I have a sixth sense for these things
and I should know what form it would take
but so many options were crowding into my head.

“What are you feeling?”, she said.

THERAPY

By Lynn White

EXHIBIT

Butterflies and Moths

By Angela Rebrec

We've been here before:
bought the museum guide book,
toured the exhibits
and read every object label,
studied the taxonomy of classification,
the differences between butterflies and moths.

Biologists argue over how to identify
morphological variations:
whether to distinguish between
the structure of antennae, those
feathered along the edges
versus
clubbed at the ends.

This is the place in the exhibit
where we get stuck;
where we look back
and forth from guidebook to exhibit item
and back to book again
trying to make sense
of how the divisions pervade
(even through metamorphosis)—
if it makes any sense to compare
the virtues of a silk-spun cocoon
to the hard, outer shell of a chrysalis.

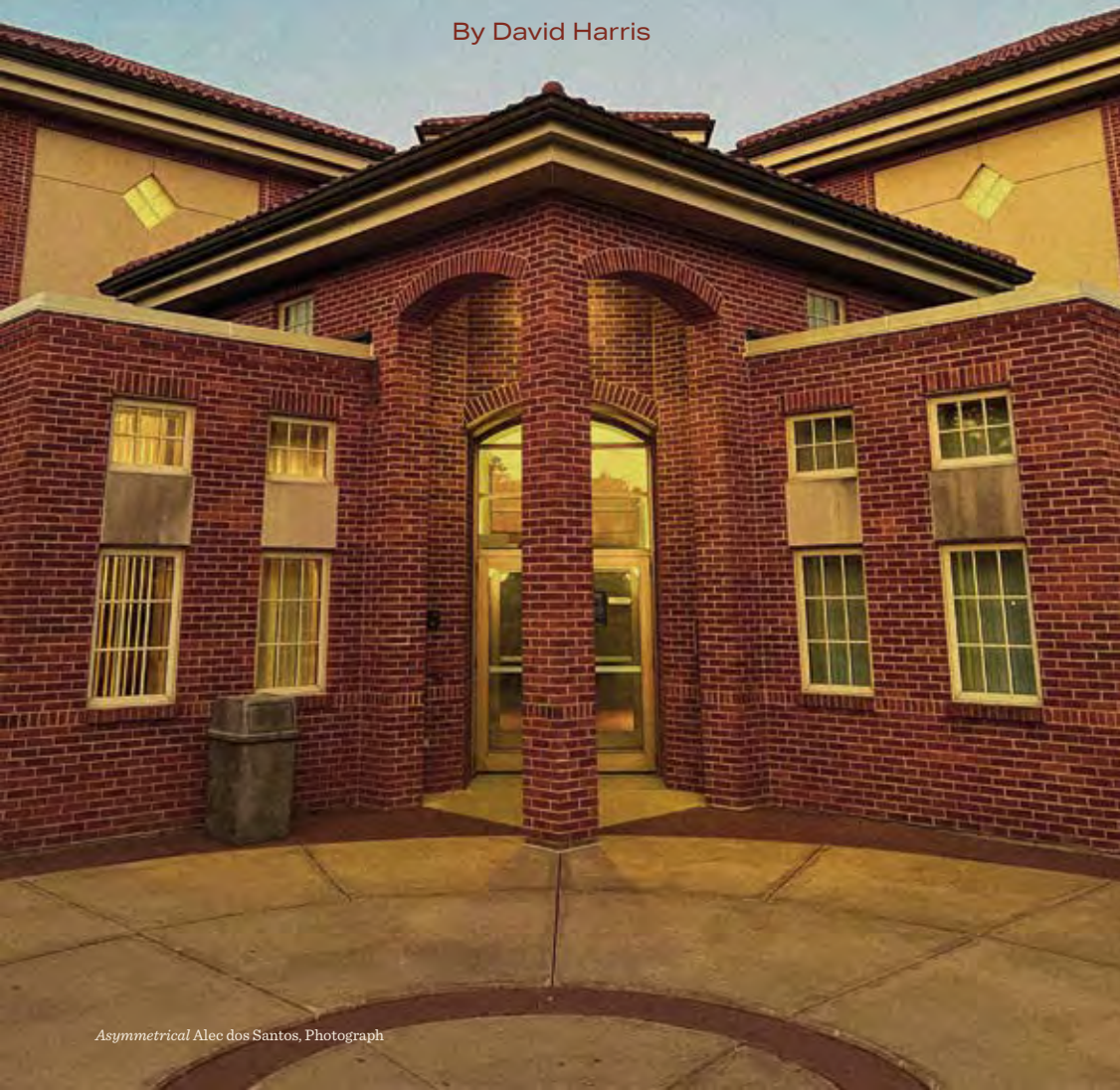
It seems whenever we walk this museum
new exhibits always resemble the last—
these images we grasp at—
like why a moth's long scales
give the impression of dust;
and why it's been well established
that butterflies are beautiful
yet cold blooded.



GOING *to* HELL

An Essay in Verse

By David Harris



Asymmetrical Alec dos Santos, Photograph

The man in the seat next to me
on the flight out of Nashville,
self-proclaimed buckle on the Bible Belt,
only wanted to save me from eternity
submerged in the lake of fire.

*

Without his help I might never accept
Jesus and the true evangelical faith,
lose my opportunity of heavenly bliss.
But for what? Am I a mortal sinner?

I see myself as less than evil.

*

So did Stalin, of course. Collateral damage
was extensive, but he tried to build
a workers' paradise. If the heart
is not evil, will God say "Go to hell
forever?" Is She beyond forgiveness?

*

Does She judge the actions more
than the heart? Is there room
for unintended consequences?
Should I try to avoid mortal sin
by sitting, quiet, in a dark room?

*

Are you really moral if you act well
only out of fear? Love your neighbor
or face unspeakable, unending,
torture? No, that's not for me.
Try to do good because it is good.

*

Sartre said hell is other people, but Huck
looked forward to eternity with his pals.
Hindus despair at the prospect of forever
on the Great Wheel, and Jews worry
enough about this life.

*

Life without parole is a very long sentence.
Death without parole? Billions
and trillions of years of torture?
The people who invented hell didn't think
in such big numbers. Their world was young.

*

Their world was also false, in so many ways.
No geology, no astronomy, no faith
in testable experience. They hadn't learned
that some effects are not divine will, that some
are just the workings of the universe.

*

Some gods are harsh, but even Mars
only killed, then stopped. No lake of fire
for Christians who abjured the Roman gods.
How could I give up my unbelief,
my mostly moral life, to dodge eternal torment
by a loving god?



Horizons Vers. 1&2 Alexander Limarev, Digital Collages

IF I BELIEVED IN HEAVEN

By Daniel Zanger

Sunshine engulfed your silhouette
as you stepped through the sliding glass door
onto the balcony.
It was as if you were
walking
right
into
heaven itself.

Goddamn angel.

HER OWN

By Kira Dewey

Child smothered by darkness
buried beneath blankets
monsters wait to
Possess

Mother infuses daughter with
complaints about complexion
covering minute monstrosities
in cosmetics

Now caged
behind forced smile
lips painted vermillion
monster's blood her own



Fighting Angels Lily Nesta, Oil on Canvas



Brothers Jessie Rebik, Charcoal on Paper

Broken

By Aleksandra Vujisić

It feels like waking up next to a ghost
and craving for life
and getting lost,
and I want to hold the girl that
I used to be,
tell her that ancient secret for me
doesn't mean more than a sweet lie -
come on little girl,
be brave, don't cry.

Broken, like a glass of wine
after a fight,
broken with all that was mine,
without no light,
broken like a preacher of forgotten prayers,
like a painting with no colours and layers,
and never asking the reason why -
come on little girl,
be brave, don't cry.

You have left me so many times before
but I always tend to ask for more,
I never stop and never believe -
come on little girl,
be brave, just leave.

Beware THE TIME IS NEAR

By Joyce Walker

The election's on its way again.
What government will inflict the least
pain?
Choose wisely, or poverty will remain.
Beware the time is near.

Who will help the NHS?
This is anybody's guess,
We hear it is such a mess.
Beware the time is near.

Education also must improve.
To the outside world, we've lots to prove
The blackhead syndrome to remove,
Beware the time is near.

Be it Tory, Labour, UKIP, Green,
Lib Dem manifestos seen,
Will they say just what they mean?
Beware the time is near.

The election's on its way again
What government will inflict the least
pain?
Choose wisely, or poverty will remain.
Beware the time is near.



