

MEAT FOR TEA

VOL 11 ISSUE 2
THE VALLEY REVIEW

CONFIT



Meat for Tea: The Valley Review

Meat for Tea: The Valley Review was founded by Elizabeth MacDuffie and Alexandra Wagman. We are a non-academic affiliated magazine committed to recognizing and featuring the work of the artists, writers, and musicians living in western Massachusetts and beyond.

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Extra special thanks to Joseph Boisvere for his tireless efforts. He will be missed - his shoes will be difficult to fill.

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salutations from the staff

I recently saw a headline that within a few years there would be software capable of translating the language of dolphins for humans to understand. This seemed like pure hubris to me, an aspiring translator, so I got the idea to run a piece of writing through Google Translate, starting in English, then to another language, and then another before finally getting back to English. So this is my Confit intro in its original, then its iteration by Google after passing through French and German.

Confit

There is a sense in which cooking has everything to do with how much fat one uses. The most austere techniques that one employs, steaming and boiling (and their attendant variations: poaching, blanching, etc.) use no fat at all to conduct the heat of the flame, and instead let liquid or gaseous water do the job, imposing an upward limit of around 212 degrees Fahrenheit upon the heat that may be applied directly to the surface of, say, a bean. Then there comes the introduction of the much more heat resistant lipids, olive, but especially common canola and flavorless grape seed oils, and suddenly you're searing, sautéing, scrambling, hitting the edge of the egg with many times the BTUs you were with water. Roasting is searing's oven-bound relative, rendering a roast's own fats to slide along its surface and crisp its outer extremes. Then it gets decadent; deep-frying in canola, peanut, or even occasionally animal fat is flashy, violent, but ultimately only skin deep. Few foods can withstand more than a few minutes of boiling fat before stiffening up, often leaving a soft, cool center, or else ejecting mozzarella, cream cheese, or some other liquid filler into your precious fat where it floats up, sizzles, and dissipates. In order to really get your chunks of pork butt, your rubbed and rinsed duck legs, to the proper extreme, the only option is to cook slowly, completely submerged in the rendered fat of such an animal, covered, in the oven and at a low temperature. It brings the braise to its logical conclusion, dispensing with the watery, evaporation-prone braising liquid and substituting for it quarts of radically inert and aromatic fat. And the more you use it, the richer it becomes.

candied

There is a sense in which the kitchen has everything to do with the amount of fat used. The most rigorous techniques used are to steam and boil (and the following variations: poaching, bleaching, etc.) do not use fat to conduct heat from the flame, and instead allow the liquid or gaseous water to work limit imposed upwards about 212 degrees Fahrenheit to heat which can be applied directly to the surface of, for example, a bean. Then there was the introduction of many persistent fat, olive oil to heat up, but especially rapeseed oil and tasteless velvet, and suddenly get off, you do, she mixes you hit the edge of the egg sometimes BTU with which you water. Roasting is the report of the oven, cleanly roasted fat makes glide along its surface and its utmost clean. Then it becomes decadent; Frying in rape, peanut or sometimes animal fat is conspicuous, violent, but ultimately only in depth. Only a few foods can withstand more than a few minutes of fat boiling before stiffening, often leaving a sweet and fresh center, or ejecting mozzarella, fresh cheese or other liquid into your valuable fat where it floats, whistles and dissolves. To really get your songs to finish pork grinding your duck cobs and rinsed in quite adequately, the only option is to cook slowly, completely immersed in the fat of such an animal, covered, oven and low temperature. It brings the embers to its logical conclusion that the aqueous cooking liquid, driven by evaporation, is removed and replaced by the radically inert and flavor fat displacements. And the more you use, the more it will reach.

Joseph

This issue is dedicated to the memory of Jenna Ziemba.

london journal - a loveprose poem

Bronwen Hodgkinson

Prologue. away too long from the city i love.

Day one.

airports flight and customs a pleasant goodhumored breeze. Wanted to squeal and kiss the ground but adulated and grabbed the tube to hotel, dropped off bag, walked walked walked got a little weepy with citylove then sad for whatmightbeens and shouldcouldhavebeens then walked more on no sleep but full of nervous energy and a thumping excitement migraine. Break for work then walk walk eat. Catch my breath and sleep. Tomorrow full consciousness catchmybreath and walk walk art warmbeer oldfriend.

Day two.

cafe americano because everything else is made with milk. why. feel like a blinkingloudtouristalarm but need strong black coffee. croissant aux amandes at offthebeatenpath lovelyfrench cafe left with fullthigh powdered sugar stains. Note to self: no more things with powdered sugar. or wear white. Walked to design museum to see wellmadethings that make you feel old if you remember them. Hello typewriter walkman white ipod payphone punkrock. Walked through holland park where I used to go to see wildtame rabbits that would slowhop unafraid for free snacks. Walked to oxford street omg tourist crush chain store hell how did I forget this. Detoured down park lane through mayfair ahhh lovely buildings oscar wilde walked here and so did i. oh so many bentleys. felt megawealth discomfort. Walked five fitbitmiles. Needed bandaids remembered to ask for plasters. Free public toilets are not a thing anymore but museums are free hello National Gallery. Too many people looking at phones instead of art in front of art. Another note to self: come back early morning before tourmobs. Stood at top of steps and gapemouthed at the shouldertoshoulder touristocean filling Trafalgar Square. Was it always like this? Been away too long couldn't find charing cross road through the crowd without googlemapcheating. (brain thinking words at stutterspeed while I try to memorywrite it all down). Covent garden for pubs and natter with sweet ageless collegemate and I'm full of envylove that she stayed in this best of cities. jetlag sleepiness and warm beer hits hard and fast. Maybe sleep in tomorrow. Maybe slow down. Maybe not.

Day three.

woke up flattened with a cold or jetlag or just overdidit. day mostly wasted on bed sleep tea tv. dammit.

Day four.

cafe americano please then over to soho today. Tube to oxford circus omg more touristmobs but guess I'm a tourist too today but one with streetsmarts and iknowwhereimgoingness. Distracted by lure of uniqlo blesstheirshortinseams then brewdog soho pub for delicious warmbeer and maccheese and wish i'd bought more damn shares and notice the place is

about 90% men. Huh. What does this mean in 2017 I don't know. In the 80s women could still be refused service at the bar but we've come alongwaybaby or have we? Head to berwick street which has had a food and textiles market for over a hundred years (a wee youngster by London street market standards) and one entire side of the street is wrapped in builders fabric and further down the street is a crampedness of scaffolding and mesh over so many buildings. please don't let soho go the way of nycsoho but think it's too late. I see a large bald man in sparkly blue heels and that makes me feel right about the world again. Walk back up to sit awhile in soho square a pretty quiet little oasis away from the westend crush. there is a tiny halftimbered building in the center that looks like it's fourhundred years old but really was built in the 20s as an entrance to an electric substation beneath and now it's just a tiny magnificent gardeners shed that I love. Walked through the theatre district to get to Piccadilly Circus tube. More touristocean what are they looking for what are they doing besides knocking people over with their enormous rucksacks. Rick steves needs to stop telling people to travel like that. Tube to pimlico to Tate Britain to see Hockney show but it's sold out and I'm convinced it's the rucksack mob buying tickets but they're not really into Hockney just came to the Tate because it's on the tour map. Plenty of tickets available for Queer British Art 1861-1967 and I think hellyes wilde and beardsley and coward and bacon oh my. It was quiet and brilliant and beautifulsad. Rush hour sardinetintube back to hotel missdontmiss that commute. Detour down side streets and notice all the notyetbloomed pollarded plane trees and how knobblystrange they look and realize I miss them too. Early night thinking what to rediscover tomorrow.

Day five.

6 tube to borough market organic fresh pressed wheatgrass hipster juice yes please heal me ohsomuch delicious food. walk over London bridge. river at lowtide lovesound of water lapping lowtide shore. cafe americano please then to st dunstans shell of warbombed wren church now a secret garden hidden amongst tall buildings and as peacefulpretty as remembered. walk past tower hill more touristmobbed than anywhere selfie sticks everywhere. and rucksacks. Late lunch in pub i was thrown out of twenty years ago when my flatmate tossed her pint on leering bartender. Bland pint, food awful must be karma. think about how bothered i am by touristmobs. Maybe I just want time alone with this beautiful city i so abruptly left. Like reconnecting with an old lover rushing headlong into its arms can't stop to breathe mad love how to pick up where we left off can we make it work again.

Day six.

batchbrew coffee please (wheeeee). work morning on laptop thankful for portablefreelancework. afternoon down to clapham south of the river where touristsdontgo. longleisurelybrunch with lovelytamara in clapham old town. over to pub on gorgeous green common then drive back to earls court in tamara's vw polo. wish we had these adorablesmallercars in horsepowerhungry states. drinks in our old local pub astonishment the olddirtydive is cleanandbright familyfriendly. old aussie bloke first trip ever complains he came here because thisiswheretheaussiesgo but i said sorry mate you're twenty years toolate. he said too right and returned to scribblingaway in his spiralbound notebook probably writing about his trip kindredspiritmaybe. tamara and i and three more lived in a house down the road collegemates when earls court was grungycheap colorful full of aussies gays and students now cleanedup gastropubs confusedtourists highstreetchainstores i miss the divepubs bedsits clonezone latenightgayclubqueues. was it more

special then in another twenty years will someone else sit here and think i miss the gastro pubs chain stores million dollar terrace houses of the 2010s? two drink light weights nostalgic drunk both gotta work tomorrow morning goodnight london.

Day seven.

coffee flat white please. note to self stick to americano. tube to embankment to hampstead walk through side streets to parliament hill fields best view of the city from the highest point on the heath. cold and windy up here today but i still love this massive beautiful old park. often more residents than tourists up here. hampstead is posh pretty village eeeee hello donald sumpter be cool smile and nod. walk stroll stop look walk repeat marvelous place to get lost. keats orwell freud wildes beloved bosie walked here. fitbit walked more than thirty five miles since monday. walk stroll down to belsize park to tube. off at camdentown it's the next stop why not. biggest tourist mobs ever but most are more interesting and good eats here. old street punks still tourist trapping punters cash for photos. i wonder is it an easier living now that everyone has a camera phone and every tourist wants a selfie with a real authentic british punk (tm). delicious street food excellent people watching easter sunday bank holiday weekend everyone is here. line around block for tube entrance ticket barrier confusion stumped tourists very patient staff. old station not meant for twenty first century crowds ninety six spiral steps down to platform too busy no lifts or escalators down sorry. squeeze onto train change twice back to hotel. want to walk more but need to work a bit pack travel up north tomorrow.

Interval.

train up north from my window pretty countryside green hills brightly yellow rape seed fields in full bloom sheep of course clouds getting thicker and darker it rains more in the northwest but i like grey gloomy skies maybe it's in my blood.

Day eight.

arrive macclesfield northern town it's been so long hello family years become minutes. drive with cousin through nearby villages up over highest point past bugger's knob (yesthats right) steep hilly windy vertigo roads peak district so beautiful so utterly england. up past house where father was born and grandparents postwar tiny grocers shop now a private home. old stone houses now desres. back in macc dinner cousins chatting past midnight.

Day nine.

milky tea please. drive with cousin off to crosby beach merseyside see one hundred antony gormsley cast iron self portrait life size sculptures standing 3km across beach. such marvelous culture of state sponsored public art in britain. (if you look gormley statues everywhere angel of the north gateshead love love). into liverpool never knew liver birds (LY Ever birds) were a thing. not real birds. mythical birds. museum of liverpool ephemera history. yes of course walked by cavern club beatles tourist trap. lennon must be gravespinning. back to macc. off to local pub local ale stories laughter chat old photos yet again up till midnight.

Day ten.

up to the lovely hills again winding roads through villages stone houses wild daffodils everywhere. dry stone walls patchwork landscape fields of sheep lambing season so many tiny lambie pies cute overload. peak district steep hills deep valleys single lane roads though wincle to wild boar clough over shutlingsloe highest point in cheshire. spectacular views of this green and pleasant land. there is calm in these hills breathe deep. past macclesfield forest through teggs nose back to macc for tea. evening train to manchester twelfth night royale exchange theatre. thre tier metal frame round theatre suspended from tops of massive marble columns hangs in center of enormous great hall. actors in pit minimal stage superb acting. late train back. goodnight macc.

Day eleven.

milky tea and full english breakfast. off with cousin to north wales today. my names are welsh bronwen gwynedd no welsh blood but still feel drawn here. to angelsey through llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwlllantysiliogogoch along coast to plas newydd stately home and gardens of posh marquesses of angelsey. walk through forest garden ivy covered trees bluebells in bloom kneel down close up photo of flowers fucking hell hand in stinging nettles how could i forget. then to ruins of moat surrounded beaumaris castle. lunch at chippy eat outside under watch of vigilant seagulls. visit penmon priory holywell of st seiriol sixth century tiny hermitage hobbit hole. short walk up path to rocky coast penmon point perfect cool grey day to be on welsh shore. puffin island in distance hoping for stray adorable puffin to fawn over here on shore. no luck. walk to edge of coast tide out tide pools rough black rock soothing sound of waves and lighthouse bell could sit here and not think and just listen. there was calm in the peak district hills and here there is calm by the sea. keep breathing deep.

Day twelve.

five days up north visiting family. so much tea. such beautiful countryside. quick wit cousin best tour guide good conversation kept me laughing. kindest aunt lovely cousins catching up wish an ocean of distance and time hadn't separated us for so long. quiet last day laptop work then posh alderley edge for coffee and celebrity spotting. flash cars but no stars. indian dinner for seven then coffee and natter and memories of gone loved ones. this is a warm place. train tomorrow back to london sad to leave so soon.

Day thirteen.

train back to london. euston to kings cross change lines past old daily stop barbican to white chapel to hipster hotel. flashback memories at barbican station can even remember what i wore to first interview (docs white jeans rose patterned shirt dressed to impress). loved that job so many regrets i never returned. so tired need to crash but brick lane is short walk from hotel past slightly dodgy area to rapidly gentrifying shoreditch chock a block hipsters artisanal cereal shops craft beer tasting vintage vinyl locally roasted chocolate so much street art love it here but fear weep for inevitable local culture obliteration but this place is always changing maybe this is just the next wave. huguenot to jew to bangladeshi to bearded hipster who will be next. still can get best bagels salt beef and a wicked curry here. this area still less touristy no look right warnings at street crossings. early night for early morning tomorrow last full day still so much to do see.

Day fourteen.

last full day in london. pourover coffee please. black. walk walk walked up bricklane looked for gilbertandgeorge noluck newspace still under construction. over to spitalfieldsmarket bestests at markets restrainedself from buying things wantneedwant ohsomany nicethings. walked to bishopsgate to moorgate architecturegawking. tube back to aldgate to whitechapelgallery eduardopaolozzi exhibit sogood. farewelltrip down bricklane morecoffee vintagemarket streetart. squeeze in laptopwork latedinner at hipsterhotel gottapack. wish i had moretime for this briefintense loveaffair. waitforme london i promise to return soon.



scarecrow hangs

Jane Yolen

"<T>he Scarecrow of Conciliation."—Teresa Matlock

He hangs there like some old corn god,
eyeing the furrows, hoping to see
some good old-fashioned humping going on,
anything to bring back fertility into the world.

Waiting on resurrection, that uncertain future,
where we all cavort in long draperies
or twang uncomfortable lyres, he smiles.
He cannot help it. The smile is painted on.

Deep inside that straw head, he remembers
dancing down the rows with a girl, a sulky dog,
an iron man, a large maned cat. A dream,
he thinks. But as with all scarecrows

life is not about living but conciliation—
making the elder gods happy, resolving
crow murders, keeping boys with matches
out of his vicinity, playing it safe.

It is the most human thing about him.



333: son of satan

Jane Yolen

Daddy's little boy,
horns on his head
just nubbins,
sparse hair an orange glow
the color of a nuclear explosion.

Taking time off from building
a local ghetto, the old deil
turns to his hag wife.
"What shall we name him?"

"Drumpf," she says.
"I like the sound of it."
The old one nods.
"It means goat's fart
in the old tongue.
He will grow into it."

Then they laugh,
a ripple of a energy
streaking through the atmosphere,
a temblor, an aftershock.

And the universe cringes.



soothing inventions

Jane Yolen

"Butter, he thought to himself, what a soothing invention"—Teresa Matlock

Butter, of course, sliding over the toast
as children down a snowy hill.
Toilet paper, of course, the catalogue
of earlier sins not to be mentioned.
Pasta, of course, in its straight and curly states,
a reminder that diversity, even in invention, matters.
Chocolate absolutely, which makes creamers
of us all, even those allergic to it, even them.

But what, you ask, of deep friers, the Edsel,
the Iron Maiden, bullets, and the political pundit?
Even God stumbles sometimes. Remember the platypus,
remember tsunamis, remember Lilith, Loki, Mel Gibson.
Remember the Holocaust and dead Egyptians
in the Red Sea.



eating salt

Jane Yolen

The spit of it,
your tongue alive
with venomous season,
the dish sullied,
friendship's wounds
sown with despair.

Why make things worse,
in-salted insult,
when kind meeting kind
makes better matter,
and a meal between
two consenting mates?



a poem is never finished

Jane Yolen

*"A poem is never finished, it's abandoned."
— Paul Valery*

See all those poems
abandoned on the highway,
trying to hitch a ride home?

I was one once, sprightly,
my rhymes held tightly
to my commodious breast.

I danced, sang, made promises
I couldn't keep, a little minx
of versification.

I didn't eat well, drank too much,
Consorted with song lyrics,
such bad companions.

Was left one night after hours.
Wretched, worn, growing old,
Missing hot food, showers.

Crawled my way back,
turned my life around.
Found a friendly journal.

The rest, while not history,
can be considered a miracle
of poetry.



the last piece of science

Jane Yolen

The last piece of the science puzzle
is lost on the floor somewhere.
no one is looking for it.

Desperate to be found,
small arms semaphoring,
subsisting on a grain of funding,

It waits to be discovered,
uncovered, recovered.
But dust settles over its face.

A mouse snacks on its edge
till the vacuum sucks the piece up,
carts it away.

There is a bonfire of the rest,
those pieces still malingering
in the box. Then the box itself.

A puzzle without that final piece
is no use to anyone, not even scientists,
so out they go, into the bonfire as well.

And the blank-faced people dance
around the blaze, expecting somehow
to keep themselves warm.

(Or at least how to make a new fire.)



an answer to billy collins' "shoveling snow with buddha"

Jane Yolen

So I'll see your Buddha and raise you,
thinking I'll try Jesus first, as soon as he walks
over on the ice floes across the Connecticut River,
shovel in hand, to help out an old widow.
We work side by side until he begins to sing.
My, that man is out of tune with the universe,
his tenor flattened further by each successive throw.
I fire him and call the next one in, that bruiser,
Moses, who arrives with a long stick and a snowblower,
parting the white sea in my driveway with such ease,
the flakes fly off to Tel Aviv or the Golan Heights.
As he works, he hums through his commodious Egyptian nose,
the sound so irritating, I try the next god on my list,
whose card was given me at a science fiction con.
It reads: "No job too big, no job too small."
He's an odd guy, Cthulhu, octopus head in dreads,
crooked grin on his face. He flies in on rudimentary wings
flapping as fast as a gnat or a gadfly, or maybe
in the figure eight of infinity like a hummingbird,
it's hard to tell which. He doesn't offer a tentacle,
just sets to work shoveling, expecting me to sit out
until the very end, when he'll exact a rough payment,
knowing I won't dare complain about the workmanship,
the drone of his song as loud as bagpipes,
or the darkness that surrounds him like a noxious smell.





Xander Berkeley

the meaty interview: xander berkeley

What is your favorite color?

My favourite colour is, and seems as though it always has been... blue, not entirely dissimilar from the shade I view the world through. I am almost certain it came to be my unflappable "go to" color, due to the hue of my baby blues. You see, without my having to do a got-damned thang, they brought waves of special attention my way early on. It was all unconscious at the time, I'm sure, but what I will never forget is the moment when two bikini clad teens, blonde and brunette and bursting at the seams, straight from the swimming pool, leaned over me and cast a private tent of a shadow on my five year old self... before concurring and saying in unison, just how BLUE my eyes were! That sealed the deal, it wasn't just boys are blue and girls are pink... it was somehow more than that. It was Deep, Blue.

What's your favorite animal?

My favourite animal was the dog, and I was brought up in a cat house. All black cats, with funny names, and all I wanted was a dog. I poured over the D book from the Encyclopedia Britannica until I wore the pages to a smudge. The Russian Wolf Hound standing on it's hind legs reaching up the yardstick alongside the standing six foot man and breaking even. That six foot dog, that's the one I wanted. I would settle for a mutt down the line and love it dearly. But before that though, I met a pig, among others. In a pen. I think it may have been EB White's persuasive prose that did it, but I was as happy with that one pig on the farm where we lived at one point, as I ever was with any animal since.

If you could choose to fly or to be invisible which would it be, and why?

I always dreamt of flying. Sort of hovercraft, temporary journeys around the neighbourhood, just above the tree line and house tops. But those dreams always felt heavily weighted with symbolism. I often tried to forget them upon waking up, euphoric as the airborne experience had been, just to avoid analysis. Whereas, invisible? Perversely, in perhaps the most visible trade/profession a person could choose, I kind of opted for the cloak of invisibility. By changing the way I talked and looked, however subtly, each time I played a part in a film or on television... no matter how many millions of people watched each of those successive ventures, I was able to remain invisible for the most part and continue to do what I loved most. Study people. Sitting in a cafe, wherever around the world, and drawing strangers 'at the speed of life' and making notations in the margins, regarding their behaviour or dialogue, remains to this day one of my greatest pleasures. Only possible when invisible.

Are you happy, and if not, why?

I think my joyful rambling so far betrays the happiness that I feel blessed to have had inside me throughout my life, and I feel it is my responsibility whenever and wherever possible to let it bubble over into world in general reciprocation for the gift of life.

What books are you reading at the moment?

Re-reading a wonderful collection of short stories by Joseph Mitchell called "Up In The Old Hotel"

What are you currently listening to?

Listening to a collaboration by The National and St Vincent called Sleep All Summer, it gets me.

When were you bit by the acting bug?

