

sine cera

A DiverseCity Writing Series Anthology

Bread on Mondays

Volume 10

April 2012

sine cera is published by the SLCC Community Writing Center

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sine cera: Bread on Mondays

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Introduction

Everyone Can Write!

In August of 2000, the SLCC Community Writing Center began working with writers from local organizations in two-month writing workshops. Each workshop culminated in a publication and a public reading. At first, this DiverseCity Writing Series worked one-on-one with a variety of organizations: Justice, Economic Independence and Dignity for Women; the Road Home shelter; Liberty Senior Center; and Cancer Wellness House.

In the summer of 2003, the DiverseCity Writing Series expanded to offer multiple, on-going writing groups. Volunteers were trained in collaborative writing strategies and became mentors for a variety of open-interest and specialized writing groups.

In the fall of 2003, the pieces written in these groups were assembled to create *sine cera: People Are Strange*, the first DiverseCity Writing Series anthology. The anthology celebrated the work of participants, who were then invited to present their writing at a public reading.

Over the past several years, the DiverseCity Writing Series has grown to include fourteen groups, with an average of 200 community members participating; however, the mission remains the same: *The DiverseCity Writing Series bridges the Salt Lake community's diverse social, economic and educational backgrounds through writing, collaboration and dialogue.*

The SLCC Community Writing Center would like to thank the mentors and participants who have made this program an ongoing success.

DiverseCity Writing Series Groups

Avenues Courtyard Group

Columbus Library Group

The Community Writing Center Group

The E Writing Group

Gay Writes Group

The Homeless Youth Resource Center Group

The King's English Group

The Literacy Action Center Groups

Men's Detox Group

Palinca

Silver Pen Seniors Group

The St. Mark's Tower Group

The Veterans' Affairs Group

YWCA

We look forward to the future growth of the DiverseCity Writing Series and are happy to present our fifteenth publication:

sine cera:

Bread on Mondays



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Table of Contents

Volume 10:

April 2012

Preface	Faye Fischer	15
Bread on Mondays	Judith Ann Johnson	17
Recyclable People	Elizabeth Ernstsen	19
To Run Away	Mary P. Garrity	22
In Daffodils	Peter Muller	23
Sprint Cup Championship 2011	Paul L. Rosser	24
The Snow Leopard	Peggy Kadir	25
Too Familiar	Melissa Rasmussen	26
Beauty is Everywhere	Ranae Allen	30
West Side Story	Fran Crookston	31
The Turtle's Shell	Jenny McCoy	32
The Wake	Steven A. Dame	34
I've Been Adopted by a Chicken	Rosemary Hanna	39
A Perfect World	Shirley Fifer	41
Normal?	Mojo Onivert	42
San Francisco	Mary P. Garrity	43
Angry Hornets	Richard H. Goms Jr.	44
Lisslin the Wrench-Headed Snake	Steve Proskauer	46
Struggle	Deann Porter	51

Final Moment With My Cat, Spooky	JoAnna Johannesen	52
Wind	Melissa Rasmussen	53
Apocrita Now!	Ked Kirkham	54
Wrong End of a Gun	David Ottenheimer	56
Uncle Alex	Peggy Kadir	57
Harold in the City	Dave Goodale	58
About Me	Edde Aguirre	63
The Secret Life of Daydreams	Rachel Lowry	64
Found	John Wilkes	65
The Lawn Gnome Story	Timothy Nahalewski	66
Left in the Dark?	Sherrie Nielsen	67
Nameless	Michael Sanchez	68
Love Lost	Susan Adams	73
The Big Picture	Debbie Freeman	74
Pantoum	Winifred M. Walker	75
The Secret of White Deer Valley	Richard H. Goms Jr.	76
No. 3 Constine Court	Dr. Paulette Cross	80
Don't Cry	William J. Pappas	82
I Am Old	Mary P. Garrity	83
The Arrival	Jenny McCoy	84

How to Make Salsa	Susan Adams	87
Behind Closed Doors	Annalee Parkinson	88
Those of the Wing'd Capacity	Rachel Lowry	91
No Place for Rage	Joseph Lindberg	92
Samantha	Deann Porter	95
I Don't Care	JoAnna Johannesen	97
Who We Should Remember and How	Elizabeth Ernstsén	98
On the Football Field	Christine R. Lee	99
TJ's Journey Home	John Boles	100
Pacing the Floor	Winifred M. Walker	102
God Has Given You the Strength	Kyle Luke	99
Unions! Hell, Yes!	Doug Woodall	104
Create a Dog	Alex E. Flores Jr.	110
Comfort Me?	Mojo Onivert	111
The Wound	Anne Peck	112
Can't We All Just Get Along???	Margie Gilmore	113
Youth For a Cracker	Emily Rose Struzik	114
Healing Hurting Parts	Melissa Burrell	119
World Beauty	Debbie Freeman	120
Daniel Timothy Silently Comes Out	Alonzo Douglass	122