DARK HOURS

By Mariah Pellino

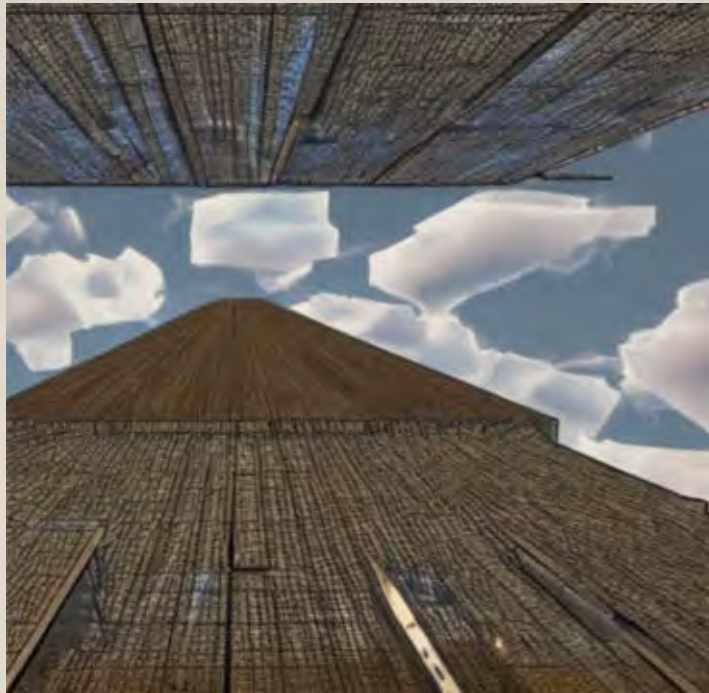
A day trip turned into a lot longer
A fun time home turned into finding a black dress and learning how
to smile through the tears

It was always a lingering thought in the back of my mind
I told Mom on Thursday, September 9
I was worried about you
I told Stacy I was afraid you were getting bad again

Scary thing is I knew there were only two ways out, and I knew I
didn't have control which way you went

I cried, because I had no new pictures of us
I cried, because I was right, you got bad again
I cried, because a terrible part of me always knew this day would come

I just wish you would've won



Dreams Vers. 1 Alexander Limarev, Digital Collage

THE OLD SPIDER-LADY

By Dibyasree Nandy

The elderly woman with arms eight;
Always spinning her yarn, weaving;
Young once and pretty, she forgot the passage of time;
With alacrity, looping and enchanting,
Children loved by her.
Bubbles floating all around;
Near cradles, near cots, near little ones asleep;
Dreams within;
Some with waterfalls sapphire, speckled with petals pink;
Others with princes in castles of silver, bright;
Icicles hanging off ceilings, floors of ice.
A dream-catcher, a web of willows intricate;
Arresting terrors of the reddened night;
Beads and feathers swaying, winds of the eve harsh.
Bairns tiny do not weep;
Slumber full of mages benevolent;
Green meadows and orchards of peach.
She smiles, ever so kind;
The hoops detailed with endless, overlapping arcs and twines;
Ill hallucinations trapped;
The hued plumes shielding the minds not ripe;
Caressing the babes, lullaby of silence.
A grandmother loving;
Fabricating ballads of cheer;
There's laughter much, behind eyelids shut and sounds of bagpipes;
No fog descending, no mist engulfing;
Only rainbows and lilies-of-the-valley;
Splashes of colour in the fields of rose.

HERE AT ONCE

By Douglas Colston

'Peaceful' and 'calm'
is exceptional and extraordinary ...
recording especially beautiful and resplendent
periods of life.

Opening the technique
while being subdued, overcome or restrained
may be foolish, stupid or rash.

Those who nurture and protect children agree
that may be life-threatening or terminal.

Crawling, creeping or grovelling
concerning justice or what is right
is like mochi or drought ...
such an objective is the way
of ceremony or ritual.

Exalted, honourable, superior, good, excellent, peaceful and stable
is special, unique, distinguished ...
and stands tall
(even if alone).

History –
especially beautiful adherence to the 'T' that is happy and pleased –
is the gateway
'auspicious, propitious, good luck, felicity and euphoria'.

An infinitesimally small number
defeat, vanquish, overcome, prevail, surmount, subdue or overthrow
the foolish, stupid, rash and vulgar
(including the verbose or mumbling).

Maternal figures looking after small children can be like tutors,
shellfish can be like currency,
and you can be exuberant thus:
welcome, greet and receive only this ...
cookies neglecting and snubbing
fragmentation, shredding and shattering.

The optimal potential in each emerging moment
is the way
(and method)
to apply and perform as a rite.

In this manner,
the method 'to do' is accomplished.
Breaking, ending, ceasing, severing, disturbing and interrupting jāti
(the genuine or true state of anything)
is necessary, arises, occurs and passes.

It is a sort of giving, offering, bestowal,
yielding, concession or adduction
demanding, desiring, pretending, claiming,
prosecuting, accusing, containing or needing ...
destroyed or broken into pieces,
it may be morally pure, guiltless, free from barbarisms,
religious, sanctimonious, condescending or judgmental.

Desolate
are the riches and wealth
knowing, feeling or teaching
the sort 'not' or 'nothing'.

To trace steps,
to investigate,
to ask,
to hear
or to be told
something broken
is to confuse, mislead, imprison and spread carelessly.

A QUIET GIRL

By Alec Solomita

They say that
as an infant
rather than cry,
she murmured
her disapproval,
made signs with her mouth
meaning I'm hungry.
When she was tired,
she fell asleep.
When she needed changing
she muttered angrily
but softly.

As she grew, there
was one exception
to her unnerving silence:
when she was eight or so,
she would gather her siblings,
lead them down to the basement,
and put on a show.

Her dad's hat and
an old walking stick
"Just you wait 'Enry 'Iggins,
Just you wait!" her vehement
voice almost in tune
and filled with passion,
dancing with an odd mastery
not unlike that old hooper
Gene Kelly, "I Love You
A Bushel and a Peck."

A fine showman she was
until the show was done
and they scrambled up for dinner,
where she hardly spoke,
though she ate heartily.
Walking to school in the morning
with her younger brother, silence
fell on her like dusk, like autumn.
In class, she would answer
the teacher when called on but never
raised her hand. She had no friends.
The other kids called her Chatty Cathy.

BOUGHS, BRANCHES

By Mykki Rios

Whole days may feel like early morning
Red-eyed, bleary, squinting
Frigid from underneath the covers
Yet harsh and blinding, mocking
Sky electrified by the sun screams shrill blue
Starkly depicted in absolute light you are a smudge
Coated in self-perpetuating lint
Soap providing only a film over long sullied skin
Fresh-washed hair falls oily across your forehead
While your scalp is filled with hot sand and blaring static
And when you try to speak
The tubing of your lungs tangles
Leaving no real breath
Merely tree limbs turned knotted, warped inwards
Forming a bird's nest beneath your ribcage
Exposed by the revealing beast of winter that renders all earth barren
Dirty little mass in the center of your being
Unfurl contorted soul!
Have courage to tilt your gaze upwards once more
For past the reach of fingertips and twining branches
Beyond the city clamor
The sky is not a ceiling or a dome
But limitless potential for you to stretch your legs in

BOUGHS, BRANCHES II

By Mykki Rios

i will demand the dragon's
eggshell
of sky cleaved
open the heavens will
obey and unfold
new paths manifold
at my bellows from
fire escapes and overpasses
i will scrape my throat raw
with incantations outraged
soothsaying until
the brittle branches ignite
with autumn foliage
and i will crack
both thumbnails
clawing
to determine the truth
that may reside
somewhere

BILLY BOY

By Katherine Fischer

This is my mother. See? She is thirty-three. She looks like Loretta Young, her dark hair curling across her shoulders. She is wearing a paint-splattered smock over her daisy-scattered housedress. She is trim, smiling, her eyes effervescent. This baby is me. I am one. I am not smiling. My brother is not here, but I wonder if mother thinks of him as she watches me sitting in the Babee-Tenda, dumping applesauce overboard.

I grow up believing I am number nine. Years later she tells me about William, the one who came before me—the nurse who removed his tiny untimely body from an incubator to show him off to visitors like a sideshow Tom Thumb, and forgot to put him back.

I am eight when I hear this story. At night my sister, Bubsie, and I sing, “Where have you been, Billy Boy?” When bad things happen—a scraped elbow, losing Dad’s class ring, two brothers dead, mother says, “Pray to Billy.”

Father choreographed five older brothers in carrying his small white casket down the aisle at St. Mary’s. Mother wept alone in a hospital room, fingering rosary beads. I was not born yet, but I am sure (or I imagined) it happened this way. She told me, “They wouldn’t let us hold babies who died.”