I was bitten by the acting bug early on, perhaps even in a previous life. I came in only wanting costumes, not caring much for trucks or toys and all that. And it wasn't so much a performance thing. As early as 3 I would doff a cap n whatever other gear my crafty mother would whip up for me on the sewing machine, and go out into the woods for hours utterly entertained. I was inhabiting a character, Robin Hood or Dr Dolittle or whomever (preferably British though I think), and off I'd go! My imagination carried me until lunch or supertime as I'm told. I'm sure all the small woodland creatures in the area were concerned.

Which came first, the urge to act, the urge to write, or the urge to paint?

The urge to act came first. Then, because my father was an artist I was given art supplies and loved sculpting first and later drawing and painting. But my father introduced me to stage make up and even the special effects aspect of it pretty early on sensing that would take advantage of my interest in both. Derma wax and nose putty and cool stuff like that. Creating very life like wounds to torment my mother with, etc. The writing lagged behind the other two and still does. Required more of the stillness discipline than ever came naturally to me.

If you could invite 6 people, living or dead, to your ideal dinner party, who would you invite?

Well that dinner party list, hmmm, let's see, Duchamp just to go with the surreal aspect of crossing the time barrier. Dorothy Parker cause the gal could talk! And I always thought Aldous Huxley and Alan Watts would make great conversationists, and Lena Wertmueller, because I loved her early films and if I invited Fellini it would be too much male ego around the table... let's see, another fair lady, well I had the great pleasure of knowing Pamela Travers, or P. L. Travers as she is known, for having written the Mary Poppins series of books among others... and though she has been characterized as a very stern eccentric, I felt her to be the most present and magical of beings I have ever known. So, there! Can't wait! What shall we have, Meat or Tea?

What's the best thing about acting in The Walking Dead?

The best thing about working on the Walking Dead is the confluence of talent and loveliness. Never have I been in the midst of such a consistently kind and fun group of people who all happen to be extremely good at what they do. The actors aren't just good actors, they are good people (which, I don't want to shatter any illusions, but it isn't always the case!). And the writers and the crew and just everybody we come in contact with, even at the studio level, all a delightful bunch of folks who are exceptional at what they do. Feel very lucky, cause I just can't do the other any more at this point.

Any other projects you want to tell us about?

Oh Lordy, yes, well, shameless self promotion has never been a strong suit. And I recon from the thought of sounding like an actor out there blowing his own horn, which I'm sure I already have... but I am passionate about keeping the Independent Film work alive in whatever way I can. SO, "Shot" directed by Jeremy Kagen should be the first to emerge, a disturbing and innovative look at the horror of gun violence in our time. I play an ECU surgeon in a way we haven't seen them portrayed before, without the sentimentality, but rather the grim reality. And "The Maestro" about Mario Castlenuovo Tedesco a Jewish Comoser exiled from Italy under Musolini, who came to Hollywood in the 40s and who remarkably became teacher to the greatest composers of the 20th Century (Mancini, Williams, Goldberg, Previn, etc), because of his gift in helping people to hear their own voice and to bring it out. My wife, the beautiful and extremely talented Sarah Clarke graces both of these films with her presence as well. And I am also appearing in two bigger budget films coming out next year, "Labyrinth" with Johnny Depp and Forest Whitiker as the Detective and journalist who devoted the last 20 years to getting to the bottom of who really killed Biggie and Tupac, and Proud Mary, in which Taraji P. Henson follows up her nominated performance in Hidden Figures as a slick hit man (woman) and I play a lovely Ukranian Mobster.





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Xander Berkeley

benoîttons

Marcos Pickina

Benoîttons are special treats that come from the French bakers. Deriving from the Rye Breads recipes, the benoîttons are traditionally shaped with dough pieces of around 4cm x 15-20cm, weighting less than 100g each. They are just marvelous to eat and can last for days, not only due to the presence of sourdough in the recipe, but also - and mostly specially - because of the rye.

Although the original and more traditional recipes call for raisins only, you can vary a bit just like I did replacing part of the raisins by choco chips.

I hope you enjoy!

(makes at least 12-15 benoîttons)

300g Wheat Flour

200g Rye Flour

380g Water

10 Salt

100g Liquid Levain

200-250g raisins

30g butter (slightly melted)

*Optional: add 1% of yeast along with the levain

*



keepsakes

Zachary Guadamour

Aunt Emily died in a bright June daydream
red cannas by the porch draw hummingbirds
the house musty with lavender scented talc
partially masked by sachets of dried flowers
Lived by herself for forty-three
years after Elmer passed
no children to visit and mostly deaf
read the works of Shakespeare and Yeats
over and over out loud to herself
etched them in her memory
until it seemed she absorbed their wisdom
quoting them at length to herself
A cello case stands in her closet
waits to be opened and taken out
leather buckles dried and hard
takes an oil soaking to free them
The red mahogany slim and delicate as Emily
strings totally slack and bow un-rosined
I remember when she played
the instrument between her legs
blue eyes lost in a cloud of notes
arm moving back and forth in time
fingers straddling the neck
a Mozart lullaby filling the house
divine contentment etched on her face
an ecstasy of music made
hummingbirds stand still
I take the cello
not wanting it auctioned



sunday's bread

Zachary Guadamour

You take bread from the oven
rub the crust with butter until it glows golden
gilded with the cow's longing for her calf
lowing in the pasture waiting to be suckled
slice the loaf and smear it with sorrow
Let it melt into the whole wheat warmth
bouquet of yeast for someone no longer there



profile

Zachary Guadamour

I

Faceted chaparral light slants in
crystallizes on the pine wood floor
a crack zigzags along the wall
An old black Royal portable typewriter sits
with teeth gaping on the rustic table
waits for someone to pound keys until words form

A black haired woman lies on her back on the bed
watches a spider walk backwards on the ceiling
Her legs spread wide while giving birth
The father's unwashed hands pull his son into the world

A pair of unbidden blue eyes watch
fascinated from the corner of the window
jewel cuts into the sapphire of her memory
wants to hold her screaming brother

II

Childhood constantly draws him down along the quay
the musty and pungent saltwater
reminds him of a room where words wait

On the pier's pilings
mussels cling and wait to be opened
flesh pulled out and swallowed whole
unbidden by his blue eyes

The beach stretches endlessly on into his life
He walks with the memory of a black haired woman
along the ceiling of the water
clenches his unwashed hands
while gulls scream

III

He lives in the small room of memory
the pine wood floors zigzagged away from the quay in Valparaiso
decayed teeth of the old black Royal typewriter
scream as they form words

A black haired woman lies on the bed
waits to give birth to his thoughts
the footprints dipped in Indian ink
walk backward across the ceiling
a pair of blue eyes peer in
his father comes unbidden into the room
where a crack facets itself on the wall

IV

In the sapphire lighted room in Saigon
the black haired woman waits for him in bed
fingers her unwashed memories
with her legs spread
foot prints of words travel backwards along the ceiling
blue-eyed Indian ink screams while gaping mussels open

War reports issue from the Valparaiso of slanting light
the old black Royal portable typewriter
spits out an endless beach of words
while his sister waits to hold him in her arms

v

The faceted jeweled light slants
into the psycho-analyst's room
the pine wood floors of memory
while he sits with decayed teeth
taking notes next to his desk
the old black Royal portable typewriter
waits to form words

He could be your father with his legs spread
while he walks along the quay
upside down upon the ceiling with unwashed hands
unbidden screams of gulls and newborn blue eyes

VI

He didn't mean to bash the psychiatrist's head in
with the old black Royal portable typewriter
its sticking unwashed keys of memory
pull the curtains on the slanting faceted sapphire light

He slips out to walk upside down along the ceiling of the quay
comes to a pier painted with Indian ink
the flesh of his muscles gives out



marceline on downtowns

Nicole Shea

I found myself in the foyer at Sylvester's Restaurant. My sister-in-law Tracy was visiting from Portland Oregon and she loves the place. Which means I eat at Sylvester's once, maybe twice a year and always with Tracy. We were sitting on the bench waiting for our table when we overheard this.

A: Heyyy? You like downtowns, don't you?

B: "Things will be great when you're downtown. No finer place for sure downtown. Everything's..."

A: Cool it. I don't know if this is a cause for singing.

B: "Linger on the sidewalk where the neon signs are pretty..."

A: Dude! Look at this. "Let's Do Something Downtown. Now."

B: We are. We are downtown waiting to be seated for brunch.

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A: So that's what you think this is about? I'm gonna open it and find a menu? Look at it. It looks businessy. It's from the Downtown Northampton Association. I'm scared to open it. What if the "Something" they want me to do is help them dispose of bodies?

B: Oh. I see. Good point. I'll read it. If it's about bodies, I'll shield you from the horror.

A: Thank you!

B: Nothing to be afraid of, they're just asking for money. Now, I can't promise you the money won't be used for disposing of bodies, because that is after all, "Something".

A: Ooh, how nice. I can choose my level of support. \$10,000! For "Something"! I don't know man. I mean, this brochure is "Something" what if I give them \$10,000 and then they say, "Sucker! Those brochures cost \$50! But they are "Something". Then I'd be screwed. Right?

B: Well, for \$1,000 you can be a "Friend".

A: How much does your friendship cost? I've never received a bill!

B: Bro, blood discount. You can write in an "Other Amount".

A: You know. I'm offended. I don't want to pay "\$1,000+" for "Friend". I'm going to check "Other Amount" and write in \$999.99. That'll show 'em. Here. Do "Something" downtown, but don't

you dare think we are “Friends”! They’ll have to come crawling for that penny if they want to be friends. The gall!

B: You’re over-reacting. Look, their “mission is simple” - they make ugly brochures to ask strangers to pay for “Something”. Nowhere does it say disposing of bodies.

A: Yeah, but does it say what the “Something” is? If I give them \$999 doll...

B: and .99 cents!

A: Right. If I’m spending that kind of dough, though, I wanna, ya know, make sure it’s at least going toward good. Not like increasing crime or “Something”.

B: You are not giving up your gold without getting answers! I respect that.

A: Thank you!

B: The “mission is simple. Improve...downtown...through exciting...beautification...advocacy on issues that matter.”

A: Hmm “advocacy on issues that matter”? But what if my “issue that matter” is NO MORE SPENDING ON INANE BROCHURES!!! - then what we got? We’re at a crossroads.

B: Well, you also get “exciting...beautification” - you totally like those things!

A: To be honest, I do, but “exciting...beautification” doesn’t mean the same thing to all people. Like, I think street art is “exciting...beautification” - but I know, not everyone agrees.

B: And you want to be respectful.

A: Right. So if I give \$999 dolla

B: and .99 cents! Dat penny key.

A: I might get no “exciting...beautification” because that’s not one thing, and then there might be “advocacy on...issues that matter” that could be opposed to what matters to me? Might be harmful to me?

B: Well, there’s no way to know that. Like I said, the “mission is simple”. I think you’re reading too much into it.

A: I thought that was what I was supposed to do! I thought you said “advocacy on issues that matter”! Downtowns matter A LOT to me! I told you I lived in Paris with mother, right? So so rad dude! Downtowns matter to me!

B: I know. I know.

A: Just sayin'. And not just "exciting...beautification" big cities! Small cities too! Did I ever tell you about my AFS high school year abroad?

B: MANY a time. Bangor, Maine. You couldn't walk down the street without seeing someone you knew.

A: Right! Downtowns are Somethings! I'm going to write a check!

B: For \$999 dolla and .99 cent!

A: Wait, do they take PayPal?

B: Doesn't say. Oh wait! There's more! They "can't do it alone". They want you to "join" to "keep the momentum going"!

A: "momentum"! Dang! I literally just found out about this a few minutes ago! They've already got "momentum"?

B: No, no, no, no. They've "gotten the ball rolling". You're getting a little excited "Friend".

A: I'm not "Friend"! I'm "Other Amount"! I'm not playin' with that yo.

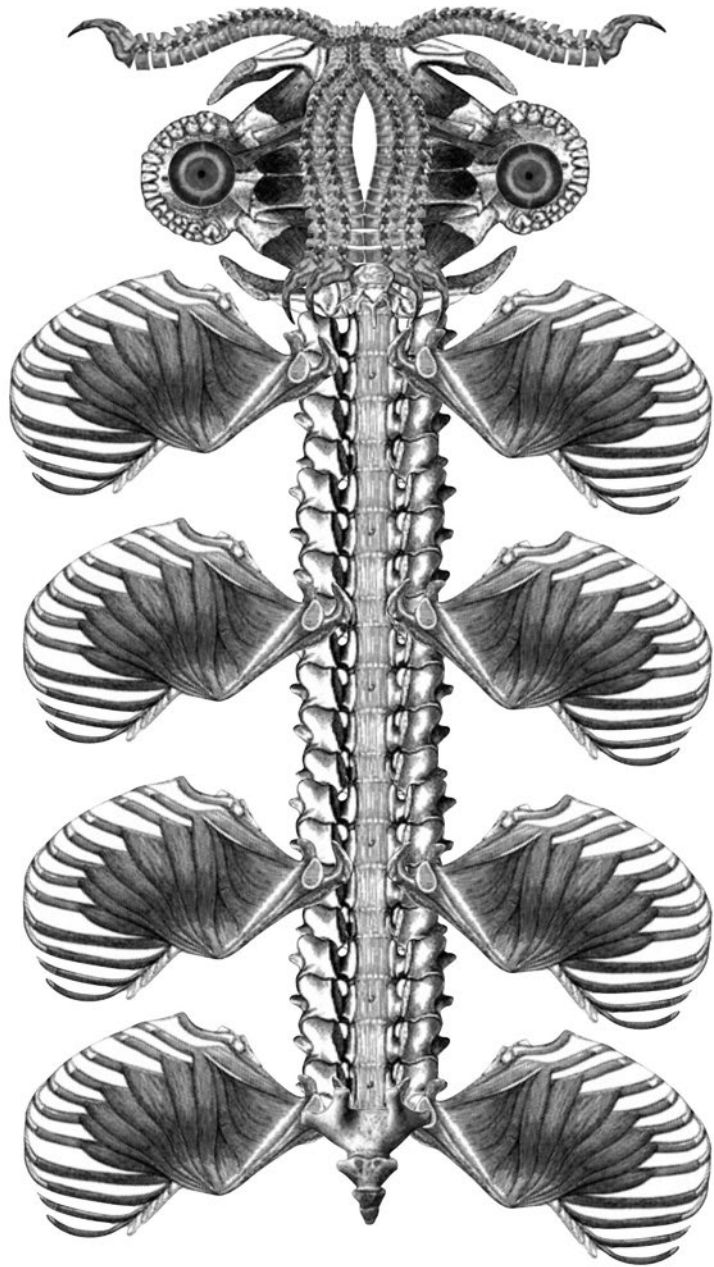
B: My bad.

A: This brochure leaves me cold. I feel dirty. This isn't how downtowns make me feel, in my heart, you know.

B: Word man. I hear you. Maybe it's them dead bodies you was talkin' about.

The hostess called a name and A+B joined their group. Tracy and I got up and grabbed brochures. We felt so fortunate to be at Sylvester's to hear that! We were sad to have it end! Our table was called a few minutes later. We'd pooled our cash, and when we passed A+B's table, we thanked them and gave them \$281 dolla and .55 cent. Can you imagine having such bright and talented young people in your downtown! It filled me with hope! And they were so thrilled for our pocket change they ordered a round of Bloody Marys! My kinda kids.





the ghost of sand
Bill Wolak

for the living insipid

Mary Abbruzzese

Walk by once, steady, important
Walk by again, a blurry sweater set;
Bulbous chest, so round, so big,
Propelled forward, unsung
So proud.

My space, lumbering, hovelled,
Berth of cards;
You think I care,
My heed equal to insect,
To 740i en route to Wainscott;
The low hum of vacuous respect.

Tallboy to Remington,
Corpulence to enriched white flour;
The white flash of unaffected deaf drums,
Rolling through oblivion-
Rolling over me, yourself, your offspring.

Gorge the many,
Nourishing desolation, feign forge;
Back fill the holes, the cavern,
Carnivorous feast, one's own brood,
Appendages; gormandize the morrow.

What's left. barren.
Oh the Consumption!
Triple X threat;
Unzip the need, nourish the blind senses,
Numbed into frenzied digestion.



my four centuries

Gerald Yelle

My mother's maternal grandmother lived in the Flats when it was French Canadian and spoke Canadian French in a low steady murmur. I remember her clear, slightly amused gaze, her glasses, her hair in a tight braid wound into a bun and pinned to the back of her head. She had light gray, nearly transparent facial hair, a mole on her cheek, and a gentle rhythmic way of walking and rocking her chair. I never saw her outside her fourth-floor apartment with its neat, clean stairwell, its front door's pane of beaded glass.

A niece she raised as her own lived with her, as did her bachelor son. She had three daughters who had eleven kids who had thirty-something of their own of which I was one.

I think she was born in 1888 and died in 1976, but I don't remember exactly, except that my mom said she was 88 when she died.

By then I was in college, immersing myself in Faulkner, whose sweeping time spans encompassed the 19th and 20th Centuries as if he'd witnessed both. My interest was strictly literary: I had no desire to question my parents about the past, and by the time I was thirty my great-grandmother had been dead ten years.

I am now past sixty. I take a slightly more active interest in the past and the future. I reach out to the latter here, and send this out to those who come after me: Together we extend each others' connections far beyond our natural lives.

Those of you born in the next few years will have a decent chance of living beyond the year 2100. Some of you may be my grandchildren.

So here I am, born halfway through the 20th Century living through the first half of the 21st, having kissed a great grandmother born in the 19th, hoping to kiss babies who live to see the 22nd. That's personal connections to four centuries: a pretty big reach: something I've been thinking a lot about lately, and something I don't think people appreciate nearly enough.

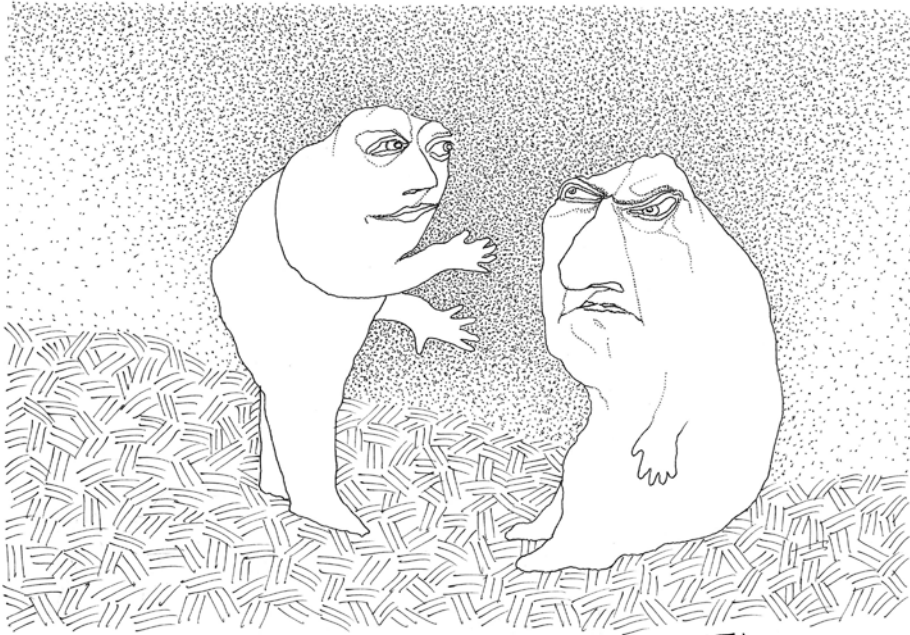
I suppose it's only true for those of us born mid-century. Births at the beginning or end of a century might have the same reach in years, but they will only span three centuries. Only.

How close we are to history. Talk about six degrees of separation. Six mid-century babies with their four-hundred year spans connect the 22nd Century to the time of Christ with no century falling through the cracks. Don't believe me? Do the math.

One born in 1555 could know people living in the 18th Century, and I knew someone living in the 19th. Of course, there's no way we could know the people we "connect to" this way. So I stretched the meaning of six degrees—more than a little, to make a point of how interconnected we are, of how "The past is never dead. It's not even past," as one of Faulkner's characters says. But how far back would we go if we stuck to people who might actually have known each other?

Right now, in 2017, I remember my great-grandmother. She, however, didn't likely know anyone born before 1800, so two degrees of separation gets us to the early 19th Century: A person born in 1815 would've been 73 in 1888, not too old to meet the young girl who would become my great-grandmother; and this person when young could have known someone born in 1740, who might've met someone born in 1675. The chances that someone born in 1675 knew anyone born much before 1600 are remote, but 1600 gets us to Shakespeare: Six degrees of separation between 2015 and Shakespeare.

The oldest people born in the 21st Century turn 17 this year. How many will survive into the 22nd? How many will I meet who haven't yet been born who will live beyond the year 2100, and themselves meet 23rd Century citizens? I want to leave them this message: I know you're out there. I'll be here for a while yet too. But our lives reach beyond our years. Reach back toward me as I reach out toward you. Whom will you reach forward to?



THOSE THINGS CALLED WORDS CAN BE USEFUL SOMETIMES

those things called words can be useful sometimes

Linda Baker-Cimini

losing confidence

Jim Ross

Ginny and I pick up our high-cholesterol, iron-rich sandwiches at our favorite Phoenix deli for carnivores, We Meat Again, board our metallic gold Sebring convertible (a rental), and hit the road for Sedona. We haven't gotten far when I notice Ginny's rare roast beef has drizzled on the yellow leather car seat.

"Look at that!" I say.

"Oh, I made a bloody mess!" Ginny responds.

"No, you're not looking. It's a mandala! Your sandwich made a bloody little mandala! Carl Jung would say that's a sign."

"Of what?" Ginny asks, "That you're ADHD and should pay attention to your driving?"

"No, that when we get to Sedona, we're going to have a really *meaty* experience."

"Focus and drive!" Ginny directs.

"I mean it. And maybe we'll have our experience in one of those vortexes."

"And we'll probably see bright lights. And the men'll come take us away," Ginny says.

We pass the sign for Frank Lloyd Wright's winter house, Taliesin West, and wish we had time to spare. After an hour, the saguaro cacti gradually become more dispersed and we shut the roof. By 4,000 feet up, the saguaros disappear entirely.