Betrayal	Winifred M. Walker	128
Life is a Puzzle	Shirley Fifer	129
The Troubled Mother	Julie Liljenquist	130
Hearing Aids 101	Chelle George	131
A New Beginning	Denise Bell	133
Vanishing Point	Steve Proskauer	134
Dreams Like Shattered Glass	Barbara Farris	138
I Want to be Yours	Christine R. Lee	139
My Christmas Memory	Richard H. Goms Jr.	140
I Tell Myself I'm Lucky	Ramona Maassen	142
The Forgotten 300	Alex E. Flores Jr.	146
Salt Lake Oil Spill and My Black Sea of an Eye	Mary Jane Shipley	147
Where Were You?	Anne Peck	148
Modern Talk	Mary Fuller	149
Riding Killer	Homer Conder	150
Woes of the Visitation Parent	Elizabeth Ernstsen	155
Irregular as Clockwork	Rachel Lowry	156
Plant Good Seed	Maggie Ryan Vogt	158
Cannon Fodder	Christine R. Lee	162
Dream Vacation	Kyle Cardwell	163

Help	Debbie Freeman	164
The Box	Jenny McCoy	165
Winter	Shirley Fifer	169
Age Crept in on Me	Marie Ford	170
All the Hills	Mona Delevan	171
Fever Dream	Steve Proskauer	172
The Calm Part of My Life	Helen Munson	175
Think First	Margie Gilmore	176
Storms	Steven A. Dame	178
American Haiku	Mary Fuller	183
Dying Green	Katherine January	184
Beginners Too	Alonzo Douglass	186
Madness in Me	Mojo Onivert	189
In My Mind's Eye	Karen Larsen	190
Beyond Darkness	Denise Bell	191
Come Home	Ramona Maassen	192
Noisy Lawn Mowers and Fire Alarms	Mary Fuller	195
Sky Colors Are Bright	Marie Ford	196
The Homeless Man	Susan Adams	198

sine cera

Bread on Mondays

Volume 10

April 2012

sine cera: Bread on Mondays

13

Preface

The DiverseCity Writing Series bridges the Salt Lake community's diverse social, economic and educational backgrounds through writing, collaboration and dialogue.

—DiverseCity Writing Series Mission Statement

Times are hard. The pressures of the world sometimes feel insurmountable as economic, social and political factors combine making everyday life hard to navigate. Difficulty often leads people to question what is most important, to explore their own strengths, and to share that strength with others.

Historically during hard times people have done what they could to make themselves happy. They bought a 25¢ ticket to the movies, listened to their favorite program on the radio and gave in to the simple pleasure of a warm loaf of fresh baked bread. Despite the fast pace of life today, I'd like to think that we are returning to the comfort those simple pleasures can provide. Contentment comes in many packages—and whether it lasts for a minute or a day—we should savor it.

The DiverseCity Writing Series brings people together around the proverbial kitchen table and the *sine cera* is our writer's own version of a hot loaf of bread. Now, all that is left is to eat and enjoy! Reading what you have written is like a small feast that can nourish the soul filling up the emptiness that often permeates our lives during difficult times. The continuation of the DiverseCity Writing Series assures that you will never go hungry. As long as writers put pen to paper there will always be bread at our table.



Bread on Mondays

by Judith Ann Johnson

The school bell finally rings at 4:00 p.m. signaling the school is over the day. I'm seven years old in 1953, and a second grader at Highland Park Elementary. I go out into the hallway to retrieve my sweater and lunch sack. The halls are packed with school children trying to be the first ones out the big double, wooden doors waiting at the end of the long hallway. Everyone wants a head start on getting home to play with friends, before the November daylight is gone.

I walk fast, to get home, to see what we're having for dinner. As soon as I get to the corner of Imperial Street and Zenith Avenue, I run toward my home at 2978 Imperial Street. I run up the three steps and turn the handle on the front door. I push open the door, and the smell of homemade bread fills my nostrils. It is the best smell in all the world! The heavenly smell permeates the whole house. I also smell meatballs and spaghetti cooking on the stove. All the food that Mom prepares is done from scratch; no box mixes. The food is always so good.

My five-month-old sister, Deanna, sits in the Baby-Tenda in the living room. Our living room is decorated in the shades of gray. I don't like gray, but, in 1953 that was the popular color. My parents bought a mahogany Duncan Fyfe dining table that is kept in the living room for special occasions, like Thanksgiving. Above the table hangs a round mirror. Against the North wall is a small Admiral Black and white television set that dad bought last year. On the East wall is a radio Dad brought with him from New York when he and Mom moved back from Salt Lake City, after he was honorably discharged from the Navy during WWII. Also along the wall is our patterned, gray couch with fringe around the bottom. An oval coffee table sits in the southeast corner by the couch. In the southwest corner sits a gray stuffed chair that matches a fabric of the couch. A floor lamp stands beside it. The wallpaper is gray with yellow roses and tiny red flowers. Heavy rose colored drapes and white sheers cover the living room windows.