In another photograph, one that exists only in memory sixty years afterward, drifting in dreams laced with morphine, she says, “There was nothing to forgive. The nurse was so young.” With closed eyes, mother gazes at the wallpaper of trees and stars across from her bed, and reaches out to shadows.



A STRANGER IN MY HOME

By Joyce Walker

Today I found a stranger in my home,
Someone I thought I'd known for many years.
A man who'd always stay and never roam
And yet with suitcase packed, fulfilled my fears,
Stood there impervious to my tears.
Our bond of love was rent and torn apart,
That he no longer loved me, now was clear
And after forty years he broke my heart,

When he said that he was leaving for another, a new start.



CHEMISTRY

By Lynn White

Flesh and blood,
muscle and bone,
that's what we're made of.

That's what we see.

But what are they
made of?

You are what you eat,

or so it is said,

animal,

vegetable,

mineral.

But what are they

made of?

Formulas,

lists of numbers and letters,

formulas

denoting chemicals.

Plumb the depth
of human knowledge
and that's what you find.

Chemicals.

WORTH

By Emily Whitler

It kills me every day

What you had done

It showed me you didn't love

Was it really that fun?

Did she make you feel free?

Were you happy at last?

Was it worth it to hurt me?

I can't take the past

Kissing her all over

You must have been insane

To leave the one that loved you

I hope your filled with shame

Are you happy now?

That I have no trust

Everything you say to me

I now know it's all a bust

I will never look at you the same

Or finally forgive

What you did to me

It made me not want to live

“THAT BLACK-GREEN WHISPERING”*

By Will Reger

I've seen the yellow lichen creep
across the granite boulder,
faster than the sunlight rhombus
crosses into lavender evening.
Black night — no grace for creeping
things. The spider crossing my cheek—
Ugh. Yellow lichen is like that—
something moves which should not.
The angle of shadows shifted
imperceptibly in the corner of my eye.
A paleness of stone covered for years
of lichen occupancy. And why not?
Is that poorest of creatures not
entitled to a vacation from its routine?
Could it not formulate the question
of what life might be like on the other side?
Or maybe, in my anxiety I see things
that are not there, or do not happens n,
or maybe that yellow patch is on a mission
to ascend to the face of some confederate
and use its delicate person to slap
or hide the face away, and thus inspire
moss to come along and cover up
the sword hand of General Lee,
or the cruel eyes of Bedford Forrest,
or the bloody stump that killed Stonewall
Jackson in the end. Slowly, slowly the moss
and lichens will work at our history.
First the greening copper, then the acid rain,
then the spores land and propagate,
until every racist traitor disappears
beneath a thick shroud of dark moss
and yellow lichen on vacation.

*A line by Laura Kasischke

Surprise Me

By Lynn White

Sometimes evolution surprises me.
Walking upright on two legs
but not tall enough
to pick apples from the tree
and quite the wrong shape to nibble
those strawberries
without back-breaking pain
seems unlikely natural development.

But prediction is difficult.
In the 1950s I read an article
that predicted
humans would evolve to grow
an extra long arm
to expiate the need to leave the sofa
to turn on the tv
or to turn it off.
Technology put paid to that one
unsurprisingly.

Three arms would be useful though,
I'm surprised it hasn't happened.
but three legs,
who needs them?

Autumn

By Carolina Torres-Tello

Warm rays of light
once golden and bright
dim down slowly
behind brown autumn leaves

Baristas serving pumpkin spice lattes
cinnamon sinking into foamy cream
apple pies melting behind steamed glass
hints of cider seeping out chimneys

Scarlet crochet sweaters
coffee stains on worn-out pages
red embers crackling
black coals simmering

Sunflower fields vibrant with yellow and green
children giggling and cheering on hay rides
corn mazes challenging the brave to go near

the leaves have fallen,

Autumn is here



Portrait of a Mother Beside Her Children

By Angela Rebrec

We will never
see her face
in that grave shadow
cast by the olive tree
to her left.

The gasp that pauses
at the edges of our mouths chokes
as a diminished
chord.

She sits in the ploughed field
beside swaddled chrysalids
positioned like markings

on a dial,
and behind,
the blurred image
of a man
walking away
from her
towards a grove.

VIRGIN BLADES

By Sunshine Duehr

Blistering heels free from silk slippers
Plunged sweetly beneath the water of bloody run
Feeling released with every jagged footstep
Of the rocks and the emerald scum
Calling to the sting
From the knives of angels
Baring virgin blades
Seeing no reflection
Blinded by the unforgiving sun
They said they would make me glitter
For all the sinners sakes
What he can make so perfectly
He can also take away
They all want me to shine
To sparkle like my name
I brought myself into the waters
I'm the only one to blame
Calling to the mouths of angels
Baring virgin blades
What he can give in promises overflowing
He can also take away

FIRST LETTER HOME

By Kira Dewey

Smiling is easy again— I am
Over the season of pain
Malignant memories fading
Even basket-cases like me can heal
Over time
No more reason to worry; now living is
Effortless

Hear the happiness in my voice
Everyone watch me
Live—finally,
Peace

My heart healed in your
Embrace

WISHING

OCTOBER 24, 2021

By Rob Luke

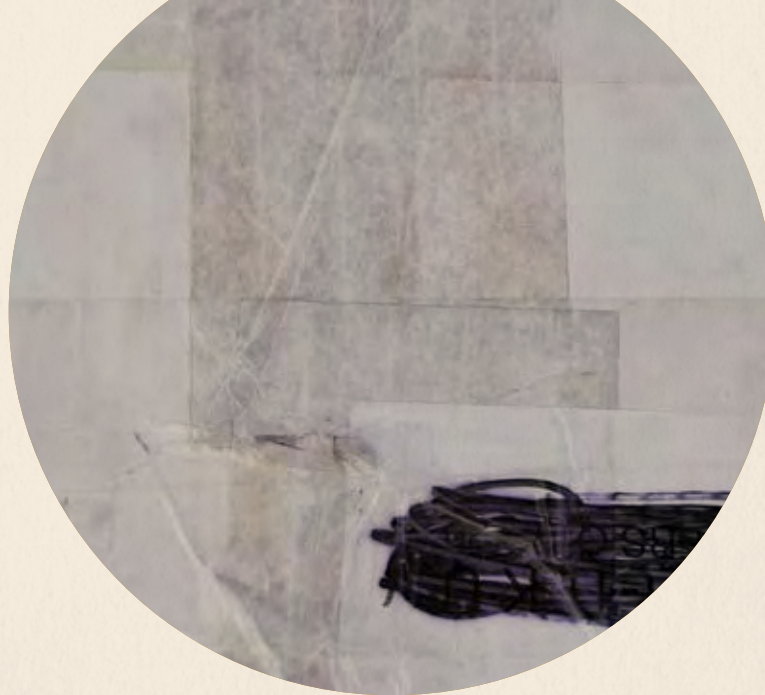
Mother, you facing major surgery as I sit by your emergency room bed, steel rails pinning you for inspection like an impaled bug doused inanimate in ethanol and pierced for a junior high science project. As you sleep in painful discomfort, your breath labors as agony from a misplaced herniated stomach. I want you to be healed, saved from suffering.

By your side, I reread *Staggerford* by Jon Hassler. Despite knowing the inevitable, dismal ending, I keep turning the pages. My comprehension takes me closer to the resolution. Death awaits the protagonist, Miles Pruitt, much as death will someday come for you. Adult inferences haunt my schema: narrow gulches of diminishing torrents and weak ass football teams. Even the religion in that novel still elicits doubts from my vantage point; prayer sometimes wavers.

Still, I like to believe in a life beyond your mother's mortality. Our lives where Miles Pruitt grades our "What I Wish" papers from our high school perpetual daydreaming, interrupted by red correction ink. Until so many years later—a lifetime—God diagrams the sentences of our imperfect lives. I pray in Jesus's monogram—J.C.—on His wool sweater, near the heart of the Good Shepherd.

Faith assures that God did send his Son for tenure and eternal teachable moments, so I envision you, Mother, receiving me in an afterlife. I will continue to wish, therein lies hope for humankind, like the revision of an old, creased paper draft cited with dog-eared textual evidence from books, offering the reward of salvation as the provisions of the dead sea scrolls.

The robe of Jesus fits him like a distinguished teacher's tweed jacket, who instructs parables, sure as patches stitched to the elbows. After Jesus as a doctoral student of crucifixion, nearly an unbearable dissertation, His graduation gown dazzles white as redemption. Now the department head, He leads academia of the highest education. My hope He will welcome me into His snug Heaven during office hours.