The temperature has dropped from warm summer day to anticipation of winter. The fog is so thick we barely glimpse the cathedral-like red rocks. We buzz through Sedona and, after 15 tentative minutes, reach The Enchantment's reception. Julio's job is to whisk us through the resort's labyrinth of asphalted roadways on a vintage golf cart.

"Whatever you do, make sure to take this flashlight with you," says Julio, outside our casita.

"What if we want to take a walk?" I ask.

"Take the flashlight," he repeats.

"No, I mean, do we still have time?" I ask.

"Sure, the sun doesn't set for, say, 45 minutes, not that we've seen the sun today," answers Julio.

"Where would you suggest we walk?" Ginny asks.

“How far d’you want to go?” asks Julio.

“About half an hour’s worth,” I say.

Julio answers, “The Canyon Trail takes half an hour. More or less.”

Ginny asks, “Where do we find it?”

Julio motions, “I’ll show you. Come with me.” We follow him down the road.

“Look down the hill. See how it snakes around?” Julio asks, demonstrating with his index finger. “You see the big building? Go to its right. Open the gate in the cyclone fence, walk through, you’re on your way.”

Ginny redirects, “Speaking of snakes . . .”

Julio answers, “Nothing to worry about. There might be rattlers but they like to bathe in the sun. We haven’t had any. If you hear rattling, it’s not rattlers.”

Ginny asks, “Then what is it?”

Julio smiles wickedly, “Could just be javelina, but don’t worry, javelina—they’re vegetarian. More or less.”

“Are they like wild boar?” I ask.

“Yes and no,” Julio snickers. “Technically, wild boar are European. When you eat pig, you’re eating their grandchildren. Javelina are peccaries, their wild American cousins.”

“Boar can be huge!” I say.

“Oh, javelina are more like little piggies. Midgets,” answers Julio.

“How little?” asks Ginny. “Chihuahua sized?”

“No, *lo siento*, I said midget, not runt. Javelina are like ten Chihuahuas. More pit bull size,” says Julio.

“Pit bull?!” exclaims Ginny.

“But much nicer,” consoles Julio.

“What do you mean they’re vegetarians *more or less*?” Ginny asks. “What’s the *less* part?”

“I mean, javelina are pretty stupid . . . and blind too. So, even though they’re vegetarians, sometimes they take little bites to find out if something’s on their diet.”

“So do they eat meat or not?” Ginny asks.

“Javelina love to slice into cactus,” says Julio. “They eat roots, grass, berries. They don’t really *like* meat—maybe a little lizard—but, sometimes, one’ll say, ‘I wanna try the Paleo diet.’”

“So, what’re the chances they’re going to think we’re veggie burgers?” I ask.

“*Un poco*, but he’d regret it in the morning,” Julio answers.

“Un poco?” Ginger asks.

“Seriously, javelina only eat meat when it’s already dead,” says Julio. “They eat carrion. If they come across a turkey or a sheep or a prairie dog that’s already dead, they’ll check it out, and maybe have it for lunch. Keep looking alive and you should be safe.”

“Thanks for that. New subject,” Ginny says. “How will we know we’ve reached the end of the trail? And how d’we get back?”

“You’ll be walking around the edges of the property. You get out at parking lot farthest away,” Julio explains. “Then, you walk back across the property. *Muy fácil*.”

After a five-minute unpack, Ginny and I put on warmer clothes.

“We really doing this?” Ginny asks.

“Do I look like a cactus?”

“You’re prickly enough,” Ginny says.

“You act like we’re going swimming with piranhas.”

“Then we’d better get going,” Ginny says, “or we won’t get home until morning.”

We speed down the hill, find the gate, and place our feet on the trail. A faint hint of patchouli follows us. The flora is a mix of scrub oak, cacti, and manzanita. We soon realize that because of repeated elevation changes this is going to be half walk, half climb. A light coat of muddy snow disguises surface irregularities. I slip on a cradling rock and begin arching backward. I regain my balance, not before Ginny notices out of the corner of her eye.

“Gotta be careful,” Ginny says. “Where’s the flashlight?”

“Right here. More or less,” I say.

“Where?” Ginny asks.

“I didn’t bring it,” I confess.

“What d’you mean didn’t bring it? You heard him: ‘bring the flashlight!’” Ginny admonishes.

“But, we’ll just be thirty minutes. Where’s your sense of adventure?”

Ginny closes her hands in the air as if around my neck. The truth is, I simply forgot.

“The best thing is to keep moving so we don’t get plowed over by javelina,” I joke.

“Don’t even try to be funny!” Ginny says.

We keep climbing over muddy rocks and fallen trees, navigate minor elevation changes, and jump a few narrow streams.

I mutter, “Five little piggies went to market. . . .”

Ginny jumps at her cell phone’s ring. “Can’t talk now, Em,” she says to our twelve-year-old. “We’ve gone *into the woods. Where the wild things are.* Call you later.”

We keep eyes peeled for a way back to civilization. We know we entered the wild from our left. We anticipate the gateway to safety, warmth and dinner likewise must be on our left. I can scarcely detect Ginny’s general shape and form.

“I heard a snake,” Ginny says.

“Could you make out what it said?” I ask.

“It was rattling,” Ginny says.

“Julio said rattlers are sleeping.”

“I heard *something.*”

“It’s probably your clothes rubbing together. Like Pogo said, ‘We found the enemy and it is us.’”

“No, I know it, we’re dead meat,” says Ginny.

Instead of arguing, I begin singing.

“I’m scared out of my wits! Stop singing,” Ginny snarls.

Then, *mirabile dictu!* two huge panels of bright lights flash at eye level, revealing a large, grey-and-white, modern estate backing on the woods, immediately to our left.

“We’ve found our vortex!” I laugh.

“Those’re motion detectors,” Ginny says. “Our movement, or the heat we’re giving off, made the lights go on.”

“D’you think they call the police too or wake up the owners?” I ask.

“Or let the dogs out?” Ginny retorts.

I shake my head. “House lights didn’t go on. Nobody’s home. No police. Just dumb lights, that’s all.”

Ginny and I can look into each other’s eyes for the first time since this walk in the wild began. When the lights flash off minutes later, Ginny grabs my hand and jerks me back to where we triggered the motion detectors. When the lights flash back on, we see the house falls within The Enchantment’s security perimeter and sits behind an eight-foot high cyclone fence topped by two feet of concertina wire.

“See that?” I ask.

“What?” Ginny asks, resigned, somewhat hopeful.

“Civilization,” I say. “D’you know what that means?”

“We’re in the Twilight Zone?” Ginny asks.

“No! We’ve nearly reached our destination. We’ve gotta forge ahead,” I say.

But because we’ve been staring into bright lights, the darkness seems nearly impenetrable. I see spots.

“Woah!” Ginny cries. “It just ran across the path.”

“You’re hallucinating. Just like when you’re driving a car and you see something out of the corner of your left eye and swerve out of the way of something you imagined.”

“No, this was real and huge,” Ginny says.

“You’re inventing your fear.”

“Oh, yeah? How many times have I been right? I know, what’s out there has night vision and we don’t,” Ginny protests.

“Give our eyes time.”

“About face,” Ginny commands.

We scamper back toward the house. I trip over a tree root, lose balance, upright myself, and resume running. By the time I reach the house, the lights have flashed on. I can see the unmistakable fear on Ginny’s face.

“I’m calling 911,” Ginny says, pulling out her cell. Call drops. Again, same result.

“Lemme try,” I say.

“D’you think your icy fingers have the magic touch?” Ginny asks.

“I don’t know what else I can do,” I say.

Handing me her cell, Ginny turns her head away.

Call drops.

“I’ve got an idea. Stay here. Keep moving,” I say.

I begin shimmying down the hillside along the cactus-rimmed retaining wall surrounding the house.

Ginny shouts, “Watch out for snakes.”

After freefalling, I jam my left foot hard onto cactus.

“I’m stuck,” I yell.

“Enough of this hide and seek stuff. Come on back up now!” Ginny yells.

The worst part of crawling up isn’t the needles sticking from my left hand and knee, but not seeing where I’m headed. When I resurface, we stand there together, three feet apart, silently meditating on the absurdity of our predicament: so close, and yet so far, lacking capacity to escape this prison we’d brought upon ourselves. Our sole relief is motion detectors.

“Look, it’s not so cold,” I say. “Sun’ll rise in . . . oh . . . thirteen hours. We’re dressed in layers. And we’ve got our love to keep us warm.”

Ginny retorts, “And stay out here and be eaten alive by javelina?”

“Remember, they’re vegetarians. More or less,” I say.

“But they’re really stupid and don’t carry flashlights so they have to take big chunks out of us before they realize we’re not veggie burgers,” Ginny retorts.

“We’re okay as long as we don’t look like confit,” I say. “We’ve got to keep our confidence up.”

Ginny grumbles and flails her arms to provoke the motion detectors. “My fingers sting. Why didn’t we bring gloves?”

I quietly suck on the needles embedded in my fingers.

“Wait,” I say. “Listen.”

Half a mile away, across the parking lot, people are talking. We hear their every word.

“We’re in a canyon!” I exclaim. “Remember what happens in cartoons when you yell into a canyon? Your voice echoes and people hear it everywhere! If we hear them, then they’ll hear us!”

Not waiting for Ginny’s approval, I yell, “HELP!” I pause about ten seconds, yell “help” again, pause five seconds, then yell, “Help! We’re stuck on the path behind the fence. We don’t know how to get out.”

Distant voices talk all at once, animatedly. I can’t make out a word.

A baritone voice commands: “Pinpoint your location.”

“Behind the grey house, up the hill,” I yell.

The lilt of distant voices talking simultaneously conveys, “We see the grey house. We know where to find you.”

“Help is on the way,” again comes the baritone

Inspired, I begin softly singing, “Here I come to save the day. That means Mighty Mouse is on the way.” I half expect to see Andy Kaufmann any moment.

Sounding less upset, Ginny remarks, “That’s really good you remembered about canyons. All your cartoon watching’s finally paid off.”

When nobody shows up after five minutes, Ginny laughs, “Has our search party gotten lost?”

After ten plaintive minutes, two gray-haired men appear on the other side of the fence. One is wearing jeans and a denim jacket; the other, khakis and a tan corduroy jacket festooned with a golden, five-pointed sheriff’s “security” badge.

“Howdy, I’m George, and this here’s John. We’re The Enchantment’s night security. What seems to be the problem?” asks George, the one wearing denim.

“It’s cold,” Ginny says, “It’s dark, we can’t find the gate, and that’s a fence.”

Ignoring multiple chains and locks, George and John try pushing open the fence as if it were a garden gate. It becomes obvious they have no clue how to jimmy a lock. That eliminates the simplest solution to our captivity—to open the fence doors and walk through. I wonder, is this the gate we’d been seeking?

“D’you know how to reach the house’s owners?” I ask.

“No clue,” says George.

Disappointing. You’d figure a hotel’s security stewards would know how to reach the owners of a private home within its security perimeter.

“So what d’we do?” Ginny asks.

“You *could* try jumping the fence?” suggests John, the one wearing the golden, five-pointed badge.

“You wouldn’t stand a prayer climbing to the top of that fence yourself,” George says to John, “even without concertina wire.”

Ginny audibly gulps.

“Maybe one of us could call for help,” says John.

“We’re the help,” says George. “Ain’t nobody else to call.”

After a pause, George adds, “I’ve got a plan.”

George and John take ten strides away. John is objecting to George’s plan, but caves.

George takes ten strides back toward the fence to John’s five. George announces, “Here’s the plan. I’ll stay here with you. John here’s gonna mosey across the hotel grounds back to where you got onto the trail. Then he’s gonna amble through the brush and we’ll all meet up right here. Then, John here’ll turn around and guide you back to where you began.”

“Is that the only way out?” I ask.

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“Probably not,” says John, “but I can’t think of a *surer* way.”

“Okay,” Ginny says. “Straight as an arrow.”

“Don’t get sidetracked,” George says.

“I’m off,” John departs.

George distracts us with small talk while staying in walkie-talkie contact with his “pardner:” When John is ten minutes away, we overhear, “Flashlight’s got no juice. Gonna be DOA. Can probably still get there, but can’t get ‘em out.”

“Let’s shout so John can follow our voices,” urges George.

“No, let’s sing,” Ginny counters. “That’ll send a continuous signal, like a lighthouse.”

After Ginny sets the key, George and I join in. Side-splitting loud, we bay, *Wild Thing*. *You make my heart sing. You make everything . . . groovy.*”

After several rounds, John limps in, ragged and shaken, with a dead flashlight.

“Third time’s a charm,” says George, all but ignoring John. “Sit tight. Not only do I have a strong flashlight, I have extra batteries.”

"I hope you got strong ankles too," winces John.

John experiments with his ankle by putting weight on it from different angles. Sometimes, the knee corresponding to his sprained ankle buckles and he shifts weight to his good side. George can't arrive fast enough. Seeing her teeth chatter, I try holding Ginny, who shakes me off.

When George arrives in no mood for conversation, he calls out, "Follow me." He focuses his beam on Ginny's feet and mine, or just ahead of us. Despite feeling worn out, it seems easier getting out with George, his high beam, and John, his trusty pardner, than it had been reaching the big house in the first place. This is no longer the place **where the wild things are**. Ginny and I worry more about turning an ankle. John occasionally cries out. For a devilish moment, I begin softly singing "Come and see those dancing feet."

When we reach the gate, George waves Ginny and me through first, then follows. John, the caboose, utters an exclamation as he passes through the gate.

"You okay, John?" I ask.

"As good as I'm gonna be," he says, closing his eyes, cocking back his head.

"If we ever see you again, we're gonna act like we've never met. But, for now, we appreciate it, both of you," I say.

"You saved us," Ginny says, "We might've been lunchmeat."

"Glad we got you home," says George. "Sorry it wasn't a smoother operation. We'll do better next time."

"Forget about, 'next time,'" I say.

"Well, me and John better be moving on. Somebody's probably sent out a search party after us. Stay away from those javelina."

Ginny and I take leg-stretching strides up the long hill to our toasty casita.

"You wanna see if they're still serving dinner?" I ask.

"Let's warm up first," Ginny says.

Once inside, Ginny turns up the heat. "I just want to feel warm again." After three minutes of holding each other, Ginny announces, "Okay, I'm warm. More or less. Let's go find dinner."

As we snake down the hill to the spa building, Ginny says, "From now on, I get to decide when and where we go for our little hikes."

"Of course you do," I answer. "Anyway, I thought going into the woods was *your* idea."

Halfway downhill, Ginny asks, “D’you remember the flashlight?”

“Why?” I ask, smiling. “You not up for a little adventure?”

We reach the spa building just before the café’s closing time. A sign in the entryway advertises a free mandala meditation that’s just about to begin. A sparkly, rainbow-colored mandala reinforces “everybody’s welcome.”

Most dinner patrons sport the zebra or leopard print robes they’d worn to the spa.

“You think they’ll require us to wear robes?” Ginny asks.

“If so, I want to be an elephant,” I answer.

“Then you may have to bring your own,” says Ginny.

The pony-tailed host assails us and, once we take our seats, morphs into our waiter. “Our special today is confit of fresh-caught, wild javelina, served over a bed of quinoa and seasonal veggies,” he announces, with bravura.

Ginny and I look into each other’s eyes as something builds upinside us. Finally, we both explode into a soul-massaging, therapeutic laugh. After composing herself, Ginny looks up coyly at our nonplussed waiter and asks, “D’you serve veggie burgers?”

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cocoon becomes cavern

Megan LeAnne Smith

When the sacrum
meets the coccyx
butterfly-boned
between pelvic
halves, there is
a small upturning
like palms or
pollen bombs.
The iliacus arising
fastens to marrow,
and it is here
we learn the work
of opposition. How
we grow but also
how we stay.

Don't you love
how the femur
will swirl in socket,
face so far away
from the spine
like an open door?
Don't you love
how the hips
un-narrow,
how the lips
sing love songs
as they bud?
With all of this
pelvis, all of these
joints bending
and giving in
it's no wonder
unlearned men
must search us,
must discover
the spaces where
they can drill
their teething
tissue and nerves.



the luxury of confit

Linda Kraus

Think about that poor, plump duck
selected to swim in his own skin
as he simmers for hours to become
gelatinous ecstasy for discerning
diners who need his unadulterated
fat to elevate their mundane repasts.

Think about the humans who simmer
constantly in a broth of prejudices,
denying any alternative credos,
decrying the value of enlightenment—
preserving a narrowness of thought
suitable for those ignorant and despotic.



after kaula, taupe house on janette ave.

Megan LeAnne Smith

I am seven and
there is a sweetoth
unfolding inside me
and you spread the
Barbie's legs like
maybe she has holes
so we lock the closet
door marvel at the
darkness sip the air
like we are just above
water floating ass-up
you say I should go
first but I say *samesame*
so we close our eyes
drop our waistbands
towards the floor
belly-up and blinded
you pull the light-chain
and then our eyes
like newborn babies
drinking in fluorescence
and wow! you too
have a batter of skin
blossoming within
you and now our
cheeks grow redhot

because we know
this closet is not
convenience and
your mother is
a woman of God
and at seven we know
something smells of
sin when women
have questions and
don't look to God
for answers instead
ask their bodies for
truth and truth is
when your mother
finds us she will
call me a lesbian
and I will miss you
but only because
this is the closest
I will ever feel to
knowledge or to
Communion or to
loving my sweet
redhot without
blushing.



42



WHITE SQUARE BOOKS - 86 COTTAGE ST - EASTHAMPTON

2004&2006&2007&2010

Megan LeAnne Smith

I used to make paintbrush of kitchen knives
make canvas of thigh flesh
make bass drum of pooling blood

(how the ripping slows us, how the Redwet shines like stained glass windows.)

Maybe I thought I could find God or
maybe I thought I could finally control the opening.

Maybe my thigh bones needed to breathe,

how they are always clamping shut or
how they are always belonging to everyone else.

Once, mother made canvas of her belly
those scissors dull she pressed firm

and I remembered that honesty
is less like sunflowers with their spinning tops solar tracing faces
and more like crabgrass in the same garden sprouting violently

despite how often it is torn from mulch.



the reprieve

Michael Goldman

When the damp strips of cast-off bark lie slack
like leather tongues on the old boundary stone wall
and the rabbit tracks leave an icy staccato in the snow
I tire of myself
sitting hours at my desk
and let myself be drawn by the cold hazy sun
out into the pathless woods
where stout trees stand half-dressed
draped in damp moss to the north
but bare to the south in half-naked anticipation.
There is a place where water seeps slowly past to the bog
with stones large enough for stepping
and a single Japanese multiflora rose sinks its thorns into my coat
as I walk by to enter the stand of white birches.
Nearby are vernal pools
charted by my occasional hiking partner
who photographed and registered the sites
when he got wind of a developer
who was going to build eighty-four houses here.
Past the birches the soils get sandier
there below the snowcover
just perfect for the endangered turtles
who plod around there
some with expensive radio antennae
so the developer might know
where he may and may not dig.
I recall the neighborhood meeting
earlier this week

when the town planner announced
that all these woods
and the bog too
and the vernal pools
and the turtles
had been purchased by the city
as conservation land
except for a handful of building lots
out on the edge along the road
all this would remain more or less
as it is now
and I wonder if anyone told the land
it was given a reprieve
or if I was the first –
that the turtles can relax
the coyotes and toads
can count on returning
to their hunting and breeding grounds
another season
the saplings can continue to stretch
in the shadows of their giant forebears
and when I tire of myself
and this great disjointed world
threatens to pull me apart with it
I will still be able to slip off to this place
where the strips of bark lie slack on the stones
and the damp moss clothes the sturdy trees.



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trust burns

Michael Goldman

Trust burns
on the way out

ignites the fuse
dry and white
in my core

consumes
a dizzying path down

ashes on the ground
hide an angry glow

don't you dare
blow on it



what i tell myself

Michael Goldman

Pick no fights;
Defeat the inner mind of contention.

Perception
is a mirror.

Before blaming,
resolve inconsistencies.

Achieving resolution,
the world becomes natural.

Don't trip up
on expectations.

When you are done
go home.



46



#baloney
Helen Hofling

graphics
by
Appointment



Contact Wyatt Fedora: wyatt.y.fedora@gmail.com

two arms

Alexandros Plasatis

I

It was night and it was October and it was cold for October. It drizzled. The terrace of Café Papaya was empty, silent, wet.

Angie stocked the fridge with beer. She had sold five Amstels and two Heinekens that evening. A piece of white cardboard covered the Heineken case. She put the cardboard on the bar, sat on her stool, got a pen, and began to draw. She drew and drew, and when she looked up, she caught the figure of a man emerging from the port-authorities. It was One Armed Mohammed. Or just One Arm for short. One Arm was called One Arm because he had one arm. The other had been sheared off one night at sea. He was pulling up the nets when part of the winch broke, fell into his left arm and sliced it off. Gone, sucked away by the waves. His one arm waved goodbye to his other arm.

One Arm stood, gazed out at the sea, took the view in, gazed up at the sky, took the view in, stuck the remainder of a spliff between his teeth and sucked that in and kept that in and emptied his chest of a sigh soaked in sea-views and star-views and hashish. He walked over to the other side of the open bar, pulled up a wet stool, sat, and soaked his bum.

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'So what can I get you, One Arm?'

One Arm didn't want anything. He was sad. No, maybe he wanted something. He wasn't sure. Did he want something? Hang on. Let him think. Yes, he did want something: 'Beer.'

'What beer?'

'Any beer.'

Angie cracked him open a beer, slid over a glass, continued drawing.

'You want a cigarette, Angie?'

Angie didn't. One Arm did. He didn't have any. He asked for one, got one, tapped it against the bar: 'How about an ashtray?' Angie passed him an ashtray. One Arm coughed, excused himself, 'Well, I think I need a lighter now.'

'Do you want a mouth to smoke it, too?'

'No, I'll smoke it with my nose.'

'It'll hurt. Why are you sad?'

'This is a long story.'

'How long?'

'Long long long.'

'I finish at midnight.' She looked at the clock. Drew. Said: 'You got fourteen minutes. Is it more than fourteen minutes long?'