CHÉRIE

By Kate Kadleck

My mother teaches me to slather bread with butter and pesto, to slice ruby red tomatoes with my knuckles almost kissing the knife. When the fistful of pills makes my leg quiver like a branch in the breeze, she wills me to plant my foot, to trust that the earth will rise to meet my twitchy limb. To coax it still. As the hours trail on in complex knots—the kind that warrant a Boy Scout's brain—my mother simplifies my life. Says, *here is a book with a world inside. Read it to me.*

ICE PALACE DREAM

By John Grey

Suppose some wintry night,
ice froze the thoroughfares,
and I was lost on my way but found in yours.

Then I might discover eyes,
flickering anticipation,
vertical to the horizontal blowing,
warm and clear in the chilblain mist,
beauty uncontested,
half-curious, half-desiring,
at your crystal sainted window.

There is a way, I'm sure, to reach, to touch,
before my veins turn dark,
those cheeks of yours, adorned in flakes,
timing your heart with breath on glass,
lips all that speak for blood,
hair dappled white and yellow.

For, enclosed in impenetrable dream,
none know better than I
the pale-skinned face of love.
Look down and hear.
Look up and feel.
Feathery words,
moonlight on the snowy rooftops.

PIECES OF ME

By Mariah Pellino

I have left pieces of me scattered across the United States

Part of me still sits in a bed on Clarke Dr.
A piece of me still lays on a stranger's floor in New Mexico
I left some of my innocence in Michigan
and the rest of it in Chicago

Some pieces were stolen
others, given with grace

I don't regret any of it
I don't mind living on in other people's lives

Villain or angel
it's all part of my story as much it is a part of theirs

Some people wrecked me
tore me to the pieces that scattered
Others helped me back together again laying to rest the parts of myself I
needed to let go

Sometimes I think about visiting the gravesites of all the places
I've died and come back to
a better version of myself again

THEY HAD YOU

By Mariah Pellino

I am jealous
They have memories I wish I knew

I barely can recall your features
or the sound of your voice
or the way your hair stood on your head when it was cowlicked

They have toasts at 1 AM
They have trips to the pumpkin patch at age 10

All I have is what's left on the static of an old VHS

I can't deny that I'm jealous.
They got so many years before me

I was too young to remember you then
They got the laughter
They got the inside jokes
They've got so many good things to hold onto

All I remember is knocks on the door at 3 AM
Cops looking to take you in
Tires slashed and windows smashed
I think that's what they said

I spent years listening to the whispers
Jail, prison, money stolen
It never made sense

All I remember is the bad stuff everyone else wishes that they could forget

I'm jealous of them

AFTER

By David Harris

The last time they looked back, all that
 registered
 was the flaming sword weaving its pattern
 between themselves and the only place
 they had known,
 between the two humans and home.
 She asked, "What now?" He faced ahead,
 thinking about blame but abandoning it,
 into whatever had spilled out of the
 Garden.

They walked until they couldn't see the
 sword.

They found shelter. They found food.
 They figured out how to plant, how to
 make
 tools, how to eat meat. They had sons
 and taught the new skills. One son died
 and one left home. They grew old.
 But they never forgot the place that still
 meant home, and they never forgot
 the bitterness of the fruit and its creator.



HOME-GROWN TOMATOES

By David Harris

I can stay at home without my mask,
 even work the garden. No gloves, either,
 hands coated in clean dirt, implanting
 the hope of tomatoes and watermelons,
 herbs and future cuisine. Off the property
 the mask goes on, in stores and what is
 left

of social life. That cough, I explain,
 predates the plague, soothing some
 nerves.

Standing by the plums, two yards away
 from the oranges I want, unable to flirt
 over the fruit with the women
 whose eyes and hair are all I can see.
 No careful picking over produce now.
 Take from the top of the display; imper-
 fection

has become more acceptable, except
 in health. The world is less comfortable,
 more
 dire for the unlucky, less hopeful, more
 in need of home-grown tomatoes.

THE SEA BLUES

By Aleksandra Vujisić

The night is falling over the water,
 turning the view into a black curtain
 with golden dust.
 I am loosing my mind over old reflections
 of the moon, dispersing the fears
 like the golden rust.

Life is slow here.
 And the air is humid
 so tears often go unnoticed,
 and the words get lost
 in the waves,
 sent from Poseidon in protest.

I slowly die in your arms,
 I drink the wild air
 like I used to drink wine.
 I toss and turn in
 grave of olives,
 waving to sun that never shines.

THE END

By Aleksandra Vujisić

Let me hold your dreams while you shake off
 the golden dust from your skirt,
 and let me release my hopes
 that there is nothing left for you to get hurt.

Let me open those curtains that hide the light
 from your memories,
 let me share with you all the magical herbs,
 let my words be your remedies.

Let me hold your pain while you slowly
 walk done the path of never found peace,
 and let me protect your eyes, wings of a
 powerful bird that needs to be released.

Let me hold you fear like a flower
 in my hand,
 let me share the loss, then the power
 of coming to an end.



SCHEMATICS

By Mykki Rios

between bed desk a fluid space
containing the aether of thought
flexing breathing flooded with colors unrecognizable that
scatter when one sees with eyes again
distance made of tension
stretched like tightropes spun from glass
latticework woven as nerves of the brain
overhead
the concept rises a skyscraper
concrete
tidy windows checkboxes and spreadsheets
until idle
the structure undulates as the tower of babel
looms gelatinous
a sea creature in the deep
and with the click of the walkman retreats

THE SCREECHING

By Daniel Zanger

The birds outside my window are screeching again.
This is not a chirp,
or a whistle,
but a yell.

A screech.
A scream.

Howling!
As if they understand the destruction of man.
Hollering!
To warn of the danger
and threat
that humans pose to themselves
and the life around them.

Some people talk to the birds about nice, simple things.
Why can't my birds be nice and simple?
Why must they fly with the angst of a thousand hornets?

Answer me that.

SCREECHING



Angry Girls Lily Nesta Oil on Canvas

SOUL MATES;

OR SPIRIT, THOUGHTS, INTEGRITY AND KEY FACTORS ?
COMPANIONS AND PARTNERS. By Douglas Colston

Gods, deities, souls, spirits, coffins,
effectiveness, wits and agility?

The hun
(that which ascends to heaven
at the time of death)
or inclination ...
including the lofty spirit of a nation.

Accompanying or rebelling?

An associate.

An accompanying
(or rebelling)
companion?

Vigor, willpower, readiness, prudence, discretion,
character, talent, genius, wisdom ...
and maybe a *katana*.

The soul
may be considered analogous
with spirits, ghosts and
mysteries.

Breath, life, the self, nature, character,
the person as a whole, the body, the mind,
understanding, effort, firmness, sun and fire?

Those things
and the subject here.
A crowd, a multitude, a troop, a convoy or a caravan?
Companions, friends, mates,
partners, allies or comrades.

Air, breathing, a light breeze, spirit,
the mind, energy, courage, pride,
haughtiness or arrogance?

Life ...
along with a partner, companion or comrade.

Breath or aspiration
(spiritual gifts of
sorts)?

The Self nearest to the
truth, I reckon.



REHABILITATION

REHABILITATION By Yusuf Olumoh

i in the middle of the night, a ghastly voice from my aunt's room, a piece of metal embedded in a gash in one's foot. what could a little boy like me do, sent tocsins to our neighbours & my mother? mother, here is your sister writhing in pain. two hospitals, two saviour places, nixed her body. & the third one accepted her when she wanted to succumb.

ii in the labour room, i gawked at my aunt: her protruding stomach, a vessel, like a palm wine gourd stuffed with water. her head restless on the bed. & she groaned with her heels beseeched her yawning thighs. fluid bustling out. of skin. of cervix. & her hands clenched to the bedsheet each time she moaned. a nurse's voice, push. harder. again. harder.

iii her body emptied to a room: a wall, a bantam orifice, that a pin couldn't be shifted out of it. her body, a hole: of perception. of survival. of waste. & of protection. her body, an opaque, rejecting every water syringe inserted in it. is there an easy way to give up than that? & i saw my mother, her mouth, full of prayer, God, let Iqrom deliver with ease. Let's hear the mother's voice and her child. but my aunt's body failed to reflect the light coming from her mouth.

iv & when she breathed again, she breathed life & death: a child, a crying voice, from her thigh. & my aunt, resting on the bed, was tranquilized. she did not groan again. she spoke to no one. no pain. but her joints, her body, were too heavy to carry. a boy died. & her body, ice, too cold. she reposed all that broke my heart. a hallucination: a cut on my body.