One Arm lit his cigarette. Sucked in. Hard: 'It's five and a half years long.'

'What story is this?'

'The story of my missing arm. I want the story to finish, but it won't. I've had enough. What's that you're drawing?'

'The map of Greece.'

'Where are we?'

Angie pointed, made a blob, wrote the name of the town in capitals: KAVALA. That made no difference to One Arm. He couldn't read Greek.

'I want to learn to read Greek one day.'

'One day you'll learn. So will you tell me the story of your missing arm?'

But, no, One Arm didn't want to tell his story, he wanted to talk about something else. Lately, he said, there was no hashish around town. He couldn't find any anyway. A friend of his in Salonica had some, had loads really, but One Arm was scared to go to Salonica. Too risky. He had to take the coach to go there. Police stopped coaches. Police searched passengers. One Arm was scared of the police.

Angie kept on drawing and One Arm watched her draw, sipped from his glass, continued:

'But tonight I was sad. I was sad because of this long story that doesn't end. So I went for a walk by the harbour. It was raining, but I like the rain. I was walking over there, at the port-authorities place. I went all the way down. At the breakwater's end I smelled something nice. I saw two young lads in the rain, standing, smoking hashish. I wanted to smoke, too. I hadn't smoked for so long. I went over and said to them, "Excuse me, lads. Do you think it's OK if I take a puff from the cigarette?" They said, "Take it all, friend." There wasn't much. It was below the middle. Five-six puffs. It was good though. And so I smoked a bit, *alhamdulillah*.'

Angie looked up at One Arm and down at her map again. Next to the town of Kavala she drew a spliff. It looked more like a canon than a spliff and it pointed to the South. She asked:

'Where do you come from?'

'From Egypt.'

'I know that. I mean from what place in Egypt.'

'From a village.'

'What's its name?'

'You won't know its name.'

'Tell me its name.'

'Ezbit El Burg.'

She wanted to draw the North-East coast of Africa, but she had already drawn Crete near the edge of the cardboard. There wasn't much space. She didn't care. She drew the coast anyway. Egypt and Greece came closer. She smiled at that. Then she realised she had squeezed out some sea. She liked that too. She felt happy for the squeezed-out sea. Asked:

'Is it a small village?'

'No. It's bigger than this town. Four times bigger. Five times bigger.'

'Then it's not a village.'

'We call it village.'

'Whereabouts is your village?'

One Arm looked at the map. Had a thought. Sipped some beer. Smoked. 'Where the Nile becomes the sea.'

Angie drew the Nile Delta. Next to it, she made a blob and wrote down the name of the village in capitals. Said:

'Tell me about your village.'

'My village is six hours from Cairo. Cairo is big. Seventeen or twenty million people. There's a great zoo in Cairo. In Egypt we have beautiful stuff, ancient stuff, the Pyramids. They are huge. We have the Nile. Nile is great, too. Nile is everywhere.'

'Everywhere?'

'Yes, everywhere. If you don't see him, you talk about him.'

'Then he's still a God. Tell me about your village.'

'There's nothing in my village. Just fish.'

'Then tell me about fish.'

'Fish?' One Arm gazed out at the harbour. He gazed out at the harbour for a long time and stubbed his cigarette out: 'Fish?'

'Yes, fish.'

He filled his glass to the rim, emptied his chest with a sigh and sent it out to the sea. Asked: 'You want a cigarette, Angie?' Angie didn't. One Arm did. He pulled one out from Angie's pack, lit up, drank more beer, and said:

'When I'm twelve years old, my baba says to me, "What job you want to do?" I say, "I like the sea. I want to go to the sea with the caique and become a fisherman." He says, "*Mashallah*, this is a tough job. Later you'll regret it." I say, "No, I want to go to the sea." So, I go. I'm a tiny kid. This is the first time I go to work and I'm very scared. The captain says, "Come over. You sit here and watch. Don't move from here till I tell you." I say, "OK," and I sit in a corner on the deck. Then we sail away. As soon as we leave the harbour and enter the open sea I feel nice, very nice. The sea is silent. But then I begin to cry. I want to leave. To go back. *Wallah* I want to go back. But it's forbidden to go back. I've got to stay for a week at sea. A whole week. Day and night. I cry! Every day and night I cry: "I want to leave! I don't like the sea! I want to leave!" And then I see the fish. I see how they got the fish out of the sea with the nets. The little fish. I like this a lot. It's like a game. I know I will like this job because it's like a game. Then we go back to the harbour and I go to my baba and he says to me, "Tell me now. Will you go again to the sea?" I say, "I want to go to the sea again, baba."

Here, One Arm lifted his eyes to the sky, uttered a sigh, and sent it up to the stars. He remained silent. He only smoked. Then he said: 'I like to remain silent and only smoke.'

'Yes, it's nice. And so you became a fisherman?'

'Not yet.'

'Not yet?'

'No. Not really. Then I go for another caique voyage and when we return to the harbour the captain pays me. He pays me very good money. I'm twelve years old and I have so much money. Too much! What can I do with it? I'm so happy that I don't know what to do. So I go to another town, a big city, Dumyat.'

'How did you say that?'

One Arm repeated the name of the big city.

Angie showed him her map: 'Whereabouts is this big city?'

One Arm took a long drag from his cigarette and let it rest on the ashtray: 'Not far from the sea.'

Angie made a blob not far from the African coast and wrote the name down. Said:

'So when did you become a fisherman?'

One Arm sighed. 'You sure you don't want a cigarette?'

She didn't. He did. He pulled a cigarette from Angie's pack, lit it, saw his other cigarette burning in the ashtray, uttered a sigh, and having sent his previous sighs to the stars and the sea and the night, he let this one hang around his shoulders. He remained silent for a while, took one of his cigarettes, sucked that in, kept that in, pulled one leg over the other, and let out a silent fart.

'One Arm, can you please be a bit quicker with your story? We got six minutes left.'

'Of course. Where was I?' He sniffed the air. It didn't smell.

'You went to this big city.'

Happy that his fart didn't smell, One Arm narrated the next part of his story with confidence:

'Ah, yes. So I'm twelve years old and I come back with all this money the captain gave me and I'm very happy and I don't know what to do and I go to Dumyat. You know what is the first thing I do in the big city?'

Angie didn't.

'I eat a chicken dish. Really. It was delicious. Then I go to the cinema. I watch a film and then I go out and buy some clothes, shoes, all new, I buy a ring, and then I go home to sleep. My baba is waiting for me. He's sitting by the kitchen table, like that – angry: "Come here, you. Where you've been?" Oh, no... I'm scared of my baba. I know I'll get a beating. He says, "Come here. Where's the money you got from the captain?" "I haven't got any money, baba." "Haven't got money? You got all this money the captain gave you. Where's all this money?" "I bought trousers and shoes and ate and I haven't got any. I only got these coins, baba." "Only these coins? Where's the rest?" "Gone. Flew away!" I had smoked the rest, but I didn't tell my father. I had hidden the cigarette pack in my sock. And my baba grabs me. From here – the neck. He takes off his belt to give me a beating. I bend over the table and my shoe falls off and he sees the cigarettes: "Aman! You smoke again, *haiwan*? You spent all your money and you smoke too?" Beating, beating, beating... For one week I'm not allowed to leave the house. No food either. But when my baba goes to sleep, my mama brings me a dish, and says, "Eat, *habibi*. Eat, my boy, eat. I won't tell your baba." I eat and my baba doesn't know. Next morning I go to my baba and say, "My baba, I will not do that again. I will go to work and as soon as I get paid, I'll bring the money to you." He says, "If you do that again, I'll lock you in your room." I say OK and I leave. I go for another caique voyage and, when we return to the harbour, the captain says, "Here's your money!" I say, "No! Give it to my baba. I don't want it, I don't want it!"'

They laughed. One Arm's laughter was *murharharhar*-like and made Angie laugh even more.

'The captain gives the money to my baba. My baba gives a little bit to me, so that I won't buy cigarettes. But again, I get cigarettes from my friend. You know which friend? Maybe you remember him. He used to come here in Café Papaya. The one with the long hair.'

'Ah, yes! Long Hair. Where is he now?'

'Back in Egypt. We've been very good friends since we were kids. He loves me too much. We used to smoke hashish here, too. Now he's back in Egypt and he calls me every night and says, "I smoked a bit of hashish and I want to talk." We spend one hour on the phone. Every night.'

'Every night?'

'*Wallah*, every night. Only he talks though. He tells me stories and I never interrupt him, because he's so sensitive he'll think that I don't like his story. I lie on the bed and I put on the loudspeaker, and say, "Now talk." He talks and I fall asleep. He's so funny.'

'Yes, he is. So tell me, after the beating you got from your father you became a fisherman?'

'Not yet.'

'But when did you become a fisherman, for God's sake?'

'Hang on. How much time we got?'

'Three minutes.'

'Three minutes? I'm stressed.'

'Don't be.'

'OK. Right. So: when I grow up a bit, I don't want to always be working. I like skiving. The captain keeps looking for me. He comes to my home: "Eeeh! Mohammed!" *BAM-BAM-BAM*, he bangs the door: "Get up to go to work!" I pretend I don't hear. I don't want to go to work. "Eeeh! Mohammed!" He shouts, he shouts, he bangs the door, he gets bored, he says, "I'd better go," he goes. When the captain leaves, I sneak out and go to see my friend. The one with the long hair. The captain comes there, too, and keeps banging, but my friend likes skiving, too. *Bam-bam-bam*, the captain bangs the door; he shouts, he shouts, he gets bored, he says, "I'd better go," he goes. He goes back to the caique, but he doesn't have enough crew to go out fishing. Many fishermen are like me and my friend, we all like skiving. So the captain can't go to the sea and he goes to the café and drinks tea. Next day the captain comes again to my home and I pretend I don't hear and he goes to look for the other lads, and they pretend they don't hear, so the captain goes to the café and drinks more tea. That's how it went. Because we work for one month, two months, and then we don't want to work. We say, "Forget it. We'll go out, walk around, see friends, go and buy clothes. When money runs out, we'll go back to the sea."'

One Arm had a sip from his beer and stubbed out his cigarettes.

Angie was drawing the Aegean islands. She wasn't sure where most of the islands were or what their shape was, but she drew them anyway. Her map of Greece didn't look much like a map of Greece.

And that's how it went for some time. The night-shift waiter was late to arrive; Angie drew and drew, and One Arm just gazed at the night. Then he said:

'I can stay for twenty-four hours in Café Papaya. From here, from this little corner, the whole world passes by. I like to sit and watch the world. Everyone passes by here. If people come that way, they pass in front of Café Papaya. If people come the other way, they pass in front of Café Papaya. If it's quiet, I look at the harbour and the sea and imagine people in faraway places. And so I like it. I like to go and smoke some hashish, sit under the trees of Café Papaya, drink a beer, smoke a few cigarettes, and watch the world passing by.'

'So when did you really become a fisherman?'

'When I was twelve years old.'

'Then why keep on saying, "Not yet"?''

'Did I?'

'Yes. Three times.'

'You know what?'

'What?'

'It's such a beautiful night.'

'Yes, it is.'

'I love nights like this one. I like watching the people, but I like silent nights, too. Like this one. Just sit here and see the rain and the street and the sea. Have you finished with your map?'

'Getting there. I have to draw the islands. We have so many islands.'

'The first time I came to Greece I worked on the Island of Naxos. Make a blob of Naxos when you draw it. I've lived there, but I don't know where it is.'

'I will. When did you come to Greece?'

'The first time...'

'Hang on. Do you mind if I do the cashing up while you talk?'

'Is it midnight already?'

'It's past midnight.'

'OK, you do your work.'

Angie left her stool and stood by the till and pressed some buttons. 'I'm listening.'

'The first time I came to Greece it was in '88. I was sixteen years old. I came to Naxos.'

'Ah, of course, Naxos.'

'Have you blobbed it down yet?'

Like most of the islands, Angie wasn't sure where Naxos was. She decided not to draw Naxos. She thought Naxos was better off out there with that bit of squeezed-out sea. She said she would draw it later. Then she said:

'Go on, One Arm.'

'All of us Egyptian fishermen come to Greece with a work permit. For eight months. After eight months I leave. I want to come back to Greece, so I start doing the paperwork. But I don't have time because after a few days I'm called up to join the army. So I go to the army for three years. The army hurt my heart too much.'

'Oh really?'

'Oh really. Because army is like prison. Once I finish the army, like a little bird I go out in the street. And I come here again, to Greece, and go straight onto the caique. From fire to fire!'

'What fire?'

'Army is fire and caique is fire. I say to myself, "What the hell is this? Better die." I want a bit of life: buy clothes, go to the disco, go with, you know, women. I want to taste some of the good life. So when Christmas comes and we break from the caique for four days, I spend all my money. Ha! Every day for four days I learn about the good life. Morning comes, I go out to drink coffee. Afternoon comes, I go to the taverna. Evening comes, I go to another taverna. Night comes, I go out with women. Four days. After that, I go to work. Then the eight months of the work permit pass and I must go back to Egypt. But I don't go back. I stay here. I was illegal for four years. And it's true, every day police were after me.'

'Every day?'

'*Wallah*. They shout, "Come here! Come here!" *Murharharhar*. Police. And I hide in the caique. I go down below deck and crouch in a corner under a bunk-bed and the police search all over the caique for me and they can't find me. They leave, I get out of my corner, they come back next day, I go back to my corner. Ha! Sure, I was like a rat.'

Here, the night-shift arrived and took over from Angie. That is, he made a café frappé, dried a chair on the terrace and sat down to smoke. It had stopped drizzling. Still, everything was silent and wet. As if the land wanted to become sea.

One Arm sighed. Heavily: 'Time to go home?'

'I'll stay for a bit,' said Angie. 'Are you going home?'

'No! I'll stay here till tomorrow if you want me to.'

'Can I have one of my cigarettes?'

'No need to ask.'

They lit up.

Angie took a long, slow drag.

One Arm's mobile rang. He looked at the screen and a smile filled his mouth:

'It's my friend. The one with the long hair.'

'Ah, Long Hair! Say hi from me.'

56

One Arm put on the loudspeaker and answered the phone and talked in Greek. Introductions were made, then One Arm said to Angie that Long Hair was shy to speak in Greek because his Greek is not good and he's so sensitive about it. Long Hair said something in Arabic and One Arm told Angie that Long Hair had smoked a bit of hashish and wanted to talk. Angie and One Arm smiled at each other. Then Long Hair laughed. He laughed way too long. He went on laughing for so long that Angie and One Arm found it funny and began laughing themselves. When all the laughing stopped, One Arm leaned over the phone, and said to Long Hair in Greek:

'Angie just finished work and she's tired and she needs to go home soon. We're smoking a last cigarette.'

Arabic came from the other side.

One Arm turned to Angie: 'He asks what we're talking about.'

Angie smiled, 'Tell him that I really need to go home soon. Tell him my parents will be worried. Tell him that we've got time for one cigarette. Tell him that we talk about rats.'

'What rats?' One Arm asked.

'Rats. When the police were after you.'

'Ah! When the police were after me and I hid under the bunk-bed,' said One Arm, and told Long Hair about it in Arabic.

The sound of the lighter was heard. The lighter strike that came through the loudspeaker sounded better than the real sound, cracklier.

Long Hair spoke in Arabic. One Arm translated:

'He says that he wants to tell you the story of when he was a rat. He says he just lit his cigarette and his time runs from now.'

And so, Long Hair began telling his one-cigarette-long story in Arabic, One Arm translating in his broken Greek, and Angie listening, while drawing more islands from her broken memory.

'He says that he spent many years as an illegal immigrant in Greece. The first time he came here he was sixteen. He had to go back to Egypt after eight months. But he didn't go back. He says he didn't go back because he has a mind of his own. He says every man has his own mind. His mind told him to stay in Greece and wait to become thirty years old so that he wouldn't have to go into the army. Because if you are away until thirty, you don't have to do your military service. You can pay it off, instead. That was his plan. But how could he wait for so long? When you are sixteen, how can you wait until you become thirty? How, eh? (I'm translating everything, Angie.) After seven years police caught him.'

Suddenly Long Hair stopped talking.

Angie looked at One Arm. One Arm covered the phone with his hand and whispered: 'Don't worry. It's the hashish that plays in his mind. He'll recover soon.'

Soon Long Hair recovered and the narration and translation resumed:

'Yes. So after seven years they caught him and sent him back. He was twenty-one.'

'It doesn't add up,' said Angie.

Quickly One Arm covered the phone again. 'Don't interrupt,' he whispered, 'he'll think you are bored of his story. He's so *sensitive*.' He continued:

'He says he doesn't want to try to remember if he was twenty-one or older, because trying to remember something forgotten is funny and he'll start laughing again and will lose time.'

Angie looked at her map. Next to the name of Ezbit El Burg, the Egyptian village, she drew a spliff. It looked more like a canon than a spliff and it pointed to the North. She wanted to make the two spliff-canons shoot bursts of laughter over the Aegean Sea, but she didn't know how to draw that.

'He says that it doesn't matter how old he was really. He says that police caught him at some point and sent him back to Egypt. Now he couldn't get away. No way. That was it. He had to join the army. But he didn't. He bribed some officials and didn't join the army.'

Here, Long Hair broke into a monstrous laughter. The night-shift waiter turned and looked at them a bit alarmed. One Arm turned the volume down and begged Long Hair to stop laughing, but instead he began laughing himself.

When Long Hair began talking, One Arm turned the volume back up.

'He says his cigarette has nearly finished, so better be quick. After the bribing, he wanted to come to Greece again. But he couldn't come to Greece because he had been deported from here and the police here knew his name. What could he do? He changed his name.'

Needless to say that the two friends found this very funny and laughed with all their hearts. Very quickly this time, though, they quietened down, and continued:

'He says he changed his name and came to Greece again. He says he had chosen a shorter name, easy to remember, but, still, he kept forgetting it. About a year and a half later, the same story. They arrest him, they take him to the police station and put him in a cell. He grabs the bars and wedges his face between them, and wails: "What can I do, what can I do now? Oh, Allah, Allah, what can I do now?" The policeman tells him, "Don't be sad." He says to the policeman, "What do you mean, 'don't be sad'?" He was very sad. The policeman says, "What's wrong?" He says to the policeman so and so and so. The police know that we come and go illegally. So the policeman says to him, "Look, mate. We'll deport you. But you just change your name and come back again." He says to the policeman, "I've already changed it! Change again?"'

All three of them burst out into a final, hearty laughter, at the end of which, they stubbed out their cigarettes and Long Hair hung-up.

'Now I'll go home to think of my long story,' said One Arm. 'But when the morning arrives, I'll come to Café Papaya to drink coffee and watch the people passing by.'

'I'll take my map with me,' said Angie, 'and finish it at home before I sleep.'

'You still didn't finish? What do you need to finish?'

'I need to draw the sea.'

'How will you draw the sea?'

'With fish.'

'What fish?'

'Like the fish you saw on your first caique voyage. Little fish.'

It was in the middle of the night when Angie woke up wet. A big stain had formed on her bedsheets. She took a deep breath, touched her clitoris, closed her eyes.

Ah... The night was warm and the beach was sandy and the sky starry. A golden sandy beach, and bright stars in the sweet black night, and silent sea with no islands, only sea. Angie stood on the beach and took all of it in. Then she stripped naked and walked into the water.

She tossed and turned around in the bed as she walked and walked in the sea, but the water still only reached her knees. She splashed some water onto her vagina. It felt good. She took a breath and dived in. Suddenly, it got *really* deep.

She began swimming in the deep, dark waters. She was a good swimmer. She swam and swam, and there it was, ahead, not far, the new coast. Ah, but this must be the Island of Naxos, she thought, when she felt something tickling the soles of her feet.

She went underwater and saw four huge calamaries right in front of her face, staring back at her. They were evil-looking calamaries, with two big sharp teeth and red eyes. One of them had a strange tattoo across its body. It seemed the meanest one, it must be the gang leader. Two calamaries clasped her around the ankles and pulled her deeper down. The third went straight for her vagina; the leader tried to shove its head down her throat.

Angie jerked in the bed, fought them in the water. Broke free. She began swimming towards the Island of Naxos. The coast wasn't far. But her swimming was slow now. So slow. That made her panic. The faster she tried to swim, the slower she went. She looked back: the four calamaries were making ground. She swam. Looked ahead. Froze: a fifth calamary, even bigger, was speeding towards her, squirting ink behind it. They had encircled her. She felt the tickling again, the sense of being pulled down, and gasped for breath. She decided to give up. To surrender to those evil creatures. She closed her eyes.

She felt something grabbing her by the hair and pulling her upwards. When she surfaced, she took a deep breath, and jerked around her bed. She opened her eyes, and in front of her, in the bed, it was not a huge calamary that squirted ink, but a bodiless arm that bled. She recognised it immediately. It was One Arm's missing arm. It was Missing Arm.

A sigh; eyes shut.

Missing Arm strangled the four calamaries, grabbed Angie by her hair and dragged her towards the Island of Naxos. He dragged and dragged and dragged her and Angie quite liked it. When they reached the beach, Angie crawled on all fours and collapsed on the cool sand, exhausted.

Ah, how beautiful the naked Angie was. She knew herself how beautiful she was. She rolled on the sand, the golden grains sticking on her wet body, dressing her up in a summer night-dress. She said:

'You saved my life, Missing Arm.'

Missing Arm caressed her hair.

'Can't you talk?'

Strong vibrations came from beneath the sand. Angie thought it was an earthquake. She panicked. Panic was mixed with pleasure as she felt the vibrations tickling her bottom.

Missing Arm scraped at the sand and unearthed a mobile phone. He pressed the loudspeaker button: a voice began talking, and although the voice talked in perfect Greek, Angie recognised it. It was Long Hair's voice. It was the Voice with the long hair.

It said: 'How can Missing Arm talk if he has no mouth, Angie? He can't even *smoke*. I can't smoke. We're cursed! I'd like to tell you the story of how we became cursed and ended up on the uncharted Island of Naxos...'

Missing Arm wagged a finger towards it. The Voice with the long hair said:

'I won't tell the story. Missing Arm wants to know why you tried to kill yourself.'

'I didn't try to kill myself.'

'You didn't try to kill yourself? Then what were you doing in the Squeezed-Out Sea, the most dangerous of all dangerous Seas?'

60

'It is a long story.'

'How long?'

'Oh too long.'

'We haven't got much time. Missing Arm is bleeding to death and I haven't got much credit. And, anyway, no-one likes long stories nowadays. Make it short.'

'Can Missing Arm hear?'

'Yes. He has developed a sonar-like system.'

'Well, then, listen... ' began Angie, but the Voice with the long hair interrupted her.

'Hang on. Can you smoke when you tell your story? We love the sound of you blowing the smoke away. It's our fetish.'

Missing Arm scraped out from under the sand a cigarette pack, pulled one out, put it in Angie's lips, scraped out a lighter, lit it.

Angie blew away the smoke, and began telling the story of how she ended up swimming in the most dangerous of all dangerous Seas, in the Squeezed-Out Sea:

'The story begins from the moment I leave One Arm at Café Papaya: I go straight to a kebab shop and say to the kebab shop guy that I want two gyros in pita bread that my father and mother had asked me to get. But then the kebab shop owner pops up from under the counter, a woman, and says that she has run out of gyros. I see the gyros, but she says she only has two portions of souvlaki in pita bread. I don't know why, but she says it in German. She says: "*Gyros kaput! Einkaufen souvlaki! Zwei! Ein-zwei souvlaki!*" I thought that my father and mother like souvlaki, so I say that this would be fine. I get the souvlakis, don't pay – why should I pay a German? – and I leave. If only I knew what was about to happen next...'

Here, Missing Arm passed her the cigarette. Angie took a drag.

'So? What happened next?' the Voice with the long hair said.

She continued:

'After I get the souvlakis, I begin walking back home. There are no people on the streets, but I feel I'm being followed. I take the long way home. I remember that it's so windy that I have to tighten my grip on the plastic bag with the food in, as it gets blown around in my hand. Sometimes a strong gust of wind makes the plastic bag sing. The streets are empty, but I'm followed.'

'It must have been that German woman,' the Voice with the long hair said.

'I think so, too. I am scared.'

'You should have taken a taxi.'

'I know. Anyway. When I enter my home, I see my father sitting by the dining table, looking like that – angry: "Come here, you. Where've you been?" I'm so scared of my father. He says, "Tell me. Where have you been?" I want to answer, but words won't come out. I see steam filtering through beads hanging in the kitchen doorway, and I smell boiled meat.'

'Was it pork?' asked the Voice with the long hair.

'No. I think it was lamb.'

'Halal?'

'I don't know. What I know is that I'm late and my parents are very hungry and my mother has decided to make stew in her huge tin-pot. I can hear the slow bubbling and the wooden spoon banging against the walls of the pot. It makes a terrible sound.'

'Then my mother calls me from the kitchen: "Did you bring us food?" "I brought you food, mummy," I say. "She brought us food, mummy," my father says, and shoves his hand into the bag. He gets one of the wraps out, removes the paper, squeezes the souvlaki and the grease runs down on his hand, and he screams:

“What’s THIS?”

“It’s a souvlaki,” I say.

“She brought us souvlaki in pita bread, mummy!” screams my father.

“Souvlaki in pita bread?” my mother begins screaming too. “SOUVLAKI IN PITA BREAD? But we asked for mousaka! We asked for MOUSAKA not fucking souvlaki!”

“No, you didn’t ask for mousaka, mummy. This is not fair! You asked for gyros. But the kebab shop owner told me she had run out of gyros. She was German, she said, ‘*Gyros kaput!*’ so I brought you souvlaki.”

“Then my father opens up the pita, and screams: “AND SHE DIDN’T EVEN PUT TZATZIKI IN THE PITA! NO TZATZIKI!”

‘My father looks so angry. He looks animal-angry. It is horrible. I begin shaking from fear, my hands are trembling. I turn around to go up to my bedroom, when my handbag slips from my fingers and falls to the floor and my cigarettes fall out. My father sees them, and screams: “What’s THAT?”

‘I tell him that this is my cigarette pack and bend to pick it up. While I do that, I turn around and see my father. I know he likes it when I bend like that, and I love the way my flesh presses against and fills the tight cloth of my skirt. Anyway, maybe that’s a bit too much information. So, I bend and see my father biting into his souvlaki and staring at my arse. He munches, swallows, and says:

“You’re coming back late and you smoke too?”

‘I tell him that I wasn’t late. He points at the clock and says:

“Do you know what the time is?”

‘I look at the clock, but the clock has no fingers. “I don’t know,” I say. “What is the time?”

“It is time to fuck you,” says my father, and with that he stands up and takes his cock out. Ten inches long and limp!’

Here, Angie sighed and asked Missing Arm to pass her the cigarette.

‘Was it really ten inches long?’ asked the Voice with the long hair.

‘And *limp!*’ Angie added.

‘*Allahu Akbar...* And then? What happened then?’

Angie took a few more puffs and continued narrating the events that took place in the dining-room.

'Then my father takes his balls out. They were big like satsumas.'

'What's satsumas?' the Voice with the long hair asked.

'Well. They are sort of mandarins, really.'

'Why don't you call them mandarins then?'

'Satsumas sounds better.'

'Were his satsumas hairy?'

'Very.'

'Yiak... We Muslims shave our satsumas every Friday. Go on.'

Angie went on: 'When my father takes his satsumas out, my mother screams from the kitchen: "Made in Uganda! Made in Uganda!" I'm not sure what she meant by that. Anyway. Then my father grabs me and makes me bend over the dining table. He pulls my skirt up, takes his belt out and lashes me. He rips my pants with his fingers, spits in his palm, rubs the saliva on his now semi-hard prick – which must have been at least thirteen inches long now, thirteen inches at least – pushes all the way inside me, and says, "Do you like it, daughter? You do, don't you? Has anyone fucked you like I fuck you? Has anyone been as deep inside you as me? Oh, I'm going to cum. Will you ever again forget to put tzatziki in my souvlaki, you little whore?" With each thrust, his satsumas bang against the table's edge. This always turns him on. He likes a bit of pain, but won't admit it. I say, "Yeah, yeah, father. No-one has fucked me as hard and deep as you. Oh, you are the best. Oh, forgive me about the tzatziki," you know, this sort of stuff, just to keep him going. So my father fucks me and I'm ready to have an orgasm, when I remember something. Can you guess what the thing that I remember is?'

They couldn't.

'I remember that I had forgotten my map at Café Papaya. This puts me off completely. That's it. I know I can't have an orgasm.'

'What map?'

'The map I was drawing at the café at the end of my shift.'

'I'm sure you'll find it on your next shift. So, tell us, what happened next?'

'So my father is raping me and he still goes on about the bloody mousaka for God's sake! Then I hear glass jars rattling in the kitchen. Soon I smell oregano. I know my mother is finishing her stew, because she always adds the oregano at the very end. She says that we must always add the oregano at the very end, otherwise the oregano turns bitter. My father begins mumbling that he's going to cum all over me, that he'll cover my face with his tzatziki, when my mother screams from the kitchen: "Wait! Wait for me! Don't cum yet! I'll bring the trident!"'

'I cry, "No, mummy! Please, not the trident!"'

Here, the Voice with the long hair coughed, excused itself, and said: 'I don't understand. What do you mean by the trident?'

'Oh, sorry. It's a strap-on with three dildos attached,' Angie explained. 'You probably don't have such things in Egypt. Muslim countries are a bit behind in all that.'

'Have you ever been in a Muslim country?'

'I've only been to Sweden.'

'Then stop judging us, it hurts.'

'I'm sorry.'

'Never mind. Please continue.'

'So I beg my mother not to use her trident, but my mother laughs hysterically and jumps out of the kitchen dressed up as Poseidon, at the sight of which I faint.'

Here, Angie took another good drag. She let the smoke rise slowly out of her mouth in curls. She remained silent and looked at the night sky.

'And then? What happened then?'

'Then I woke up in my bed and I was wet and I went for a swim to cool down. I didn't try to kill myself. I never knew that the Squeezed-Out Sea was the most dangerous of all dangerous Seas. I was so lucky Missing Arm was around and saved me from those bad calamaries. Missing Arm is my saviour, my Prince Charming...'

'Yes, yes, he is,' said the Voice with the long hair. 'But this raping business must have been a horrible experience for you.'

'It's all right, I enjoyed it. And it wasn't real anyway.'

'Then make sure next time you don't even put tomato on your father's souvlaki. That will make him really mad.'

'That's a good idea,' Angie said, and opened her legs. 'I'm so *horny*. And, you know, guys, I have a confession to make. I loved being watched...'

'We can only hear, I'm afraid. Would you like Missing Arm to finger-rape you?'

'Oh, no, no. I like the fantasy of being raped, but I'm a romantic really.' She turned and looked at the deserted beach, at the sea and the sky with the stars. 'We are on this mysterious, deserted island. It's so romantic here.'

Missing Arm pointed at the sky.

'Oh, yes, Missing Arm,' Angie said. 'Bright stars. It's such a beautiful night, my Prince Charming, my hero. I love nights like this one.'

'He's not pointing at the stars. He's pointing at the moon.'

'There's no moon. What is he on about?'

'He's pointing at the missing moon.'

'How come you understand each other without talking?'

'That's what friends do.'

With that, Missing Arm clenched himself into a Superman-like fist.

'Watch him,' the Voice with the long hair instructed Angie.

Missing Arm rocketed off. He flew, bleeding his way flying to another world, and returned with the missing moon in his grip. He dunked the moon in the Squeezed-Out Sea, brought it up and wrung it out. He returned to the beach and began washing Angie's body with it. It felt cool and soft and fluffy, not rocky as they say. She opened her legs and Missing Arm washed Angie's vagina with the missing moon, something that gave her numerous romantic orgasms.

Missing Arm chucked the moon back up into the sky and Angie closed her eyes. And her legs. She felt tired.

The Voice with the long hair, who had remained silent for some time, now spoke: 'I will lullaby you with stories in my own language and you'll have the sweetest sleep.'

'That's so romantic... What stories?' Angie mumbled, turning onto her side.

'The Arabian Nights. Original version.'

With whatever credit was left on his mobile, the Voice with the long hair began: *Alf Layla Wa Layla...*

Missing Arm caressed Angie's hair, waved goodbye to his friend, and crawled back into the water, where he belonged. He swam bleeding towards the heart of the most dangerous of all dangerous Seas, the Squeezed-Out Sea, searching to save girls lost in bad dreams, swimming towards the end of this long long story.

In her sleep, Angie mumbled: 'I'll miss you, Missing Arm.'

It was dawn when the night-shift waiter of Café Papaya found a strange map behind the bar of Café Papaya. He had a look at it, and chucked it into the bin.



Out of the Mouths of
Babes By J. Andrew World



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so that's where babies come from
J. Andrew World

catch me

Richard Horton

I

It'll do ya!

How much is it?

Thirty.

For fixing a car? That's good!

Yeah. Say...

Let me get my purse.

Uh-huh! So...you say you're a nun?

Yes. I'm a Sister of Mercy.

A little mercy is always good. Are all Catholic nuns as nice looking as you?

What! You think I'm attractive?

I'd say so.

I don't know what to say to that!

I notice you don't have your nun suit on. Does that mean you're off duty?

Hmmm!

I mean...do nuns ever go out and have fun when they get off work? Have a beer or something?

Fun?

Yeah. Like...you know...what if some guy told you, Hey, gorgeous! I know a beer joint down the road! And suppose that beer joint happened to have a row of motel rooms in back of it?

I'd tell him he'd have to pay me five hundred dollars!

Whoo! Hold on a sec.

What are you doing?

There you go. Cash or charge?

What's this? Oh! Just the bill. Of course! Could I owe you? I'm expecting a check next week from the social agency I work for.

I gotta do bills in less time than that!

What if I pay you just as soon as the check arrives and I cash it at the bank? Pretty please?

Well...

I know what! You could put on the form here that I already paid! Put today's date! Then I'll bring the thirty dollars on Monday and date the check with today's date. I'm a nun. Don't you trust me? Really, we don't cheat people too often in the Roman Catholic Church!

I'm not liking this. OK then. Damn, lady!

2

And that's how I got your car fixed for nothing, Trudy! I'll never forget the look on that grease monkey's face when I told him I wouldn't go on a date with him unless he gave me five hundred dollars! You should have seen him turn green!

Sister Doris, are you OK? You were laughing so hard I thought you were going to pee yourself!

66

Oh, Trudy! Bring me some water!

OK. Just don't have a heart attack.

Nobody better try to put one over on Sister Doris!

But Sister! What if he had given you the five hundred dollars? What would you have done then?

(Crash!)

Sister! Sister! You almost hit me when you threw that glass! That was a good glass! I bought it for fifty cents! It had a picture of Peter Pan on it!

3

So Trudy, what order does she belong to?

Uhh...is an order something they have to be in if they're Catholic nuns, Steve?

Yes, like the Salesians, the Dominicans, or the Trappists.

I think she's a Sister of Mercy!

My ass!

Y'all think she really isn't a nun! But she looks after those old people a lot better than I do!

Bumfoozles 'em, I expect.

Now me, I was just heating Mrs. Galloway's supper last Thursday and didn't watch her close enough. She carried out her garbage can and put it on the front curb, but then when she turned around to go back in, she didn't recognize the house she was standing there looking at. She wandered off, thinking she must live in some other house. Later I heard a knock on the door and it was one of the neighbors bringing her back. She was so mad her mind had slipped like that, she didn't speak to me till I put her supper plate down in front of her. Then she said, 'Some people like to hold other people prisoners!' Now that wasn't fair! After I cooked her favorite TV dinner, too! I wonder what Sister Doris would have done! Well, I got back to my apartment that night and turned on the TV and suddenly Sister Doris came stomping out of her room mad as a bear! She said I was making so much noise I'd knocked her conversation with God clear into outer space, and that she was going to kill me if I didn't turn the TV off! I thought

she would, too, the way her eyes bugged, so I jumped up and turned it off. She stomped back into her room and slammed the door. Then I tiptoed over and turned it on real low. I watched it as I got into my gown and sat down with some ice tea. A bald man without a shirt kept shooting people. Jeeps with men in them blew up. Buildings exploded.. I watched till I I.

4

69

You know, Ned, Trudy doesn't always take her crazy pills! Whenever she's not on duty, those pills of hers sit on the bathroom shelf and gather dust. Then I walk in and she's murmuring and whispering harsh scary things, and doesn't realize she's turned the TV knob till it won't turn any more and I have to gently pry her fingers loose and turn it down so the pounding on the wall from next door will stop! I'm trying to look after her the best I can! You know that, don't you, Ned?

Don't you?

Uh...sure, Sister Doris! Why, of course!

That's why I was thinking...you never know what someone like that, looney, you know...what they'll end up doing when the moon's full! I already removed the butcher knives from the kitchen drawer. She had a regular armory in there! I guess you could call it a museum of terror! Who knows? Maybe she doctored her records, too, before she came to you begging for the apartment...took out the violent behavior reports and burned them in that little metal trash can in the bathroom that I found ashes in the other day. If I were you, I would hang around her and watch her closely. Maybe you could step out of your office sometimes and climb the stairs, listening for anything odd, any little...well...screams?

Sure! I'll...oops! There went my coffee!

You fat fucking...No, don't get up, I'll get it, Ned darling. I'll get it! Stay right there.

Did you say something?

I said you were a sweetie.

5

I'm just saying, Trudy, you need to watch out for him. I caught him trying to look up my skirt. A nun! Now, that's sick! Maybe he's got his sights on you too. Maybe he has a special thing for crazy girls that have to take pills.

Mr. Beasley a letcher? Sister, you're funny!

Is that what I am?

Sister, what's wrong? Sister...Don't get mad! I'll do what you said! I'll watch him real good!

Hm!

I will!

Well, OK then. Go into your bedroom, dear, and see what I bought you!

Sister Doris! I didn't need a...oh, uh...Where did you get this nice coat, Sister Doris?

Thrift Town. That's why it's old fashioned. They don't make em like this anymore. Put it on!

But I'm not cold!

Do you think it has germs? Do you think it hasn't had the germs of the last hospital bird that wore it washed off with lye and DDT? Do you hate it because I'm giving it to you? What's wrong with me?

6

It's like her jowls were shaking, Sally!

Well, thanks, Trudy! I can wear it to work. How does it look, Steve?

Check it for germs!

What the...Excuse me...could I help you?

No, I'm OK. Just gotta change these altar cloths. Continue with the benches if you wouldn't mind!

You know, you're really going to have to put those cloths back! I'm sorry, but I don't know who you are!

That so?

I mean you say you're a nun called Sister Doris. But nobody's heard of anyone like that.

Do tell.

Oh, for crying out loud!

(singing)

Shouldn't you remove the old cloths before putting on new ones?

Are you telling me how to do my job, you fucking WITCH!

Have you ever thought of seeking mental help?

I...am a friend...of FATHER MALCOLM!!!!

Well, Mama, I was sitting there in the car outside the church with the window partway rolled down and she came out with the priest and she was walking funny. I pushed the window button and it came down and I yelled out the window, What's wrong, Sister Doris? She whipped around like she was going to throw her purse at me, but then she calmed down and said, Trudy why don't you run on home, I'll get a ride with Father Malcolm. Just like that! And she waved her fingers, like she'd just done her nails and was drying 'em. But later she told me what had happened with that lady in the church. That lady there...you see...hadn't been told about Father Malcolm's express orders to let Sister Doris tend to the altar. Still, she said she wasn't going to return to that church till she had to step over the woman's dead maggot-riddled carcass as she walked in the door. I don't know how that's going to be arranged.

Well...maybe she can go help out at some other church.

Mrs Galloway is outside right now. I'm keeping an eye on her. She told me I could use her phone. I told her we're not really supposed to do that, but she said she wanted me to and she wouldn't tell. She's out watering the flowers now and having a pretty good day.

That's nice.

Sister Doris bought me a scarf and a clock radio yesterday!

Maybe she's not such a bad person after all!

Maybe not. She said Miss Stout gave her a bonus because the old ladies she works for say such nice things about her! She said I didn't get the bonus and never will, because everyone thinks I'm stupid cause I talk so slow. Now how can I be stupid when I made all B's in school? Did I get stupid after I left school? Don't I drive a car, and tie my shoes? Don't I bring home a paycheck?

Yes.

So where do they get off calling me stupid?

You were always smart, I thought!

I did too. But maybe she's right. Maybe I am. But why? How?

9

Hush!

72 Sister Doris! Why are you looking at me like that? You're scooching down in your chair like an atom bomb went off.

Now look what you did! That man and his family over there are scared. Sir, don't worry! She gets this way, but I'll protect you!

What kind of stunt are you pulling? Now you're ducking again.

Trudy! Am I going to have to get on my phone and get help?

I wish somebody'd hurry up and wait on us!

Trudy! Shhhhh! Now don't go having one of your fits!

What fits? Sister, what is your problem? You're just trying to get me mad, I think!

She's schizophrenic, sir! I guess she had to pick our lunch break to have a seizure!

A seizure! I guess that shows how much you know about schizophrenia! We don't have seizures! Oh...you! I know what you're doing! You're trying to get me mad and make it look like I'm crazy!

How may I help you ladies? Are you having a good dining experience?

I'm so sorry, sir! I shouldn't have brought her here. She was just released from the insane asylum.

What! That was two years ago! And I always take my pills! She's trying to make it look like I'm crazy!

OK, so everything's fine! Enjoy your lunch!

No, it's not fine! I feel it's only fair that we make some kind of restitution for all the customers you lost just now! What you should do is count all the plates in the area without people sitting at them and send me an estimate of how much you lost. I'll make sure Trudy pays.

Well...OK, I guess! Yeah, you're right, there was some damage here today, come to think of it!

10

And now I have to pay for the lost business, and the manager says he had to tighten a screw on the table after I banged on it. It was wobbly before! I remember my water slopped out when I leaned my elbow on the table waiting for someone to come take our orders, which they never did! That evening I let Mrs. Galloway talk me into having a can of tomato soup, and, sure enough, later on she discovered it was missing, and couldn't imagine where on earth it had gone!"

Hey, ho, whoa now! You're not going to pay that cafe after they didn't serve you, are you?

Well, Sister Doris says they might get nasty and tell me not to ever come back,

They'd be doing you a favor!

Oh, well, Steve, I guess I better pay 'em!

Pay Santa Clause and the Easter Bunny too! Santa got chimney burn going down that chimney, and the Easter Bunny got a hernia from laying all those eggs in the yard!

Aw, you just don't believe in Jesus or Christmas or anything!

11

Sister Doris? You know where Doris is? We've been trying to find her for ages! She has a lot to answer for! I see you call her 'sister' too! Like we did! Funny that she could even fool real nuns! Do you have her address? I want to talk to her very badly! What she did has destroyed the credibility of our Care For The Elderly program!

What did she do?

Stole and conned. The lonely, suggestible old people, seeing themselves at the end of their earthly life, wanting to be of use to someone, to be generous, to let go of something for a good cause, would fall for her hard luck stories and charming personality. She got money, food, even jewelry and furniture. If the client was bedridden, gravely ill, she simply stole. And she wouldn't steal just anything, either. She was a connoisseur!

Is she dangerous?

To herself, certainly! She'll take your pocketbook, and drive you nuts while she's at it. But will she kill? Who knows? When she came to us, I'm convinced she started out being a hard-as-nails con artist. But to some extent she must have been seduced by the role she was playing. Without for a moment giving up her lucrative con, she became compulsively religious, active in charities, always first in line for communion. She prayed out loud, and tried to get us to pray with her. That sort of desperate acting-out made us start wondering about her.

Ah! Finally! Here it is under a foot of phone table junk. Trudy's number. Sister Doris lives with her!

OK, give it to me.

12

Well, Steve, it sounds to me like Doris or whatever her real name is, is trying to get to Trudy's bank account, by getting her declared mentally incompetent!

Maybe the bitch needs a message!

What do you mean? Tell her we know? But then she runs, and the real nuns take the rap!

74

Something mean, then. Mean and unjust.

That's too confusing to even think about!