A BLOODY BOOKMARK OF THREADED LOVE

By Dibyasree Nandy

Anything to establish a scarlet string of connection;
Anything to battle a journey through a barren tundra; empty, cold;
And so I play a game; 'tis all just a game;
All to keep despair at bay.
"You insist then?" Inquired the lawyer, brows knit;
"Yes, I murdered the man;" tired I was, "the one whose room was beside my own...
In the asylum,
Must I repeat it over and over
here in this court?"
"You, Madam, are not being clear;
on your modus operandi!" The judge gazed at me;
"Does it matter, Sir?" Oh, so weary;
"Isn't it enough that I admitted?"
The lawyer unhappy at the lie.
They left me to rot;
In that madhouse where no light reached;
Yet that person, my neighbour smiled, spoke.
I am nothing, but that was everything;
My confession, a link by means of death.
His wife, the true culprit, but, once, they were in love;
That tale of passion, that crime, that scenario, I wasn't an actor;
So, a bookmark I wished to be;
Inserting myself into the theatre of red;
Only when a threaded noose will hang around my neck;
Would a crumb of affection be thrown at me;
The final act, the final scene of the drama, out of my reach.

BEAUTY WALKS ON CORPSES

By Rosemary Dunn Moeller

Beauty Walks on Corpses

Tu marches sur des morts, Beaute, dont tu te moques; --
"Hymne a la Beaute", [Fleurs du Mal](#)
You walk upon corpses, Beauty, mocking me.
"Hymn to Beauty" [Flowers of Evil](#) by Charles Baudelaire

I'm gullible: swallowing science news of new species,
migrations changing mysteriously, hazy sunrises from far away fires,
species extinguishing, populations fluctuating like storm waves,
blossoms out of season. Yet distrustful

of knowledgeable pundits scaring me, scientists
disrupting my morning at my bird feeders. I watch
hummingbirds fencing for position, sparrows being cute,
woodpeckers upright and curious, cardinals chirping,

chickadees and titmouse heading down trunks. On a perfect morning
it seems unlikely our yard or planet could be in such danger. But
"You walk on corpses, Beauty, mocking me..." as Baudelaire wrote.
Beauty, singing, as we forget to sacrifice extravagantly, as if

time were on our side, all will be well. I'm gullible, drinking the liquor
of morning without saving reasonable thought for closing of days.
Roses refresh salty air daily. Sunlight will always return
and I prefer to be better tomorrow, when it may count even more.

PERCUSSION CONCERTS

By Rosemary Dunn Moeller

I own September sounds, in particular
percussion of wood on wood that warms while striking.
Acorns plunk onto our wooden deck, only now, ripened
just right, ready to fall, as I'm here, ready to listen to
this oak concert in morning light, irregular beating. The deck,
suspended over the water, amplifies wooden echoes.

I remember
visiting my high school friend
at a different university. Esther
grasped Freshman Year at Cornell, Ithaca,
becoming Chimemaster at McGraw Tower.

So appropriate.

I took the short bus ride from Rochester.
Saturday morning, following my friend, I climbed
one hundred sixty-one wooden steps, always counting,
to hear The Jennie McGraw Rag perfectly performed
on the Chimes by a wild jumping Esther,
arm wrestling handles,
stomping levers,
a body of red-headed memorization.

It was 1968, Centennial year for music never
before clappered and rung, and classics
played for a century. I've forgotten her program.
She re-inserted heavy mute bars across the handles
so she could practice, just as wild but
without the ringing.

Hard hitting of wood on wood sounds best
at this balanced time. It was September unlike any other,
never repeated. September percussions, tonal ringing,
hollowed wooden sticks, rattled seeds in gourds,
its own beats, tones and rhythms. As sophisticated
as Bach and as unintentional as acorns falling from home,
plunking into the wider world to become.

LOUISE IS DOING SILKSCREENS

By Robert Beck

Taut with attention, you review the screen,
caress it briefly with your palm, and then
begin to slap the plastic tape into place,
notching it with your blade, before you tear
it cleanly to the certain edge you want.
Unerringly you mask the blank parts out.

Having earlier sawed the squeegee to size,
you test it once again inside the frame,
then from the bench select two pots of paint,
one of which you casually unload
across the farther end in a gloppy row;
dollops of the other spice one corner.

The plank-like squeegee wakes to life, for now
it rides in your hands sensitive as a baton.
Reaching it across the frame you mulch
the gumbo color, then evenly squeeze it toward you.
A turn of the wrist, you lift the excess paint
to carry it back down for a second swipe.

That piece done, you plant the board in goo,
reach over to flip down a drying rack,
then lift the edge of the screen half a foot
to prop it with a convenient nearby jar
and let the painted paper peel its weight
off the underside, easing its wet suck.

You slip the print out for arm's length appraisal,
notice three things you decide to change,
and with a tiny shrug transfer it to
the drying rack whose rungs are wider
than the paper size you've chosen for this run.
Then you're back at the screen for another turn.

INDOOR PLUMBING

Most of the folks I know in their 20's are gutless.
Made by a scene,
for a scene.

They liven up in the presence of others
like a wilting flower gulping up rain.

You see,

they crumble in the wake of their own isolation-
they go mad,

alone,
staring into the abyss.

Nothing that's ever been overstated falls out of the abyss.
It's the crumbs,
the tiny moving pieces,
the intricate,
detailed,
brush strokes of life
that spawn from complete emptiness.

Most people can't wrap their brain around that.

Most people think life should be grand-
like the picture shows,

like the coked up millionaires
on the television.

My father will tell you:
The most grandiose thing in life?
Indoor plumbing.

By Daniel Zanger



Aztec Feminism Lisa Martinez Colored Pencil

WHAT GRIEF IS

By Kate Kadleck

Grief is not an octopus.
Sure, it may be many-limbed,
interminably contorting and transforming
itself. And yes, when grief loses an arm,
another one sprouts in its place.

Still, grief would make a sorry excuse
for an octopus—after all, it doesn't
know how to float.

Grief is not a Moroccan rug,
despite its congregation of multicolored
threads. You can't traipse across it.
It doesn't cushion or cradle your toes.

Grief is not a Russian nesting doll, either.
True, it carries so many selves
inside it, and often it's on display.
But even with paint, grief could never
dazzle like those dolls do.

More than anything, grief is not a lozenge.
Though it dwells in the throat.
Though it changes the taste
of everything that comes after.

TOWARDS ELYSIUM

By Dibyasree Nandy

The silver seas, the purple vales;
The indigo stairway to the harbour final;
The golden horizons await.
Beyond the castles and spires;
Beneath which old kings sleep;
Their regal spirits in a white crown and mantle pearly,
Stand at the dock.
When will they arrive?
The adorned vessels with opalescent masts and sails;
Whipping with the soft caresses of the wind?
Spring forever;
On the other end of the ocean sterling;
Glistening with drops of dew;
The fields bursting with blossoms of
scarlet and amethyst.
Trumpets are blown;
The bronze peal rung;
'Tis time for the angels to helm;
The ships shall meander yonder;
Farther from the cardinals;
Where new tales will be spun,
like new crests and troughs of brine water;
By mariners departing.
The resplendent Empyrean haven;
Where smiles do not fade;
Eventide does not descend.

What About Them?

By Tyler Poland

What about the woman who,
After four children,
Knew she couldn't handle another?
Or the woman
Whose husband insists they have a son
After six daughters?
Or the woman who, at the prime age of fifty,
Having been told her child-bearing days were over,
Discovered, crying on her bathroom floor,
That they were not?

What about them?

What about the woman,
Dancing with her friends before her wedding day.
Noticing a strange taste in her mimosa
And waking up bleeding in an alley the next morning?
Or the barely eighteen-year-old
At her first college party,
Drugged
And passed around the football team?
Or the thirty-something
Out of a job and short on rent,
Pimped out by her landlord to make ends meet?

What about them?

What about the woman
Going home to her wife after a long day
Hearing a group of men behind her
Saying they could "fuck the dyke out of her"
Or the trans man
Just trying to use the restroom
Cowering in fear
As the man outside his stall explains that he can,
"Make a real woman out of you"
Or the non-binary person
Walking home from class
Hearing a whisper behind them,

"Never been with a fag before"
What about them?