13

Oh, isn't it fun to be a nun! Home again, home again, jiggedy-jig! Let's find us some lingerie, shall we? Then a nice bath. Why, Father Malcolm! Oh, no you don't, you merry priest! Looking up a girl's skirt! Stop that, do you hear? I would say that if he was here. Those man eyes, going places they shouldn't. At least I thought this was my lingerie drawer. Now it's full of sweaters. Let's go to my sweater drawer. And the mystery deepens! My swag of jewelry! OK, we'll try the jewelry drawer! Nun suits! Games are afoot, it seems. The displacement game. I've played that one myself. OK, over here we have my books, Honey Bunch In The Country, and here's Fulton Sheen's Life is Worth Living. Is it, you filthy old fag? Now what's this? Dead Porn Studs of the 70s. Ha, ha, as in funny! Let's just peek inside. Oh, it's the dead ones, all right. And I can clearly see how they got that way! Let's go read this treasure in bed. Whoof! Off with the shoes. What's this bump under the covers? You freakin'... You dumped a pot of spaghetti in my bed! Help! Beasley! Get your butt in here! Help! Help!

Doris! You in trouble in there?

14

God, Mama, when are you going to get rid of that old army blanket?

It's still nice and warm. Don't worry, I'm going to wash it soon.

So Trudy, you can sleep on the little bed by the sewing machine. I'll clear the junk off it.

Sally, I don't know why you think Sister Doris is a bad person and wants to hurt me. Let me go on home.

No, no, stay right here. Designing Women is coming on TV. Mama will watch it with you.

I've forgiven Sister Doris in my heart like Jesus said to do, and you and Steve should stop thinking bad things about her.

I got it cleaned off now. You can turn in whenever you want.

15

I still think I could turn Father Malcolm into a grunting pig. Beasley is one already, but he's a pathetic baby, and by the way, thanks for the gun, Neddie! I found it in your pantry behind the roach infested Ritz crackers. You thought you were going to surprise a home invader while getting a snack! Wonder where Trudy is tonight? I dressed up special in my nun suit. A nun with a gun. Pow! It's ten o'clock. Do you know where your hospital bird is?

75

16

So Manton! The flying nun has flown the coop again!

Looks like it. Now, uh...Mr. Beasley, what is Miss Lowery's full name? If you don't mind my asking.

Doris Lowery.

Is that so?

I don't know.

You don't know her name? But I thought you just told me what her name was!

I did.

Was it a false name you told me just now?

I don't know. I just know that to me she was always Sister Doris.

Not Sister Doris Lowery?

Sometimes Sister Lowery, but that sounds too formal.

That's three different names you've given me so far. Which one was her real name?

I don't know.

Does that mean you suspected that she might have been using a fraudulent name? Sir, did you ever stop to consider that some users of fraudulent names are engaged in illegal activities, or are fugitives from the law?

No.

No, huh? Oh, you're good!

I know she was nice to me, and I'm sorry she's gone! Everyone's a thief. Maybe she stole more than some of the others, but the others didn't smile at me and treat me like I was a man!

Shit, Gonzalez, this isn't helping.

I knew that, man! She's flown! I said it already and you didn't listen!

Mr. Beasley, did you suspect that there might be stolen goods on your property?

No.

There you go again! No! I don't know! Beats the dog shit outa me!

Well, it's true!

Let's get outa here, Gonzalez! We're back with the nuns across town. I bet they know more than they're telling!

You're not going to go through the other questions with him again? Try to trip him up?

No, it's thirteen minutes past when we shoulda been sitting down for a cup of coffee.

You got a point there, partner!

Thank you for your help, Mr. Beasley. If we think of anything more to ask, we'll call you!

Any time, fellows!

17

He knows.

Want to go back?

What's the matter with you? You don't like coffee, or what?

All I'm saying is if you want to do something, do it! That's my philosophy!

18

I still don't like the coffee here even with all the seasoning crap they put in it. Whoa, now, what we got over there?

Picking up something in your radar, Gonzalez?

Just checking out the action a little, here! Just checking things out!

Which one?

What do you want to know for? You can't see her anyway! You'd have to twist your neck around like the Exorcist. I wish you'd do that anyway! Save me havin' to do it!

Fuck you, man!

(turns head)

Damn, Gonzalez, you like 'em porky!

She aint fat! She's got style!

Like your old lady.

19

Oh, heavens!

What is it, Sister?

I believe I've left my pocketbook at the school! Can you imagine that?

Your credit's always good here, Sister! Want me to warm that coffee for you?

Bless your soul!

20

Yeah I see you over there, Goofy and Dopey.

21

Catch me!

*

78



demented ladies

Alicia Ferrara

the woburn odor

David Lawton

They called it the “Woburn odor”
If you were stuck in traffic on the east side of town,
It would get all up inside your nostrils
With a stink like rotten brontosaur eggs

It could have been from the General Foods plant
Where they rendered down whatever marrow and fascia
It takes to make your Jell-O wiggle
Or the cleaning solvents and heavy metals
The factories disposed into ponds and lagoons

But when a construction company broke ground
On the new Industrial Park, unearthing a mass grave
Of animal hides from old leather tanneries
The proud, rocky New England soil
Vomited up a corrosive neglectful stench
Which moved with the sluggish breeze
All through the oppressive summer months
Of ruined cookouts and Little League games
Until the state sealed the crypt with red clay
And looked the other way

Everybody hold your nose
Until it's over.



limbs on the evergreens

Frank Zahn

Limbs on the evergreens
outside my window
sweep downward
with weighty tendrils
and silently undulate
in gusts of wind
as nature's prelude
to a summer storm.
And when thunder
breaks the silence
and lightening flashes
in the darkening sky,
limbs on the evergreens
outside my window
wait impatiently
to bathe in rain
that will refresh them;
extend their reach;
and keep them strong,
limber, and ever green.



in the kitchen

Jan Maher

I.

Deep Sink

You can hide things in it
You almost don't know are there
When you sit across the room.
Just the tip of a pot handle
To remind you
There are deeper things to deal with.

II.

Miracle Cleaning Cloth

It polishes the stove without chemicals,
Wipes fingerprints from microwave and fridge,
Dries windows streak-free;
It sops, sequesters, keeps secret
Whatever grime and germ
Used to lurk on our surfaces.
It is made in China.

III.

Stock Pot

Bones in vinegar water
Erode to feed mine.
For two days, the house is permeated,
The odor announces to all
We are not vegetarian.
Every hour in the broth
Dissolves more cartilage, tendon, sinew;
Thickens my solution
With deliberate decay.



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the saddest polar bear lives in a mall in china

Jim Whitten

The saddest polar bear lives in a mall in China
Shakes his shaggy head under artificial lights
Paces past murals of icebergs in a glass enclosure
Crouches by an air vent to sniff the world outside
The bear, named Pizza, displays distress behaviors
Visitors at the Grandview Mall love to take photographs
Pizza, along with hundreds of animals, are popular with shoppers
All day long they take selfies and knock on the glass
It shows a complete lack of regard for their welfare
This disturbing new trend stocks malls with exotic animals,
Game arcades, supermarkets, 3-D movie theaters,
Coffee shops, clothing brands, domestic and international
Wild animals like polar bears require a large and natural habitat
Exhibiting wild animals keeps consumers from shopping on the Internet



82

Kevin Mulligan
Construction



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clouds like knives will never stay sharp

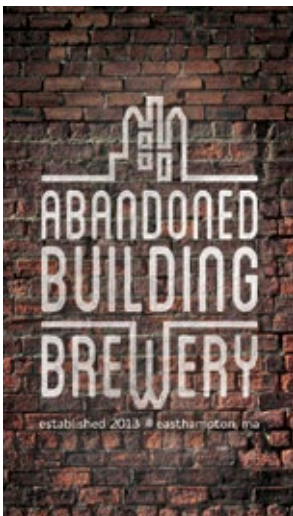
Thomas Lopes

on action
Action
Inaction
in action
Inaction
Inaction
Inaction
Inaction

Sitting
and Fading
while seeing
fleeting
letting all the //motion
Move
and Ocean Pour
floating seeds

elevation
Levitating
emptiness
in outer-space
w/gravity
pulling heavily
on openings
everything

lack of light
in the night
looks the same
as things
not reflecting
//
action
phantom





office love
Alexandria Heather

2008
AH

thimble & thread

Ian Prichard

When Tom Terrell was eleven, he found a thimble in the ground. His dad had him digging in the clay, introducing him to toil. Resting on his shovel in the wan spring sun, Tom admired the dome's irregular dimples, its funny half-squatting shape, its tarnished inscription: *Staben*, it read round the inside of the ring, 1734.

"If that trench ain't done by end of day," Tom Senior bellowed, "you'll never be no mason of mine."

And Tom was not. He did other things—bartending, gripping, manning various lifeguard stands—decently but without distinction. He was athletic and made friends easily. But the main thing going from that day in the clay on was always the thimble.

Staben, Tom found, was a Salzburg metallurgist, and 1734 the date of the thimble's fabrication. Its age and Tom's romanticism generated an aura of magic, richness, depth. He collected articles and images and artifacts that captured or represented or referenced Austria, to Germany or Switzerland or Prussia or the Ottoman Empire, to thimbles, to sewing, to domes and cones and geometry and codes and mysticism and metallurgical alchemy.

He found in it all a promise of an ethereal connection, the disparate threads of some ancient mystery that, if ever grasped and woven, could make him complete. The concept of wholeness presented itself for the first time in his life as a possibility, and that, however remote fulfillment remained, was for many years enough.

Then Tom found a wife. They had one child, then another, then twins. Tom discovered new Meanings of Life that had nothing to do with thimbles or history or magical threads, and one afternoon when he was holding the twins and dribbling a toddler down the hallway, he made a choice. Within a week he'd packed his *thimble-alia* into boxes—two dozen all told—and piled them in racks, shielded from the damp, in the basement and under the stairs.

A decade went by, and when Tom looked around he didn't see threads any more, he saw fabric. A tapestry. Then Tom's kids left the house, and he took up squash, surfing, yoga. He couldn't afford a fancy car and knew better than to start skydiving. He didn't *not* think about the thimble, but it reminded him of his dad, long dead now, and of the false idyll of his youth, and that maybe he had just been a lonely kid.

What stuck, finally, of all the new things Tom tried, was chess. He travelled to tournaments, first locally, then to D.C., then internationally.

He was in Salzburg one day, sitting at a bar after a heavy loss, unconscious that he was in the place of the thimble's origin, when a man plopped down beside him.

"Oof. Quite a day." There was a sparkle in the man's eye.

Tom didn't like talking to new people but thought maybe a little conversation would take his

mind off the tournament. “That so?” he said.

The man nodded, smiled. “I have looked for many years, since I am a boy, for—”

“What do you want?” The bartender had appeared.

“Cognac,” the man answered. “Just a thimble full.”

The room, the air, the astral plane—something—vibrated. Tom shivered. “What did you say?”

“What?”

“About the thimble.”

“It’s something one says, no?”

Tom could see the man was innocent. “Oh,” he said. “Sure.”

But the sparkle in the man’s eye—Tom thought he saw it twinkle. Or did it? *Nah*, Tom thought. But he couldn’t be sure.

When they parted, after several quarters of an hour, Tom said, “This may seem strange, but could I get your address? I feel we’ll meet again.”

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The man smiled, warmly, as if he’d been hoping for this exchange, and handed Tom a card—*Karl Staben, Purveyor of Ancient Mysteries*.

It took Tom a week to unpack his thimble-alia, another to sort it, and nine months to write a 756-page manuscript detailing the history of the thimble, the interrelatedness of all things, and the timeless thread of meaning that bound them all together. His thimble collection seemed to have grown in richness, in depth, and the magic to it to have developed and grown stronger with age. As he opened the boxes and breathed in their contents, Tom remembered what it was to thirst, and through those months of writing he came to know what it was to be sated. Those months of writing, of synthesis, of transmutation became that crystalline core at the center of the void for which he’d been searching, he realized now, his entire life.

When it was done he wrote to Karl—if he came to Salzburg, would Karl have time to talk?

“With pleasure!” Karl replied, and Tom caught a flight.

On the appointed day, Tom wrapped his manuscript in paper, tucked it under his arm, and set out on foot. He saw only a mother of four, an unhurried ambulance that splashed icy water onto his trousers, and a very old man parked on a bench.

There was a crowd in the foyer of Karl’s building. Tom wound through and told the receptionist Karl was expecting him.

“He, ehm . . . He has left! No—he went!” Tom pulled for the young man as he stumbled over his English. “He has gone, Herr Terrell. I am sorry.”

Tom smiled. If he’d been closer he would have clapped the receptionist on the back. “That’s fine,” he said, enunciating clearly. He put his book on the counter and went searching for a pen. “Fine. Do you know where he has gone?”

The receptionist crinkled his blond eyebrows. “He has gone to . . . the morgue!”

“Great!” Tom said. “But I think you mean the cemetery?” Tom could think of no better place to meet—turned earth, the past. “Could you point the way?”

“He will not be there for some days. The ambulance goes to the morgue. It is not possible to go there.”

Tom realized the crowd were reporters, friends, teary-eyed neighbors. A policeman cleared his throat.

“Your English is impeccable,” Tom said, and turned to go back—to his hotel, to home, to the tapestry of his family and the rest of his days. To wherever you snipped single threads, or tore them roughly from a hem.

By the time he’d packed his bags and was waiting for a car to the airport, Tom could no longer summon the mystical connection between thread and thimble, or recall just how, exactly, it had driven him halfway around the world. But it had certainly been nice while it lasted.

Absentminded at the end of his shift, the receptionist put Tom’s manuscript in the outbound mail. It sat for years in the Salzburg post office, propping up a corner of the dead-letter box. Perhaps it’s sitting there still.



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the year of infinte deer

Joseph Boisverre

The car speeds silently and carefully inches above the street and out of the dark: first eyes, ears, a flash of the tail, then a bump, a stop, and elbows first I fall through the cobweb of the windshield and grab for the flailing fawn, holding its tiny, silent mouth and quivering snout to my cheek. We land on the glass-covered ground at dawn.

I'm pulled back up with my fawn through the breach in the windshield. My fawn sits next to me and we drive away from the dawn. Insects smash against our exposed cheeks and necks. A doe stumbles from the inky shoulder and again we stop suddenly, exit quickly over the car's hood, and rendezvous on the blacktop, legs bending or snapping, hooves clacking on hooves.

From the back seat I clutch my fawn. I look through the hole in the windshield at the reflective yellow dashes blurring, now a yellow line between two tawny shoulders. Bloodthirsty buck eyes on all sides flicker like fire and radiate red in the dusk. They vault for the car's flanks. The passengers within tremble and the woods rumble on either side as they assemble deer after desperate deer.



the year of charlotte

Joseph Boisverre

We met at a tire fire, in a tire fire,
part of the acrid smoke.
The malignant heat thrown off from the
nebula of steel-belted vulcanized all-season
radials was our pulse. The toxic pock-marked rocks
underneath pressed our breaths past our lips.

Now when you sleep I also sleep. When you are awake
I am the hoarse ringing of an electric bell. When you are
a burning bridge I am a rubber-roasted nut.

A wire resonates between us.
That is called music
that is called a voice
that is called a violent
trash-born ember.



the year of the man-child

Joseph Boisvere

It was the year we summered at the bottom of a well
in town, under a heavy iron grate. Digital vermin
left their trails of blue “I’s” wrapped around our breakfasts.
We heard fragments of what was probably news from a
chorus of hoarse bells.

I knew it was the end. Who knows of what?
We should live in the cold shade it cast.
You planned to steal a gun and run,
making like a lean spider in the rude light.

That autumn, rescue workers freed us from that
narrow iron pipe, lifting us like infants. They gave our thin bodies
chocolate and steaming water from foam cups. You got
smaller, yellower, your limbs became brief as hiccups,
sounds through a baby monitor.



the year of the crow

Joseph Boisvere

Frayed wingtips crackle. A
finger is filming bowing boughs
heavy with bird bleating.
Birds reeling and angling awkwardly,
back and forth atop black fibers, black wires.

When today began these were bad omens.
Under the weight of repetition
and after frequent careful dustbaths
they became pure and many. Fences filled,
felled from black feathers.

We left home before noon crossed our street.
A curse was lifted and hurled
between the indifferent houses.
I am certain that we will survive.



waterlost

George Lenker

for Jenna Ziemba

These are hollow iron hours
Since you swam away
Leaving this chilled village
Just a little colder.

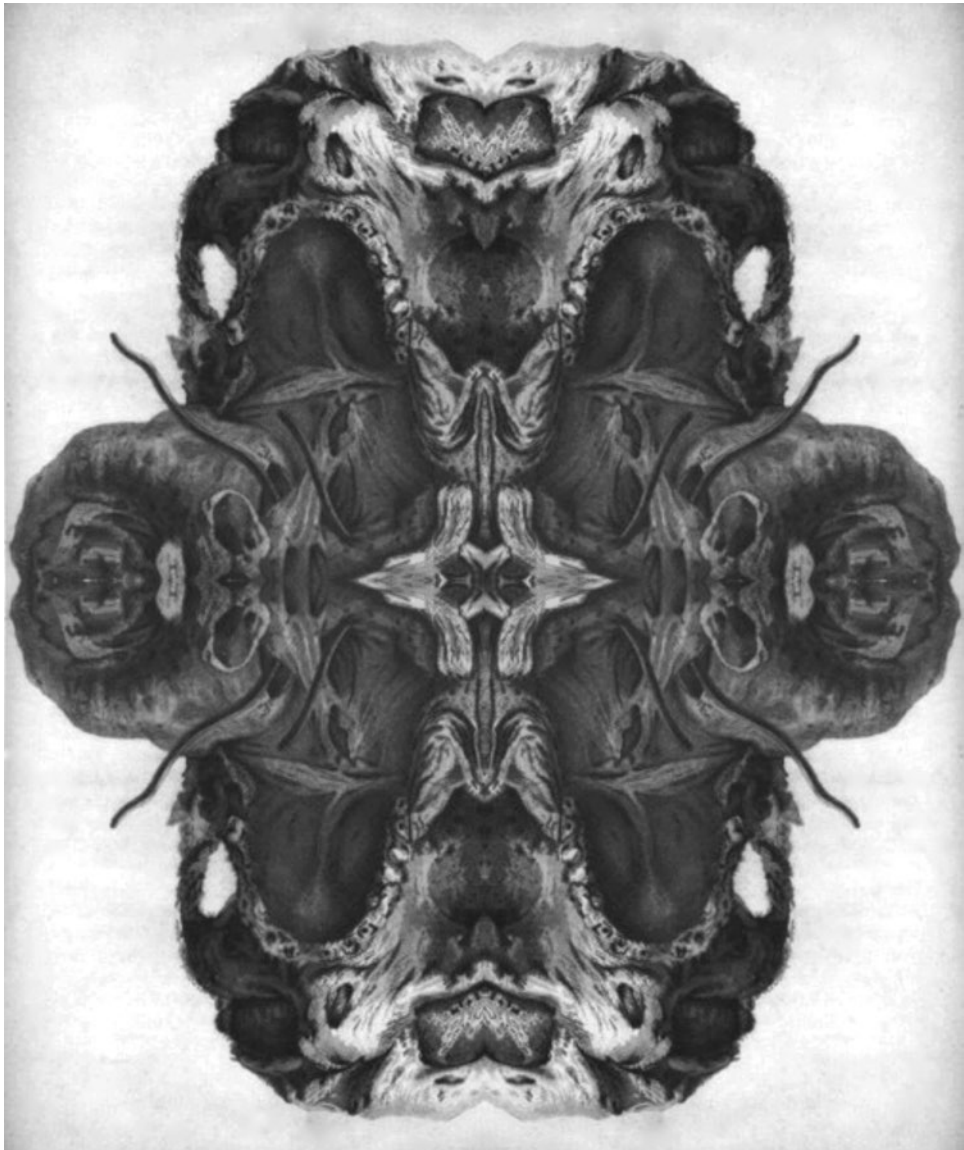
No one felt things more than you
Racing like crazed nighttime trains.
Now those cars are merely specks
On the far horizon:

While we sit on this shaky dock
Steep our feet in pools of grief
Remembering your eye-bright smile
And hoping you can hear:

What we hope you knew before
What we didn't say enough
What's now whispered by the owls:
How much you were loved.



dan, lynn, jenna, jeff, jack and james
photo by James Broadhurst



look deeper into this mirror
Bill Wolak

where the boy belongs

Z.G.Watkins

Joost is exhausted. He has spent the better part of eight months entangled with *The Changelings*. Thirty-five souls trapped in a holy experiment— a kind of psychological beaker out here on the bleak Arctic tundra. Long hours of confusion punctuated by frequent prayer and bible study. On occasion, he could be found sifting quartz from the shale of a Norwegian shore. Fashioning tree bark into mittens and undergarments. Learning to live without access to a smartphone.

Deprivation as a path to enlightenment.

And it's true, he did receive a host of Messianic visions— bald eagles, in their thousands, feasting on the carrion of young brightly adorned Berliners... golden robots marching under a sky belching Frankincense and Myrrh... a crystal palace rising up out of the desert, its interior snugly packed with millions of baked potatoes... a jackal eagerly devouring itself to the frenetic tempo of Dubstep. Yes, God spoke to Joost in a panicky falsetto on several occasions. But at what cost?

Franz and Pepper are gone.

When the twins failed to return to camp, the mood sunk further. The boy and girl's demise was a shock to the strange rhythm of the youths' collective endeavor. Several of *The Changelings* wept. A shrewish young woman named Marion clawed at her shorn scalp. Joost sat by the campfire, running numb fingers over the crusty name on his frock. *That could have been me*, he thought. *Except I did not have the courage to continue on with them. Such is the luck of a coward.*

Shortly thereafter, their group leader, Jerry, gathered them all together and said a few words regarding the pair's disappearance. It should be noted that the man was ecstatic.

"They have been washed clean in milk and honey!" Jerry screamed. His mild American accent frayed at the edges. Spittle rained from a lurid grin. His large pink head quivered in the frost and the fog. "Never again will the beast tempt them! Never again the forked tongue of the serpent lashing at HIS temple! They are capsules now, swallowed whole by the Lord and safe in his bosom!"