What about the sixteen-year-old
Spending the night with her boyfriend
Who promised he'd never hurt her?
Or the high school junior
Whose brother decided that he loved her so much

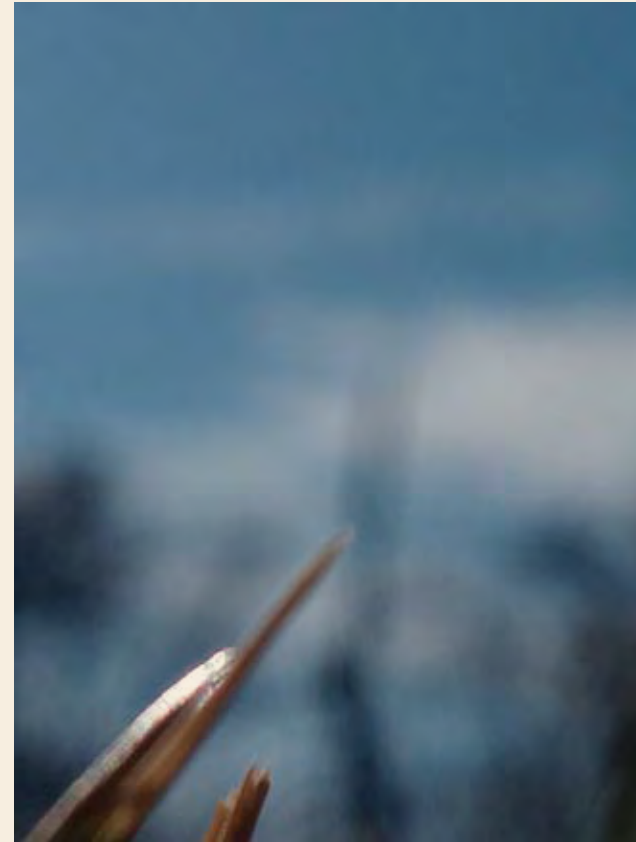
No one else could have her?
Or the twelve-year-old little girl
Having had her first period
Was deemed by her father
As a good replacement
For her menopausal mother?

What about them?
What about the woman
Who took every precaution
But somehow still saw two lines on that little plastic stick?
Or the woman who,
In her third month,
Felt her water break?
Or the woman who,
After receiving the wonderful news,
Was told her egg was stuck
And could kill her?

What about them?

These are just a few examples
Of the horrific experiences of those affected
By the overturning of Roe vs. Wade.
So to those who fought for it,
Those who harassed Planned Parenthood clinics,
Those who called people murderers for seeking healthcare,
Those who celebrated,
I ask you,

What about them?



Untitled Danyel Rieck, Photography

THE PEACH OF HER KISS

By Sunshine Duehr

I swear that I knew you before I was born
And I could swear that I can't feel anything
anymore
But when I do it all comes to me at once
Sometimes I wonder if she's out there some-
where
Stuck under the snow
I'll take all of your black kisses
And put them in frames
Praying again that you will visit me in my
dreams
Hearts were draining
Bleeding in crimson
Bodies scrubbed raw
Girls when they're innocent
Sing to me where it hurts
Falling in love again
Swallowing razorblades
Tripping on stars
The boys said they could taste the suicide
In the peach of her kiss
White stained red
Still hot from the inside
Oh, how I hate those mothers
Those women in windows
Oh, how I cried
It was a tragedy
It was a mistake
She was only a doll
She was only 13
Voices when they pray
Knives in high heels
Pixie blue dress draped over a crucifix

So full of life
With the eyes of an open casket
Melting in the sunlight
Like the prettiest plastic flowers
Taxidermy babies stuffed rancid with
lipstick
Hearts were draining
Bleeding in crimson
They could taste the suicide
In the peach of her kiss
Angels when they kick
They sneak inside me
Pretending they're sleeping
Frozen on the head of my bed
They all swear they knew her so well
Down to the dirty soles of her feet
Sometimes I think I see her
In the trees
Sometimes I still think she's out there
somewhere
Asleep in her tower
Surrounded with spindles of gold
Never to wake up
Never to grow old

FIRST KATA

By Kira Dewey

Itch!

Fist dives
falcon-like
lunging with tucked wings

Kni!

Strike snakelike
shoulders squared
stare unbreakable

San!

Banking, wind catching feathers
reversing mid-flight
to face a rival avian

Shi!

Fists tight
Feet light
dancing in the sky

Go!

Scales flash, body contorting
whiplike, answering the backstabbing
attack

Roku!

Strike

Seechi!

Never first

Hachi!

Always ready

Ku!

Raptor reels an arial acrobat
eyes flashing as she
dives

Ju!

She rises
wings unfurled
sunlight eclipsed

Itch!

Faltering
turning again
plummeting

Kni!

Weakness feigned
charging upward
barreling through clouds

San!

She revels in her wings
challenging sea and sky
crying

Shi!

Wings snap

Go!

Drums

Roku!

Heartbeats

Seechi!

Serpent coiling
on her nest
waiting

Hachi!

Arm raised to shield;
heavy breathing
lungs burning

Ku!

Serpent's body bending
to falcon's drumbeats—
slow inhale

Ju!

Final strike
serpentine tongue flickers
warnings whispered

Deadly dance ended
a branch the falcon's
resting place, victorious!

CABIN IN THE RAINFOREST

By Carolina Torres-Tello

Rain patters against the roof
droplets slide down panes of glass
bare feet shuffle across the floor
wooden planks groan in dissent


A moth flits around the room
the doorknob turns and creaks open
her white robe stands out
amidst gray clouds above
and green foliage around

Fingers encircle a heated mug
toes test the hot tub's water
before sliding in to savor the warmth
taking in the view before her

Elbows prop just over the ledge
ears open, eyes searching
tendrils of hair press to her temples
humidity slowly sinking in

Down the steps of the wooden porch
lies a world untouched by human hands
tropical birds whistle in greeting
leaves sway and make music

This was her paradise
her one true escape
from the city and the noise
her cabin in the rain forest

Dangerously Gentle Lisa Martinez Graphite 

A NIGHT AT THE SYMPHONY

By Carolina Torres-Tello

Glittering gowns and dazzling couples
filter themselves through elaborate entrances.
Thousands of lights illuminate the theater
reflecting off surfaces of chandelier diamonds.

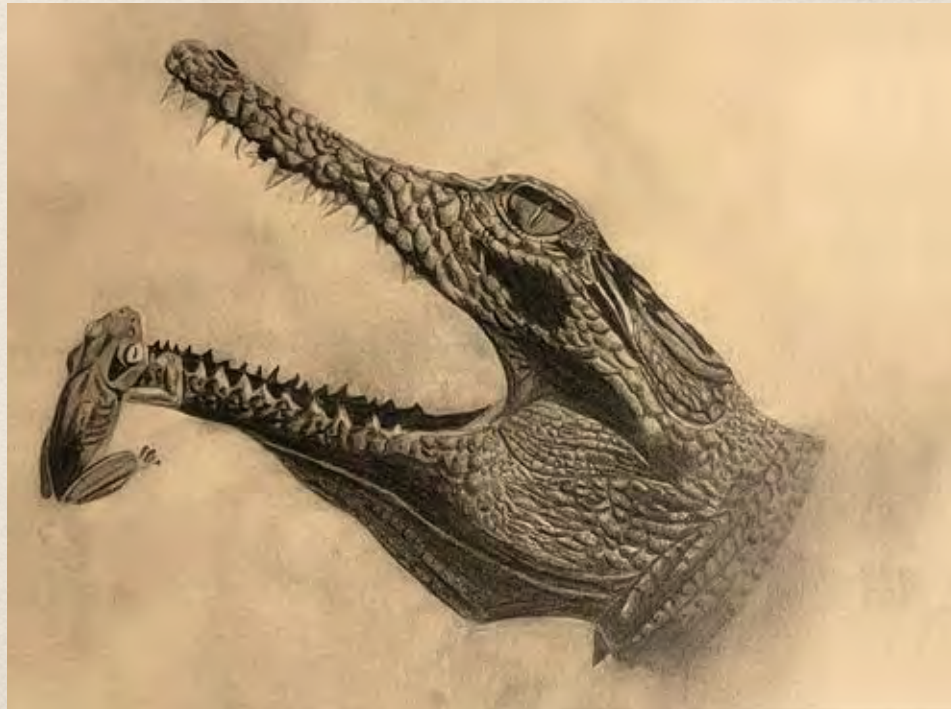
As seats begin to fill
the lights dim in response.
They flicker on once more
gently reminding all to quieten.

The audience hushes
and a still silence fills the room.
A heavy velvet curtain lifts off the ground
creating suspense as to what lies beyond.

Like the sound of waves crescendoing
before breaking against the shore
thousands of hands begin to applaud.

Dozens of men and women sitting in place
instruments at the ready, hands in position
awaiting the conductor standing in front.

He bows in greeting
before lifting his baton.
He drops it dramatically
and the orchestra launches
into symphony.



The Love That You Take

By Sunshine Duehr

In a heartbeat I would die for you
In every sorrow
And every shadow
I'll give you all of my tears
And my spit
And all of the sin in my heart
It fills me
And I won't stop
Until it kills me
In my dream we left together
Arms bound in metal
Water splashed on the ripped and
yellowed finery
Stains plunged deeply
Seering through
The sheets that they draped over me
I was there in every aching footstep
In every shattering scream
Beauty too grand to notice
Nobody could hear me
Only the sandy eyes of an angel
Guilty in marble
Harboring twisted secrets
Through gaping mouths
And bare shoulders
How lucky am I
To live life for the dagger
Swimming in a sequin dress of
loneliness
Dragging me, pulling me further
down
They'll laugh

They'll call me weak
What a waste
To wash away that pretty face
Remember me in those hal-
lowed halls
Dripping with angels
Golden upon golden head
Tugging at my pearly strands
With every beat of your heart
With every last word
In every sorrow
And every shadow
In every horror within
They will feel me
In their beloved summers day
Lingering
Only a feeling
Oh, what a feeling
To die by mistake
For the love that you take



VULTURE STALKING

By Angela Rebrec

The man with a camera stares
through his lens, waits
to frame the perfect shot

before chasing away
the vulture that stalks

the child
seated knee-bent, forehead in hand


clothed in a necklace
and those ladder rungs
along her chest.

This is not the only photo
the man will take—

though we remember it
like a burned afterimage—

as though having first stared at the sun
and then squeezed shut our eyes.

Waiting for carrion:
vultures come.



THE ANGLER'S CATCH

By Will Reger

I am too old for this to happen
again.
Too old to be dragged up
and slammed against the side
of a boat,
choking on the raw oxygen
that burns in my throat,
and another hook caught in my lip.
I am too old for this.
Well, let it happen. I am ready to go.
I do not have the energy for this.
Not even to flip my tail
or make a fuss slapping
myself against the aluminum boat.
I feel my hidden ugliness revealed
in the airy sunlight, ugliness
on parade before the men and birds,
which I have kept hidden deep
in my end of the lake,
where I dissolve slowly
amid the sharp-edged weeds,
and the rocks that lurk below.
The ick is hard on me now.
The stains of death grow.
Barnacles hang like polyps.

I am strung with weeds and suckers.
Who am I, to be wanted still
by this savage race? Look at her,
the way she stares at me,
as if she expects my gratitude,
displeased with my condition.
She imagines eating my flesh
and it makes her ill.
I will not look at her.
I have paid my dues in life.
I have taken the hooks
that sought me in the darkness.
Each of these pains me still,
so I can hardly eat any more.
I cannot eat. I am too old.
I can only stare into the boat,
the ragtag boat that dazzles
with oily rainbows in the bilge.
Just as I steel myself to be dragged
up into the boat, the dirty water,
to die ignominiously, this unfathomable
beast lets me loose, free into the water,
and as I sink wearily back into the shadows
where I live,
I cannot muster any gratitude.

BEFORE YOU LEFT

By Joyce Walker

I walk this house from room to room,
Remembering a life that's changed forever,
That took us from a time with family,
To a time with you and me,
A life before you left.

The only house we've called our own,
The one in which we put down roots,
The rescue dogs we shared it with,
And took long walks together with,
Before you left.

The house we shared for thirty years
The one you said you'd only leave
If they carried you out in pine,
True to your word, that was the way
You left.

I walk this house from room to room
Remembering a life that's changed forever,
Our last dog gone, I am alone,
This house and all my memories are all that's

Left.

BACK HOME

FROM A TRIP TO THE CIT

By John Grey

You've been four hours couped up
in a bus seat that backs onto the bathroom.
And if the skyscrapers weren't enough,
you chugged your way through endless suburbs,
and no-name commuter towns.
You didn't think the city would ever end.

But slowly the scenery opened up.
The bus window framed silos, cockeyed barns,
and fields of golden wheat.
You could feel yourself spreading out
despite the limitations of the uncomfortable seat.

Houses were placed acres apart not bunched together.
For every tractor on the move, another sat silent.
A cross at the side of the road was adorned in fresh flowers.
Cows nibbled. A foal suckled on a mare.
The old guy sitting by the gas station pumps
was most likely the owner.

Now you can see the scattered clouds clearly
And the land is as flat as the pane you peer through.
An hour to go
yet your life begins here.



The Backrooms Kat Jones Monoprint

ART CONTRIBUTORS

Alec dos Santos

I am an international student from South Africa. My passion lies in the art field, and I am at Clarke to pursue a Bachelors in Graphic Design.

Alexander Limarev

Freelance artist, mail art artist, curator, poet, photographer from Siberia / Russia. Participated in more than 1000 international projects and exhibitions. His artworks are part of private and museum collections of 71 countries.

Danyel Rieck

I am music education major. A few of my hobbies are taking pictures and crocheting and playing instruments.

Emma Grant

I am a sophomore graphic design major who is also a track athlete here at Clarke. I adore to paint and design portraits, whether physical or digital. As my art journey continues, I'm excited for what future pieces I'll create!

Grayson Eggers

A non binary artist that dreams of becoming an educator.

Jessie Rebik

Jessie Rebik is a figurative photo-realistic painter who works and lives in Galena, IL. She received her MFA from Florida Atlantic University in 2007, and currently teaches Drawing and Painting at Clarke University in Dubuque, Iowa. Her work has been exhibited nationally, and has been awarded honors in several juried exhibitions.

Joshua Morris

Assistant Professor of Computer Science; Pledge myself to higher education by developing and teaching computer-related classes while generating impactful relationships with students through the exploration of emerging technologies and Clarke's core values.

Kat Jones

Kat Jones is a Graphic Designer and Printmaker who has a passion for everything cartoony and expressive. This year the work she is submitting strays away from what she is normally comfortable with and shows works of realism and expressiveness.

Lily Nesta

My name is Lily Nesta and I am an oil painter located in Dubuque. I am currently working on my bachelors degree in studio art.

Lisa Martinez

Northern California chicana native.

Madeline Meseke

I am a sophomore at Clarke University majoring in Psychology and minoring in Art

Olivia Gossard

Hi! My name is Olivia and I am a fall '22 graduate from Clarke University with my degree in Psychology. I am a lover of all things art and literature so incorporating that into my studies and personal life here at Clarke has been one of the best things for me.

Pete Carlson

After spending most of my working life as a carpenter and iron worker, I've joined up with Clarke to pursue a second career in art education. In my free time I enjoy writing music and being mistaken for a member of the faculty, here on campus.



Cuttie Set Joshua Morris, AI Generated Images

PROSE CONTRIBUTORS

David Pratt

David Pratt's poetry and short fiction have been published in over 100 journals in the United States, Canada, Britain, and Australia. His op-eds have appeared in national newspapers in Canada and the United States. He is the author of *Apprehensions of van Gogh* (Hidden Brook Press, 2015), and Nobel Laureates: *The Secret of Their Success* (Branden Books, 2016). He lives in Kingston, Ontario, Canada.

Jeff Wilson

Although I no longer live in Iowa, I still visit there sometimes and have written stories that are set there. On top of that, I sometimes seek out literary journals from Iowa regardless of where the story is set. (As it turns out, "Baling Hay" is set in Iowa.) Some quick bio info: I'm the music editor for a magazine called *The Absolute Sound*. Recently I've published stories in *UC Santa Barbara's Spectrum Literary Review* and a quarterly from Cincinnati called *Tidelines*. I hope you enjoy this story, and I hope that, if you ever planned to bail hay one day, your experience turned out better than mine.

Katherine Fischer

Katherine Fischer, MFA, is an award-winning author (*Dreaming the Mississippi* and *That's Our Story and We're Sticking To It!*). A featured columnist in newspapers, her work also appears in magazines like *The Cream City Review*, the *Iowa Review*, and *Creative Nonfiction* as well as on NPR. Past chair of the Language and Literature Department, Professor of English Emerita, Katie graduated from Clarke College and Goddard University awhile ago.

Lois Bassen

L. Shapley Bassen's grandmother was a telegrapher on Wall Street a century ago who taught her to read and tapped messages to her in Morse Code. A *New Yorker* living in Rhode Island, she is a multi-published & prize-winning author of fiction, poetry, & drama.

Luisa Reyes

She's had pieces featured in "The Raven Chronicles", "The Windmill", "The Foliage Oak", "The Eastern Iowa Review", and other literary magazines. Her essay, "Thank You", is the winner of the April 2017 memoir contest of "The Dead Mule School Of Southern Literature".