As for Joost, he has his doubts. Weren't Franz and Pepper actually wandering the white wasteland? Wasn't that closer to the truth? Not for the first time, Joost questions the American's sanity. Jerry was a man of many words, few of them coherent. He was fond of speaking in riddles— phrases and questions that were wildly open to interpretation. At all hours of the day and night. And for any occasion. Upon rising. Over a mouthful of brittle freezing tuna. While squatting over a hastily dug trench and defecating.

"Why did The Father hang the sun in the sky? If not to shine a light upon our sins and shortcomings, then why? What other sense can we make of that celestial glow? Are you not all ashamed? Is your shadow not proof of your guilt? Are you worthy to burn and blister under His all-seeing eye? Well, are you? Answer me!"

“We are all ingredients in a pie, children. That’s all we are. The Lord is the crust. You and I are the filling. And our faith— that’s the oven. Bake with me children! Rise up! Let us prepare for the feast. Let us be devoured by the Host of Hosts!”

“I am nothing but a piece of clay... no, wait! I am less than clay, I am dung! Stinking and hot and shat from the womb of a whore and stepped on and dragged through the filth and the mud. Make something of me, Lord! Make something beautiful!”

Jerry said all this and more, forever composing a deranged soundtrack to play against the backdrop of their suffering. He whispered among them when they huddled for warmth, crawling among bodies to make sure hands were kept to themselves. He stood sentry while they attempted to bathe in the frigid North Atlantic, loudly encouraging all not to masturbate. He spoke in tongues while passing around the knife, showing the teens where to cut on their arms and how deep.

It was a trial by ice and steel and nonsense. But all that seems like a fever dream now. Joost is far beyond the camp, lost in a vacant landscape. He has time and quiet to think. He ponders the strange American as he shuffles over white permafrost towards a blank horizon. *Why did I never murder the man?* He wonders. Or perhaps more importantly, why not his own parents? After all, they were the ones who delivered him to this misery.

“It’s vulgar, the things you do. And very unnatural.” His mother’s precise words less than a year ago, on a wet Christmas morning back in Gronigen. Joost was sixteen then, and huddled over a pile of neatly folded wrapping paper and opened boxes. His smile faltered. His holiday spirit waned.

“What do you mean, mother?” Joost asked the question with all sincerity. He was genuinely caught off guard.

“I won’t even speak of it. You know what you are.” She said this and then bit down on an apple tart, looking away. Chewing silently. Sourly. As if she was about to bring the pastry back up and vomit on the carpet, the presents, the tree.

When father entered the living room some moments later, Joost looked to the man for support. But he was his usual absentee self. Thumbing anxiously on his Blackberry and muttering under his breath.

“Ho-ho-ho...” His father breathed. Then he disappeared to parts unknown. Maybe his office. More likely the garage. Father liked to pace and worry and sneak cigarettes in there.

For a moment, Joost thought about following the man, considered physically dragging him back into the living room. Something was clearly wrong with mother. She was an unblinking bundle of nerves. Her eyeballs seemed to be shivering inside her sockets. Perhaps she had taken too much of her medication. Or too little. Regardless, Joost felt there might be more safety in numbers. He did not want to be marooned with the woman. He was just pushing himself off the carpet, when she clapped her hands and drew the boy’s attention back to her.

“Open that one, Joost,” his mother barked. She extended a long shaky finger and pointed under the tree. “No, not the green one, that’s mine! The small golden one. Open that. It’s the only one that matters. The only one you get to keep.”

Joost did as he was told. He grasped the thin garish package and slowly pulled at the tape sealing the gift, conscious to not rip the paper. Mother liked saving her wrapping paper, liked recycling every square inch for birthdays and other such festive events. Inside, he found a large rectangle of card stock. Words were printed in a thick black serif font. They might as well have been Mayan pictograms. None of the text registered. It was as if Joost had suddenly become dyslexic or illiterate. The symbols wavered in his hands.

Welcome to The Changelings
A recovery program based on faith and scripture.
With an open heart and fierce conviction and the light of the Lord as our
beacon, I look forward to your imminent conversion! Soon, you will become
blessed among men and return to the flock.
–Jerry Moss, program director

“I don’t understand,” Joost finally said.

“You will,” his mother replied, while getting up to check the pot roast. “And very soon.”

For the next several days, Joost read and reread the words on the card, struggling to make sense of the message. Apparently, his parents had become convinced that Joost was a drug addict. *But why? He asked himself. What have I done that would make them draw such a conclusion?*

It’s true that Joost was cut from a different cloth than his classmates. For the most part, he kept to himself. He enjoyed his studies. He frequented a squash court many days after school, ignoring opponents, as he found it more challenging to chase the limp ball from one end of the glass cube to the other. He also spent long hours on his mother’s phone and computer, frequently checking up on the progress of the Mars One project. He hoped to apply for the program one day, board a ship and take a one-way ticket to the red planet. *To be among the first on an alien world, now that would be something!* One could accuse Joost of being somewhat removed from the human race, a hermit of sorts.

But a junkie? No, he did not recognize any such evidence in his behavior. Yes, he had a compulsion for chewing gum, to the point where his jaw would lock up and he would find it difficult to eat or drink or even speak. But he had never smoked marijuana. And while he had heard of cocaine, he couldn’t be entirely sure what the stimulant even looked like.

Of course, Joost tried to discuss the matter with his mother, to convince her that she was confused and that a rehab program would be money ill spent. But she would not engage the boy in any discussion on the subject, choosing instead to visibly balk at his presence and withdraw to some distant corner of the house.

Joost saw his only chance of laying the misunderstanding to rest on New Year’s Eve, when his father was quite drunk. Based on a handful of mostly pleasant memories, Joost knew that booze

made his father talkative, triggered something in his brain— on these rare occasions, thoughts and ideas traveled between the son and his father. Laughter was occasionally shared. And so after mother had retired to bed, Joost grabbed a bottle from the liquor cabinet and joined his father in the driveway.

The man was stumbling in a cloud of blue smoke, flicking his lighter, sending rockets high into the air above the cul-de-sac. The sky erupted with loud booms. Red and blue filaments dripped from the sky.

Joost hollered to be heard, “Happy New Year, father!”

The father jerked at the sound of Joost’s voice and tripped over himself, spilling to the pavement. When he looked up, the man’s voice was shaking. “Joost, boy. Please, don’t come up on me like that. My heart, you know, it’s... please don’t do that.”

The man slowly rose to his feet and stood staring at his son. His face was a complicated knot and Joost could not read it.

“I’m sorry, father. I was just hoping we could talk. This business with The Changelings... I really don’t understand. You know I’m no drug addict.”

“I’m not really sure what you are, Joost. Not really sure of anything anymore.” His father lit another rocket. It leapt into the sky and soon fractured in a sizzle of bright colors.

“And the spiritual component,” Joost continued. “That also makes no sense. We’re not religious. We don’t believe in God.”

“Maybe we should,” the father returned. “There are things we... or at least I... do not understand. Besides, I don’t see what harm can come of it.”

“Well, I do. I belong here with you and mother.” The words escaped Joost in a kind of moan. He moved to his father and offered him the bottle.

His father reached out and poked the glass cylinder, several times, before wrapping it up in his large hand. And then he began to shiver. Then he began to cry. “I do love you, Joost,” he finally said. “Ever since the day you were born, and after... maybe even more then. Maybe to a fault.” He drew in a shaky breath and then slung back the bottle, sucked at its contents. When he spoke again, his voice was raw, as if the alcohol had stripped a layer from the man. “Please go rest now. Tomorrow is a big day for everyone.”

The next morning, Joost followed his parents to the car, peering up at the baby pictures of himself hung up and down the hallway. For the the first time, maybe ever, it occurred to him— *Why have they not hung a more recent photograph? And why are there none in mother’s phone? Or father’s office?* Thoughts such as these always kindled an anxious hitch in his belly. And so, as he had done so many times in the past, Joost pushed them from his mind, choosing instead to focus on the here and now. Choosing to believe that, despite his parents’ odd behavior, they loved him dearly.

In silence, they drove. Out of the manicured sameness of the little subdivision. Past barren fields wreathed in mist. They approached the ancient city, with its leaning houses and boat-riddled canals. Joost had never been here, but he knew from his textbooks that this was Amsterdam. His eyes glazed over and he devoured each sight. The brash laughter of tourists, many stumbling in a fog of hemp and booze. The fish monger swinging his cleaver, absently turning death into dinner. He saw an old man toss a sack of rubbish into a canal, and wondered at the secrets buried inside the black plastic. He watched a loon and pigeon squabble over a crust of bread, both oblivious to the tram bearing down on them. And everywhere, he witnessed the bicycles. Herds of them, all rolling into and through one another— somehow, the collision Joost expected never materialized, and he was struck by the unseen order in all that chaos.

“Joost, are you with us?”

Mother’s question, or maybe the sharp tone of her voice— it snapped him back into the confined space of the vehicle. He shook his head to clear the glut of recent images.

“Yes, of course,” Joost answered. “It’s so lively here, so—”

“We’re at the station,” Mother announced, before turning on Joost. Her face was flush, her eyes raw and red. “Come on out. And take our hands. Stay with us. Don’t get lost.”

Once the car was locked, Joost was escorted into Central Station. Father to the left of him. Mother to the right. Their hands gripped his tightly, pulling him into the guts of the building. He heard a thousand conversations, all minced into a kind of sonic paste. He watched the elderly wobble, watched them wince when strange elbows and fingers drew near. He watched young boys and girls dart between the forest of legs, their mouths slick with chocolate and grease. He watched the pregnant women, unsteady and cautious, trying to bear the new weight of swelling life. He watched them all, the hundreds milling about the platform, watched their chests sink and expand, watched them suck at the oxygen and diesel fumes while steel wheels screamed and the whistles blew. He could imagine himself lost in that crowd, blending into its mass, becoming a small part of some greater animal. *Maybe this won’t be so bad*, he thought. *Trading the silence of home for the clamor of strange faces and odors and words.*

“Hello, Joost!” A man right in front of him spoke. His head was as smooth as a loaf of bread. The face was pink. The eyes green and big and laser focused. The voice foreign and mild, teetering on condescension. “I’m Jerry. And you and I have a long, long journey ahead of us. God’s greatest adventure. Would you take my hand?”

Joost felt mother release him. And soon after, father. Then mother’s bony hand on his shoulder, urging him forward.

“Go. On. Take the man’s hand,” Mother hissed.

As usual, Joost obeyed. And then turned to face his parents. His father took a deep breath and tried to smile. His mother had turned away. Her shoulders hitched, and sounds escaped her. Joost wondered if she were choking. Or was she coughing?

"We'll... uh," father began. "We'll be seeing you. We will." He pulled a tired hand down his face, and again tried to smile. But it was a failure. And the man's eyes began to leak. "Maybe soon."

And that was all. That was Joost's farewell speech. His father turned and allowed mother to drag him off into the crowd.

We'll be seeing you. Joost remembers those words. All too well. He hadn't doubted them then. But he does now. Further, he is not sure he wishes the words to be true. Hadn't father and mother forsaken Joost? And would he ever really want to see them again?

Joost looks down at his sneakers. Watches them kick at the grey slush. Night is approaching and there is only nowhere in every direction. There are no trees. No shrubs. Not so much as a stone or pebble breaching the crust of the earth. He should be cold now, shouldn't he? He should be in peril. A burlap frock and tennis shoes— these are his only defense against the subarctic wind. And yet, he feels perfectly fine. In body, if not in mind.

It's the memories which cause the problem. Joost is finding it difficult to dredge more memories to hide behind. All this reverie, this rehashing of family drama— it's all been a shield, a distraction from the real point. The truth Franz and Pepper had revealed to him. The words he did not want to believe.

Five nights ago he had followed the twins out of the camp. The three held hands and ran wildly to the north, where a ripple of low hills crowded the horizon. Joost remembers feeling giddy, as if it were a dream and the three were owls gliding across the nightscape. But he can't remember why they chose him, why they tussled him from a restless sleep and grabbed his hand and pulled him up and away.

Jerry never allowed them to speak. Not to one another. The Changelings were only permitted to talk to him. And so, for those many months, he shared little with Franz and Pepper. Only glances. A meeting of eyes each night at the campfire, Franz and Pepper finding Joost's gaze through the licking flames and holding it steady. Had they smiled at one another or made faces? Joost can't remember. He only knows that those brief silent meetings made him feel less insane and somewhat human.

After they had reached the hills, Franz and Pepper slowed and stopped. Franz patted the earth and offered Joost a seat between himself and Pepper. The boy, like his sister, wore a crown of bright platinum hair. His face was smooth and pale. A wide white grin split his face in two, and Joost heard the boy's voice for the very first time.

"Out of that frying pan and into a new one, eh Joost?"

"Well, I guess," Joost stumbled. "But... why?"

"That creep," Pepper announced. "Jerry. I'm for sure not spending the rest of *my* eternity with him. Can you imagine?"

“Uh... no. And so... you're saying... what?” Joost asked. He was smiling and wanted to laugh, wanted to join in the twins' apparent glee. But honestly, he had no idea what was really happening or why there were out here. Weren't they just skipping out for a bit? Wasn't this just a bit of late night fun? Joost tried again to understand. He asked them, “What should we do before we go back?”

“Back?” Pepper blurted.

“We're not going back,” Franz promised. One look in his eyes, and Joost knew the boy meant it.

“C'mon, don't tease,” Joost told him.

“We're not kidding, Joost. We're not going back there,” Pepper said. “Not ever.”

“What?” Joost's smile had given up the battle. His words tumbled anxiously from his mouth. “That's crazy. We'll die out here.”

Joost felt their eyes pin him to the earth, watched the smiles slide down their bright faces. Neither spoke for a long time and Joost felt uncomfortable, overly conscious of the twins' body heat, their rigid postures.

“You don't... you don't know, do you?” Pepper finally asked him.

“What are you talking about?” Joost rushed the question out. He was breathing hard. “What is there to know?”

“We're dead, Joost.” These words whispered by Franz. He laid a warm hand on Joost's shoulder. “We died a long time ago. So did you.”

Joost remembers laughing, a loud and crazy hoot that traveled far across empty snow. He remembers the twins beside him. They did not join in his laughter, and their faces remained as hard as stone. Joost remembers sprinting for the camp. For Jerry. For the life he thought he knew.

The life he thought he had. When it ended, or how— Joost does not know. Maybe he should ask father and mother. Maybe they can tell him.

Joost walks and scans the the darkness for something, anything, a direction to follow. For hours he shuffles, eyes bright and wide and searching. And just before dawn, he sees it. A glow on the horizon. The lights of Tromso, perhaps. There must be a train there. There must be a train headed back to Amsterdam, headed back to home.



farmhouse of my dreams

Jacob Chapman

I want a farmhouse, and I want a good one.
I want it quaint but not decrepit.
I want a kitchen that smells like lasagna.
I want tiles with cool patterns.
A real farmhouse has a dirt floor basement,
but I don't want beetles and mice
running around down there
unless there's a terrible storm
and they have no place to go.
I want to be a friendly neighbor.
I'm going to practice scuffing up my grammar:
I'm doing good. I'm doing good. I'm doing good.
Oh, I can't quite do it. I keep grinding my teeth.
The basement. The basement would be hard for me.
I could be watching the sunset on the porch,
and there would be worms down there
tunneling through the walls
messing up the foundation
making the house tilt.
I would grow angry.
I would consider flooding the basement with concrete
after giving the worms a warning
with bright lights and loud music.
But the worms might think it's a party.
They would all come,
and I would have to say *I'm not your friend*
even though I want to be.



flamingos at night

Jacob Chapman

I love the plastic pink flamingos
that line my street every year
on the third week of May.
As I drive past them,
I give them a little parade wave
and imagine myself
drifting through the applause
of a real parade
(thank you, thank you)
But at night,
as I drive by the flamingos,
their beady eyes
surprise me every time.
I slow down, and their eyes
become less beady
and more patient.
Recently I ate candy
and only candy
all day long.
As I passed the flamingos,
I stuck my tongue out
into the night
and said Look my tongue's blue.
I've been eating candy
all day long again.
I feel bad about it, a little,
but talking to you
is strangely calming,
and the night is young.



the year without spring

Jacob Chapman

Not exactly, but pretty much.
One day—piles of snow, grumpy moods,
sledding, laughter. Then rain all night.
Seventy degrees in the morning,
snowball collections melted,
outdoor rock collections revealed,
organized by size/color/shape/purpose.
No peepers, just frogs. Frogs and old crocuses.
Some sulking about this, some confusion.
Coats put away, bins of summer clothes
pulled out. Flip-flops? Yes, flip-flops.
Too hot for Easter? Of course not.
But maybe. Everyone learning to speak
to strangers again, mangling small talk,
mangling grammar. No time
to ease back into it. Just hey hi hello,
what do you, how is your day, I mean how
was your winter? I mean that was pretty weird
what just happened, with the snow and the rain
and the rocks and the frogs and the heat.
How are your plans, I mean what are your plans
for summer? It was far away,
but not anymore. This grass is crazy high,
looks like it's been growing for years.



my birthday party

Jacob Chapman

Everyone's getting a red wig and silver nail polish
whether they like it or not. And black mascara.
Then we'll go trick or treating, even though it's May,
and we'll hand out rubber snakes to people
who have no treats for us. And then,
because the parents won't be able to tell
which kid is theirs, they'll take the wrong one home.
But the food will be weird at every house,
and all the kids will say I don't want to be
in this family anymore. The parents will say OK,
and we'll all come back together, and the kids
will run in a circle, a blurry red-silver-black circle,
and we'll jump out of the circle in front of our real parents,
who will say you look different. And we'll say
stop being silly—it's just a wig. And the parents
will say I'm not so sure about that. Then we'll laugh.
Then everyone will go home, for real this time,
and we'll all say somebody's been here.
Somebody's been messing with my stuff.



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a preservation method

Alicia Bones

My mother was the most beautiful woman in the world. I'm not being sentimental now that she's dead; I'm paraphrasing the glossy mags she kept on our coffee table. Her skin was so luminescent the magazines said it was a shame when she started appearing in color pictures. Her skin looked its best in black and white, cream skimmed fresh from a metal pail against those shades of gray.

My mother worked for her skin. She sealed herself in moisturizers, masks, and oils, coconut, shea, and avocado, and she always smelled like a tropical vacation. She preserved herself with lotions and creams, rubbing her skin in vigorous circles and long, swooping movements. Her hands had a sheen on them from the oils, and when she touched me, she left an oil slick on my cheek like she'd swiped me with a slice of pepperoni. She never went outside. When she wanted to seem like a sunny and fresh Californian for a photo shoot, she lathered herself in sunscreen and carried an umbrella. Once, I wore my mother's moisturizer to bed and woke up with zits so deep I couldn't pop them for days. I was adopted; I didn't inherit my mother's skin.

Each night, my mother laid down for exactly nine hours in her bedroom, which she kept humidified at a cool 65 degrees. She lathered herself up in a dangerous night cream made from belladonna and covered her skin in cotton and silk: cotton gloves on her hands, cotton knee socks over her calves, charmeuse silk pajamas protecting her from wrist to ankle, cotton headband holding back her thinning hair. She covered herself with only a habotai silk sheet, no comforter or blanket, even on chilly nights. Too many layers blocked her pores, she told me. I watched her as she slept one night. She looked more dead than alive, laid flat on her back so the skin on her face didn't sag, her hands at her sides like a corpse, her mummification in oil stilling her features into moon-lit lifelessness. But when she woke every morning, she was reborn. Her face was suppler than the faces of her Hollywood friends whose browlifts made them look at the world in permanent shock, their lip injections pursing their mouths into perennial disapproval. My mother never took the easy way out, no surgeon, no other pair of hands ensuring her skin's continued elasticity. She did it all alone.

When my mother died, I bought a vineyard with my inheritance. My vineyard had been in operations for decades when I bought it, and it came with a manager and a couple of laborers, so I didn't have to toil the fields myself. Nevertheless, I walked my property every day without sunscreen or a hat, pinking my nose and shoulders, the part between my hair. It's not that I had never been vain like my mother, but by then I knew my level of attractiveness. I didn't want anyone thinking my average looks bothered me. I didn't want them to think I was trying to make more out of my looks than they could offer. By the end of that first summer, I had achieved what I wanted. My skin was baked tan, peeling off in white, papery strips. I liked the rebellion against convention my crisped skin signaled, hardening more and more as worked in the garden or laid by the pool, took the dogs out for walks. My skin felt dangerous, and it was.

When I opened my winery for tours in my second spring in business, the L.A. women with their pulled-back faces and immobilized foreheads came for tastings. These women were tan, not like my mother's generation and their prized alabaster, but I could tell their tans were fake: no sun spots. They said things like, "What a relief it would be to live out here!" They meant they wouldn't have to look good if they lived outside the city, an idea I found absurd. "I wouldn't dream of owning a hat if I lived here," one woman told me once, sampling my chardonnay. "The sun is too glorious."

"I don't have one," I said, big brown sunspots on my chest visible above my t-shirt. My hair was wild and my cheeks were red.

"You are so lucky!" the woman said, toasting me, but she didn't mean what she said. She preferred her well-preserved 60 to mine. Her effort at self-conservation was important to her, probably she had regular hair appointments and on-the-books Botox rejuvenations, even though she wasn't the most beautiful woman in the world, not even close.

The women who visited my vineyard would have killed for my mother's skin.

Now, in my fifth summer outside, something surprising has happened: I've become good-looking. Not beautiful, but attractive. I've aged rugged like a man in those old movies, dirty Bogart in *African Queen*, John Wayne Westerns in color. The sun broiled my skin into leather, cooked me into someone who belongs outside in shorts and hiking shoes. Sunspots suit me; wrinkles suit me. Men my age make eyes at me in the grocery store now; I used to have to be witty to get their attention. I bet they think I own a vineyard, own a boat. My skin somehow gives them a clue. I should thank the women's movement, it makes men think rich women can give them the luxurious lifestyles their nine-to-fives never did. I've never turned heads before, it's quite a sensation, but I don't deserve the attention. You never appreciate what you haven't earned.

Men's approval wasn't what it was about for my mother. Really, even fame was a byproduct, an outcome that let her know what she was doing was working. She earned the satisfaction she felt every time she looked in the mirror. She was dedicated. My mother and her repetitive rituals remind me of monks, the silent, cloistered kind, Tibetan maybe, and their routine worship, focusing solely on reaching a purer divinity. My mother did the same thing. She confined her life to small, unvarying practices, devotions to prove her commitment to her beauty. Don't get me wrong, I'd do the same thing if I'd been given a calling like she was. My mother's face was a miracle. You don't choose devotion, devotion chooses you. Mostly, I'm glad about the way my looks turned out. I've never been very religious and have preferred to leave things to chance.





early bird gets the wormhole
Mallory Caloca

obituary for another mermaid girl

Kailey Tedesco

I feel aural this morning –
a ghost in glittering
salt to shut
her casket.

I am the evident
cause of death & she is
my elderflower familiar –
one cup

of placenta
will siamese
the lungs & that is
a promise – you have

my word, my hand,
my sympathetic
magic. How many

106 times do I need to tell you
we're all a child
rolling downhill & rolling

underneath –
dirt & water choke
similarly so it's easy

to remember
how to swim.



girl shaped like an axe murderer

Kailey Tedesco

glitches above intertidal shards,
glass unswept & gorgeous
at a distance – God liked my

sins, so he kept them secret
in a box out by his shed. My grandmother said
the monsignor told her it is unholy to spread

tarot over chapel stoops,
but sometimes dark on grass feels
too much like an eyelid. I live

with bloody children – I live with a master
list of all the shrines
to see before I die. Now I live,

but I will die & I'm sorry
for it – put my ghost inside peacock
ore & worship. Worship the way

mirrors feel when covered
in polaroid & ribbon. Let me die
apologetically as a feathered thing

with bones in my eyes & a crown
of caul. Let me find lostness in
this forest & count the killers,

their mouths stuffed
with the gelatin of sky
between tree & tree & tree.



the vampire who said he was you

Kailey Tedesco

After Sylvia Plath

Inside – there is a snake & it shines.
I grab, I grab, I grab
but my hand is sour candy.

You gave the snake
to me – a present.
I said thank you & I peeled
the wax off
the black moon (shiny

& makes my nose run dark). That
snake is wrapped around
galaxies inside me, sucking
at pink stars & gutty jupiter.

I pull, I pull, I pull –
a Shining.

I was wrapped with caul – a still-
birth still breathing.
You chewed the feathers
off me & bit down.

Now I see shapes coagulate
from my body – a vision. Always
red figures or black in certain
moonlight.

I will never turn thirteen –
I die, I die, I die & you already
know it.

I had no idea
you smelled blood
on me
even then.



up from the salt cellar

Kailey Tedesco

We all come from the inside
of a snake – the rat head
reanimates

the bowels & reveals
a fortune – my body,
naked

except for a crown
of amethyst & you
coming

to make a matryoshka doll
out of me – flick your
wrist against a shadow

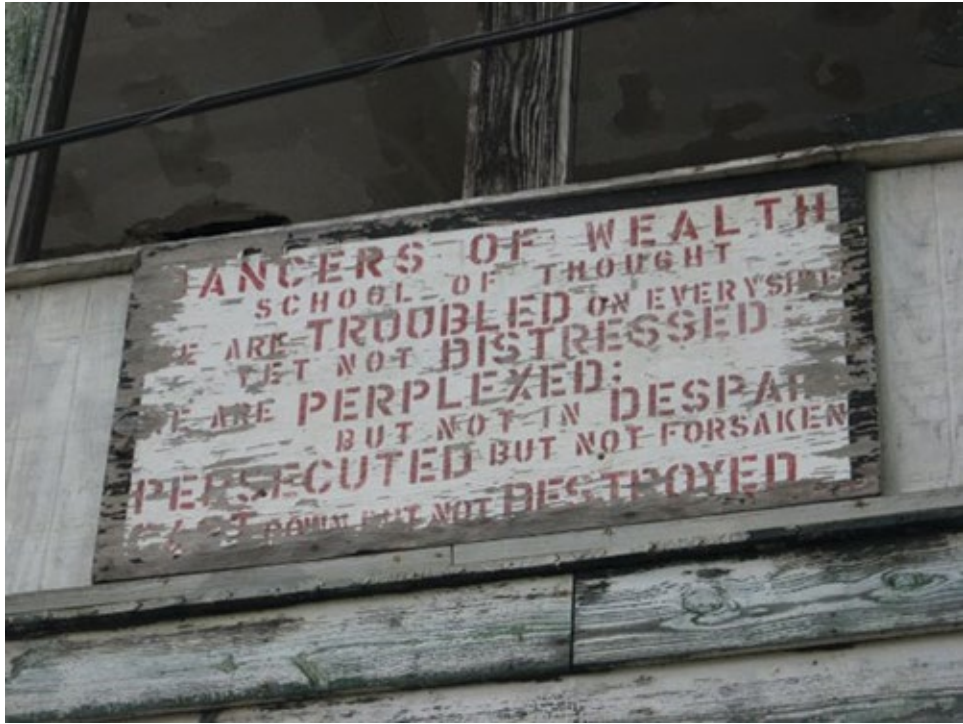
& show me a star of a better
color, show me a
lunette infant

with a circus
for blood, show me
something that's never

seen a man & let it
fizz fast in celebratory
death. We all come

to die eventually & please
let my death be a glass
of flat champagne.





dangers of wealth found in little rock
Jason Burke Murphy

Contributors' Notes

The youngest of seven siblings, **Mary Abbruzzese** was often picked last for flashlight tag. On weekends her older brothers would deposit her on the bunny slope just before they disappeared down a black diamond. Growing up with so many siblings has provided Mary with a unique perspective: she enjoys observing the world and recording what she sees with intimate detail and deep perspective. Her love of reading and writing can be seen through her many experiences. She began working on her first book, a memoir, in 1998. In 2001, she began writing freelance for the Jackson Hole Daily News. In 2004, she won the Warren Adler Short Story Contest, sponsored by the Wyoming Arts Council. In 2008, Mary was a quarterfinalist in the BlueCat and Scriptapalooza screenplay writing competitions. She continued to develop her writing skills by taking screenwriting and memoir classes with the Gotham Writers Workshop, the Troy Arts Center, and John Truby Writers Studio. In 2012, Mary was accepted into the New York State Writers Institute. Mary recently earned an MFA in nonfiction from Bennington College.

Xander Berkeley made his big screen debut as Christopher Crawford in the cult classic *Mommy Dearest*, followed immediately by guest roles on various TV shows like *The Incredible Hulk*, and *M.A.S.H., Hart to Hart*, etc. But staying focused on feature films, he soon landed the part of Tom Hanks college roommate in *Volunteers*. As an aspiring sculptor and painter since childhood, he had developed skills as a make up man in the theatre from early on. The idea of transformation was his inspiration as an actor. This began to show in roles such as “Bowery Snax” the junkie drug dealer in the seminal 80s film, *Sid and Nancy*. He jumped on the independent film train with Alex Cox then taking him into Spain with *Straight to Hell* and on to Nicaragua (while the war was going on there!) opposite Ed Harris in *Walker*. (Both *Sid and Nancy* and *Walker* have recently been added to The Criterion Collection of classic films.)

He began other collaborative relationships with directors like Mike Figgis (with whom he did *Internal Affairs*, *Leaving Las Vegas*, *One Night Stand* and *Timecode 2000*) and moved on to work with some of the most influential and recognized film directors alive including Steven Spielberg, William Friedkin, Clint Eastwood, Rob Reiner, James Cameron, Ron Howard, Wolfgang Peterson, Stephen Frears, Todd Haynes, Michael Mann, among countless others.

However, it was by shunning convention and remaining almost deliberately ‘under the radar’ by entirely changing his persona and appearance in one role to the next, always in service of the story and the director’s vision, that seems to have given Xander a distinct air of mystery. The Doctor in *Gattaca*, the traitorous secret service agent Gibbs in *Air Force One*, the head of C.T.U., George Mason, in the iconic first two seasons of *24*, Percy, who created the nefarious shadow wing of the defence department, ‘Division’ on *Nikita*. Sherriff McCallister, before revealing he was Red John on *The Mentalist*. Magistrate Hale, playing both sides (Pagan and Puritan) against the middle in *Salem*, and The Man, in *The Booth at the End* (is he angel or devil?). So, if Xander were to be pegged for anything, it would be for being the guy you can’t quite peg. Having already had one of the most prolific and varied film and television careers ever, the credits continue to mount.

Xander is currently the series regular role of Gregory, on the AMC hit show *The Walking Dead*. He recently shot roles in the Miramax feature *Labyrinth* for director Brad Furman opposite Johnny Depp and the Screen Gems feature *Proud Mary* opposite Taraji P. Henson. And alongside these studio films, watch for Indys; *Shot*, by Jeremy Kagan, and *The Maestro* by Adam Cushman... soon, at a film festival near you.

Joseph Boisvere is a man. He is also a student of language and a native of the Pioneer Valley. He currently lives in Northampton where he curates a collection of his long, ruminating walks through various urban areas.

Alicia Bones finished her MFA at the University of Montana in 2016. Her work has been published in Fairy Tale Review, Queen Mob’s Teahouse, Necessary Fiction, Entropy, Qu Literary Journal, Maudlin House, and Spry.

Mallory Caloca graduated Cal State San Luis Obispo with a B.A. in Fine Arts. Today, Mallory is a working artist and exhibits regularly in local and regional galleries and shows. Her use and experimentation with color and mixed media elicits strong and emotional reactions from viewers, patrons and critics. Whatever else may be said about her work, it is impossible to dismiss or ignore. See for yourself.

Jacob Chapman lives in Amherst, Massachusetts with his family.

Linda Baker-Cimini is an artist who lives and works in Western Massachusetts.

Alicia Ferrara is currently an undergraduate art major at the university of Delaware.

Born in 1953 in Western Massachusetts, **Ken Gagne** studied Fine Art/Art Education at Southern Connecticut State University in New Haven, CT from 1971-1975. After teaching art in public schools for several years, he attended Pratt Art Institute in Brooklyn, New York and graduated with a Masters of Fine Art in Printmaking in 1980. During the next seven years of residency in New York City, Ken worked as a silkscreen Master Printer for several renowned artists while pursuing his own art. A teacher at heart, he also taught art to inner city children through a Title I Education Program titled "Learning to Read Through the Arts", operating out of the NYC Public School system. In 1987 he moved back to Western Massachusetts, where he continued to make art, raise a family, and work with people with disabilities at Community Enterprises, a social service agency based out of Northampton MA for 28 years, retiring in 2015. In 2006, Ken purchased a building that once served as John's Fine Foods supermarket in the New City section of Easthampton MA, and converted it into his art studio and residency. Ken would like to acknowledge the good fortune of having the opportunities to "stand on the shoulders of giants", those artists, teachers and professors who helped shape his art, notably, Walter Korzec, Bill Regan, Chris Horton, Walter Rogalski, and George McNeil.

By translating a Danish copy of *Catcher in the Rye* word for word, **Michael Goldman** taught himself Danish over 30 years ago to help him win the heart of a lovely Danish girl. He has received numerous translation grants for his work with 6 distinguished Danish writers. Over 100 of Goldman's translations have appeared in more than 35 literary journals including *The Massachusetts Review*, *Rattle*, *International Poetry Review*, and *World Literature Today*. His original poetry appeared in *Poet Lore* and *The Fourth River*. His recent and forthcoming books in translation from Spuyten Duyvil Press include: *Farming Dreams* (poetry) by Knud Sørensen; *Stories about Tacit* (prose) by Cecil Bødker; *Fragments of a Mirror* (essays) by Knud Sønderby; and *Average Neuroses* (poetry) by Marianne K. Hansen. He lives in Florence, Mass. <http://hammerandhorn.net/>

Alexandria Heather is an Interdisciplinary Shamanic Artist. Her art, writing and music has been exhibited, published and performed throughout North America, the UK and Europe. She considers anarchy a methodology but manages to keep some examples of her work at home here: <http://alexandriaheather.weebly.com/>

Bronwen Hodgkinson wears many hats. She likes hats. Sometimes she travels. Sometimes she writes to remember. Sometimes she gets a little sleep. She hangs her hats in Easthampton, MA.

Helen Hofling is a writer and artist based in Brooklyn, NY. Recent work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Storm Cellar Quarterly*, *The Vassar Review*, and *Infinity's Kitchen*.

Richard Wayne Horton is originally from Austin, Texas where he published locally and nationally and was one of the open mic poets helping to create an Austin literary voice in the seventies. He now lives in Springfield, MA and has published in *Southern Pacific Review*, *Meat For Tea*, *Danse Macabre Online*, *Aphotic Realm*, *The Blue Nib* and others. He was nominated for a Pushcart Award by *Meat For Tea*, and has recently brought out a book, *Sticks & Bones*, with *Meat For Tea Press*.

Linda Kraus has taught literature and film studies at the university level. She has published poetry in several literary journals and anthologies and is currently editing two collections of poems. She is an orchid judge, a rock hound and a film buff.

Originally from the Boston area, **David Lawton** is the author of the poetry collection *Sharp Blue Stream* (Three Rooms Press), and serves as an editor for greatweatherforMEDIA. He has work featured currently in *Muse/A*, *POST*(blank), and forthcoming in *Maintenant 11* and *FIVE:2:ONE*.

George Lenker is a writer whose work has appeared in such places as the *New York Times*, as well as numerous other publications in both the United States and Europe. His poetry book, *Broken Music*, will be published in the summer of 2017

Thomas John Lopes is a Broadcast and Audiovisual Systems Engineer. He also plays guitar in Moon Power and drums for the Connecticut River Band.

Jan Maher's novel *Earth As It Is* is published by Indiana University Break Away Books. Other writing credits include a novel, *Heaven, Indiana*; plays *Ismene*, *Intruders*, and *Widow's Walk*; and *Most Dangerous Women: Bringing History to Life through Readers' Theater*. Her website address is <http://www.janmaher.com>.

Jason Burke Murphy grew up in South Arkansas, with frequent visits to family in between Central Texas and Southeastern Texas. He teaches philosophy at Elms College in Western Massachusetts. The *Goethe Eyes* photos are part of a series. The eyes were cut from a t-shirt with a picture of Goethe. He reads philosophy, follows soccer, and advocates for a basic income guarantee. He and his daughter are currently arguing over house affiliation for Harry Potter fans. Murphy argues you can imagine you are in whatever you need on the occasion. His daughter thinks that lacks seriousness and may even be a bit disloyal.

Marcos Pickina is a part-time baker with a micro-bakery scale production in Brazil. Baking has always been present in his life, but a few years ago he decided to learn proper skills directly from the French and still considers himself an apprentice of this world. "Mostly the dough (from small to big batches) is developed by hand, from all the stages. It's a manual and handcrafted process looking for breads (and its relatives) that will bring to my costumers a healthy and good quality food."

Alexandros Plasatis is a Greek ethnographer who writes fiction in English, his second language. His stories have been or are due to be published in UK and American anthologies and magazines such as *Meridian*, *Adelaide*, *Unthology*, *Overheard: Stories to Read Aloud*, *Crystal Voices*, and *blÆkk*. He is a volunteer at Leicester City of Sanctuary, where he helps find and develop new creative talent within the refugee and asylum seeker community. He lives in Leicester, UK.

Ian Prichard works at a water agency in Ventura County and lives in Los Angeles with his wife, kids, cats, and sourdough starter. His work has appeared in *The Mulberry Fork Review*, *Mantra*, *The Post Game*, and others.

Jim Ross, after retiring in early 2015 from a career in public health research, jumped back into creative pursuits after a long hiatus to resuscitate his long-neglected right brain. He's since published over 40 pieces of nonfiction, several poems, and over 150 photos in more than 45 journals, including *1966*, *2 Bridges*, *Cactus Heart*, *Cargo Literary*, *Change Seven*, *Entropy*, *Foliage Oak*, *Friends Journal*, *Gravel*, *Lagan Online*, *Lunch Ticket*, *MAKE*, *Meat For Tea*, *Memoryhouse*, *Panoplyzine*, *Palooka*, *Pif*, *Plum Creek Review*, *Riverbabble*, *Sheepshead Review*, *Souvenir Lit*, *Thin Air*, and *The Wild Word*. Forthcoming includes: *aaduna*, *Bombay Gin*, *Sirsee*, *Stoneboat*, and *The Human Touch*. Jim and his wife--parents of two nurses and grandparents of three toddlers, with another on the way--split their time across MD, VA, and WV. He hopes to move more in the direction of combining photos with stories.

Nicole Shea tells stories, makes things, and builds connections. You can find her at shopfoe.com and on Instagram at [westernmassme](https://www.instagram.com/westernmassme).

Megan LeAnne Smith is a writer and teaching artist specializing in poetry and spoken word, fire performance, and movement arts. She currently resides in Nashville, TN and serves as a poet mentor for Southern Word, Nashville's non-profit spreading literacy and performance skills through the vehicle of spoken word. Megan's work has been featured in Calliope Magazine, MTSU'S Collage (winner best poem Fall 2016), Rebelle Society, and Flowers Center. Find her online at meganleannesmith.com.

Kailey Tedesco's chapbook *These Ghosts of Mine, Siamese* is forthcoming from Dancing Girl Press this summer. She is the editor-in-chief of Rag Queen Periodical and a performing member of the NYC Poetry Brothel. Her poetry has been nominated for the Pushcart Prize. You can find some of her work featured or forthcoming in Bellevue Literary Review, Prelude, Prick of the Spindle, Faerie Magazine, Minola Review, Rogue Agent, and more. For more information, please visit kaileytedesco.com.

ZG Watkins was born in Oakland, California and earned a journalism degree from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. For the past 20 years, he has been a working TV and commercial writer. After working abroad for several years in Europe, he now lives in Los Angeles with his wife and son. He recently finished his first novel and is currently drafting his second.

Jim Whitten is .5 of the poetry.music project, [Izikhotane](http://Izikhotane.com). www.facebook.com/izikhotane

Bill Wolak has just published his fifteenth book of poetry entitled *The Nakedness Defense* with Ekstasis Press. His collages have appeared recently in *Naked in New Hope 2016* and *The 2017 Seattle Erotic Art Festival*. Mr. Wolak teaches Creative Writing at William Paterson University in New Jersey.

J. Andrew World is the writer and illustrator of the webcomics *Right About Now*, *Word Salad*, and *Out of the Mouth of Babes*. He also designs visually compelling graphics highlighting inspirational, thought provoking, and sometimes controversial quotes. He is committed to using his talents for raising awareness of issues of social justice and for encouraging open and respectful debate. His work has appeared in publications such as *APB: Artists Against Police Brutality*, *Fighting God: An Atheist Manifesto*, and *Nth Degree*. Although he has lived everywhere from Texas to Turkey in his lifetime, he has long been drawn to and loved the Pioneer Valley and is very glad that he is now able to call it home. When not creating art or writing, J. Andrew does his best to remember to spend time with his wife, their very silly daughters, and their cats.

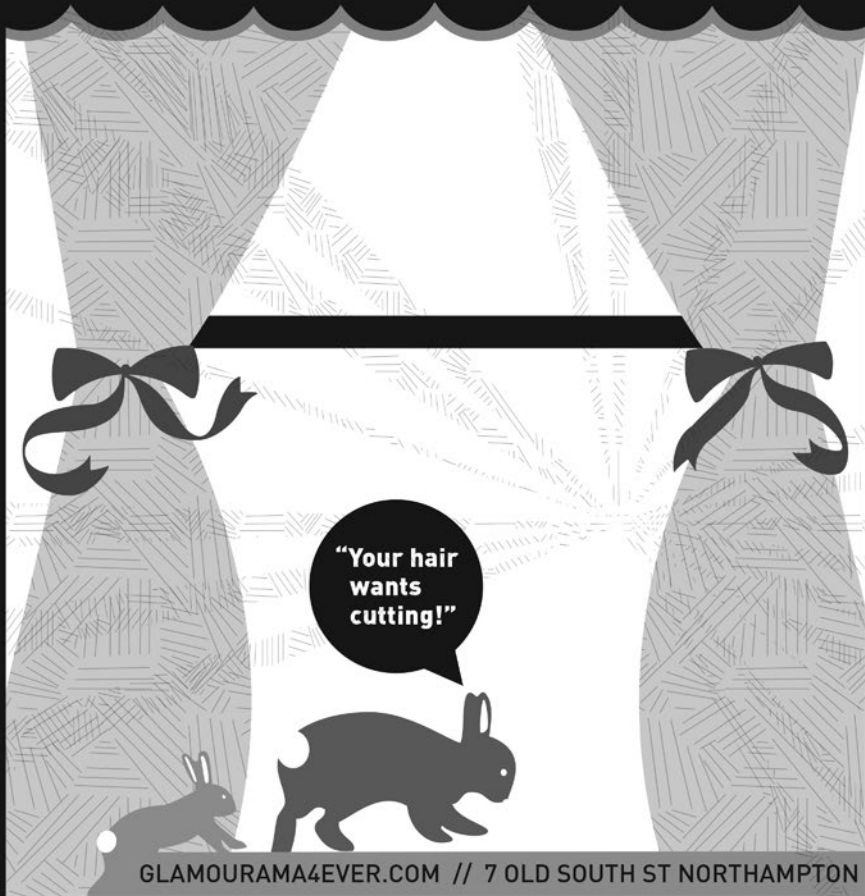
Gerald Yelle's books are *The Holyoke Diaries* (Future Cycle Press), *Evolution for the Hell of It* (Red Dashboard Press), *Mark My Word and the New World Order* (The Pedestrian Press), and *Restaurant in Walking Distance and Everything* (Cawing Crow Press). He teaches high school English and is a member of the Florence (MA) Poets Society.

Author of over 350 published books (yes that's the actual number), often called the Hans Christian Andersen of America, **Jane Yolen's** more recent honors include: A New England NPR Humanitarian Award, Massachusetts Book Award Honor; Book, Massachusetts Unsung Heroines List. Six Colleges and Universities (including Smith College and University of Massachusetts, Amherst) have given her honorary doctorates. On the other hand, one of her awards set her good coat on fire.

Frank Zahn is an author of nonfiction, fiction, and poetry with a Ph.D. in economics from the University of California, Santa Barbara. His publications include nonfiction books, research articles, commentaries, book reviews, essays, poetry, short stories, and novels. For details, visit his website frankzahn.com.

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