Mark Miscovich

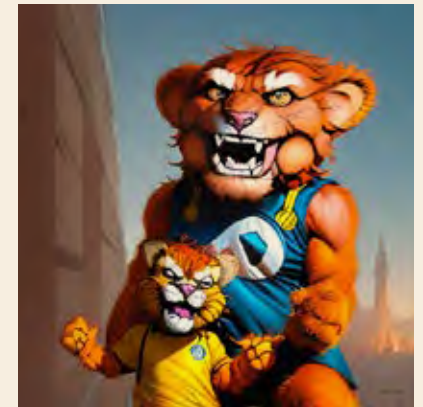
Mark Miscovich is a freelance author and translator living in Vienna, Austria, with his wife and two daughters.

Vaneza Diaz

I am the oldest of three siblings born in Reno, Nevada in 2002. Currently this is my second year at Clarke and I am looking to obtain my Business Administration degree with an emphasis in Finance and Management. Here on campus I am the Secretary of Future Young Professionals, I am apart of the Scholar's program, and I am also apart of the Future Women in Leadership program. I also love hiking and being outdoors almost as much as I adore dogs and ice cream!

William Baker

William Baker's short fiction is published a number of times since 2013. He thrives and lives a positive and purposeful life in Yeshua in Indiana.



Cuttie Set Joshua Morris, AI Generated Images

POETRY CONTRIBUTORS

Alec Solomita

I wrote my first story at the age of 12. It was about senility, which should give you a bit of a character note. My drawings, and photographs have appeared in several shows.

Aleksandra Vujsić

Professor of English and an award winning writer of prose and poetry for children and grownups.

Angela Rebrac

A multidisciplinary artist whose most recent writing has appeared in Vallum, Prairie Fire, GRAIN, Cathexis Northwest Press, as well as the anthology Voicing Suicide (Ekstasis Editions, 2020). Her writing has been shortlisted for several awards and contests including PRISM International's Nonfiction Contest.

Carolina Torres-Tello

A student at Palm Beach Atlantic University and is studying Creative Writing and Psychology. She is a Presidential Ambassador at her university and hopes to graduate with a Master's in Forensic Child Psychology.

Daniel Zanger

Danny Zanger is a Senior Music Composition student at Clarke. He enjoys writing his own singer-songwriter material as well as composing original jazz tunes for his local jazz group— The DZ Combo. Having played piano most of his life, Danny spends most of his time at the piano, however, Danny likes to dabble in other artistic outlets-- such as poetry. Danny is looking forward to graduation and all that lies ahead of him in his artistic endeavors.

David M. Harris

Until 2003, David M. Harris had never lived more than fifty miles from New York City. Since then he has moved to Tennessee, acquired a daughter and a classic MG, and gotten serious about poetry.

Dibyasree Nandy

Dibyasree Nandy began writing at the age of 27, two years ago, after completing M.Sc and M.Tech.

Kira Dewey

Kira M. Dewey is an author and journalist previously published as an intern for Good Faith Media. She is currently an honors student studying English and Creative Writing at Palm Beach Atlantic University.

Douglas Colston

Finds himself approaching his mid-50s and living at the Sunshine Coast in Australia – has played in Ska bands, picked up university degrees, supported his parents during terminal illnesses, married his love, fathered two great children, had his inheritance embezzled, transitioned into Counseling as a vocation and experienced chronic mental and physical illnesses consequential to workplace harassment. Now, among other things, he is pursuing a PhD.

Emily Whitler

I wrote the poem that I am submitting when I was a senior in High School in 2007. I had just had a baby the year before that me and my boyfriend at the time gave up for adoption. I was struggling with that, moving, my parents divorcing, and then my boyfriend, and Childs father cheating on me. I didn't have a lot of good support or good role models in my life, so I turned to writing at the time. This is one of the only poems I could find from that time and it is still one of my favorites to go back and look at. It shows me how far I have come as well as how far I still need to go in terms of self worth.

John Grey

John Grey is an Australian poet, US resident, recently published in Sheepshead Review, Stand, Washington Square Review and Floyd County Moonshine. Latest books, "Covert" "Memory Outside The Head" and "Guest Of Myself" are available through Amazon. Work upcoming in the McNeese Review, Rathalla Review and Open Ceilings.

Joyce Walker

Joyce is a retired administrator who has had poetry and stories published in a number of magazines. She won 1st prize in the Writers Brew story competition in 2002 and was runner up in the Erewash Writers Burst Flash fiction competition in 2013. Her most recent win was 1st prize in the Writers Forum Poetry competition, published December 2021. She loves the First World War Poets.

Kate Kadleck

Kate Kadleck is a marriage and family therapist originally from Northbrook, Illinois. She now lives in Dubuque with her partner, Nate (a Clarke alum), and their two adored dog-sons. Her poetry has been featured in various publications over the years, including Prairie Margins and One Hand Clapping. Beyond writing, she enjoys yoga, interior design, and spicy food of all kinds.

Lynn White

Lynn White lives in north Wales. Her work is influenced by issues of social justice and events, places and people she has known or imagined. She is especially interested in exploring the boundaries of dream, fantasy and reality.

Mariah Pellino

Before, now, and always, Mariah continues to learn and grow her creative spirit. Mariah graduated from Clarke University in 2021 with a bachelors in art. Although a graphic designer by trade, after hours of pushing pixels she often finds herself scribbling words on a page. She may not call herself a writer, but she has always wanted to be one.

Mykki Rios

Mykki Rios is a queer gender-fluid Mexican-American poet, performer and multimedia artist. Raised in Chicago, and having lived many places across the globe, Mykki has had works featured in issues of Welter, Meat For Tea: The Valley Review, Random Sample Review, Smoke and Mold Journal, Lupercalia Press' Vulcanalia anthology, and more. They were also a finalist in Lupercalia Press' 2022 Chapbook Series Contest.

Rob Luke

Rob Luke is a graduate of the MFA in Creative Writing Program from Minnesota State University, Mankato. He teaches English at Delano High School in Minnesota. He lives on Lake Minne-washta, near the town of Excelsior, Minnesota, with his wife, Sara.

Rosemary Dunn Moeller

I write to connect to others, reflect on living, and preserve time passing too quickly. I winter along the Atlantic Ocean and summer on our farm on the Dakota Prairie. Both horizons are very flat and constantly in flux.

Sunshine Duehr

I am a writer, singer, performer and spoken word artist from Dubuque, Iowa.

Robert Beck

First-time contributor, and literary supporter.

Tyler Poland

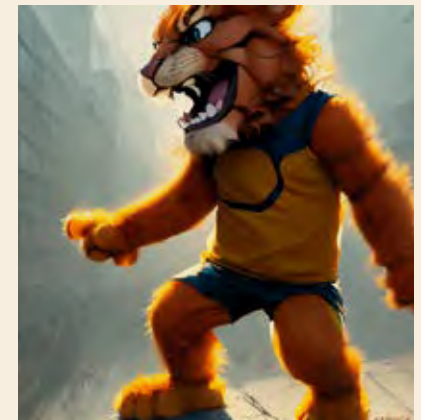
I'm a first year art education major here at Clarke, who wants to use his voice to advocate for those who can't. As a trans man, I've felt the pain of being disregarded and ignored, and I want to do what I can to prevent anyone else from feeling that pain. Thank you for reading!

Will Reger

Will Reger has a Ph.D. from the University of Illinois. He has published two books of poetry, Petroglyphs (2019) and Kaleidoscope (2020). He has served as the inaugural poet laureate for the city of Urbana, Illinois 2019-2020. For the last decade he has been active in promoting poetry in his community. When he is not focused on poems, he watches water flow, listens carefully to what crows are saying, and plays world flutes, especially the nan xiao from southern China (similar to the shakuhachi from Japan).

Yusuf Olumoh

Ismail Yusuf Olumoh is a Nigerian creative writer and teacher, a poet, a spoken word artiste, a graphics designer, a content creator, and a video editor. His works are published and forthcoming in Nantygreens, Eboquills, Fevers of the mind, Poemify Publishers, Festival for poetry, De Curated, Synchronized Chaos, Williwash, World Planet Anthology, and others. He writes from Ilorin, Kwara State. When he is not writing, he enjoys reading or cooking.



Cuttie Set Joshua Morris AI Generated Images

COLOPHON

Software

Adobe InDesign, Photoshop, and Illustrator

Typefaces

Sentinel / Futura / Didot

Bebas Neue / Aktiv Grotesk

Brokenscript / Knewave

Gotham

Paper

50lb Text, Extra White Newsprint, French Paper Company

50lb Text, Aged White Newsprint, French Paper Company

80lb Cover, Natural Felt, Neenah Paper

Print Production

Carlisle Ryan Digital Print and Services

2472 Meinen Court

Dubuque, Iowa 52002 USA

Perfect Bound, Book Assembly

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