I look into the small kitchen and see Mom brushing over the tops of four loaves of bread cooling on the kitchen table. She

tenderly covers the loaves with a dish cloth. She wears a red, yellow, blue and white full-length apron. It hangs over her shoulders and ties in the back around the waist. She always wears her apron to protect her dress while cooking.

The kitchen is only big enough for four people to sit at the wooden table. There are four of us. Mom has already fed my youngest sister. At every meal, once my two younger sisters were older, we pull the table away from the kitchen windows and crowd six chairs around it so we could all eat together. The wooden chairs have a red stripe across the back. The table is covered with an oil cloth tablecloth. There is hardly any room to move in the kitchen when we are seated at the table. I look around the kitchen and see the cupboards my Grandfather Lehman built. They are painted white and have red plastic handles. The kitchen wall is painted a light yellow. The counter is made of tiny white tiles with gray grout. The appliances, a Kelvinator refrigerator and gas stove, are white. The linoleum floor is white with red and gray specks.

I crave a slice of bread with melted butter on it—real butter. I ask, “Mom, could I have a piece of bread just this one time before dinner?” She answers, “No, it will ruin your dinner.” What would one slice of bread hurt before dinner, I think to myself? The rules can never be broken! The fresh baked bread smell teases me, but I have to wait until dinner is ready.

Finally, it is 6:00 p.m., time for dinner. My mouth anticipates the first bit of homemade bread! We all sit down to the table; say a quick prayer over the food, and Mom slices the bread. I patiently wait for my slice. I quickly butter the bread and take the first bite. Heavenly!!

Recyclable People

by Elizabeth Ernstsén

Recyclable people are of great value. Why I know this is because I am one of them. To many people I seem a throw away or of no value or of little use. But I do not feel this way at all!

To my first husband, once he had established himself in his career, I was of no use to him. This hurt since I put him through college, gave him children and moved to foreign countries that better established himself as a very important person. Once he had this and I was worn down I was no use so thus he cunningly discarded me as worthless. As painful and ugly as this was I was numb for quite a while, but I knew God was there pruning me for something else. Just as gold seems worthless until it is put through the through the refiner's fire so was I.

My second attempt as marriage was far too soon to work as I was too weak to make a wise choice and not able to see my worth just yet. So that one didn't work out as well either, perhaps even worse than the first. One thing I did better was to get out sooner this time.

Upon many attempts at dating, I soon realized I had to change myself and the way I was, because it seemed I could only attract the same kind of people. I prayed real hard for guidance. The answer came and so I began to be recycled.

In the recycling of myself and in many others as well, there is the crushing and compacting all around me and within me as well. No, I didn't lose faith in God—rather my faith grew stronger instead and in spite of all that had transpired. I thus had to go through the refiner's fire not for any sins of any kind, but to be purified. Then came the remolding into something much greater than I could ever had perceived in my life time! To be recycled is much like what a caterpillar goes through his life until he enters his cocoon. It is in his cocoon by which all these changes come about.

I remember asking God to help me change for the better as my dating came to an end by my choice. I knew I hadn't lost faith in marriage even though successful ones have yet been seen or so few had I a glimpse during my life. While in my cocoon and recycling I

**“Just as the
butterfly
emerges out of his
cocoon
so do I”**

first learned to value who I was... a child of God.

I then started to feel God's love which gave me courage to endure all that needed to come to become a better me.

I started by saying no to the old ways and yes to better ones. Then I went through the discernment of which was which. This was not easy at all, but just as one hold to the rod of iron in times of doubt – I held on to it through the dark-

ness of my own cocoon. I grabbed hold to His

words and His ways and by so doing I started shedding off the torn and tattered skin of once a caterpillar I had been. I started getting molded into a strong individual in such away as I never knew possible. I feasted upon the words of Christ more and more in such a way I hungered upon each word He spoke. His love I felt as I went through the refiner's fire burning away everything that should not have been, but was. I let go of scars that battles left behind and saw others do the same. I noticed some had lost a leg – some two, but instead they glowed brilliantly than that of diamonds of that of the sun on fresh white snow. I pondered much upon those around me as I got a glimpse of them in the refiner's fire along side of me.

Once out of the refiner's fire, then came the cool down time that makes one solid and immovable when done. I love this part of my recycle time. The start of a new me who knows when to say no or yes and to what as well. Just as the butterfly emerges out of his cocoon so do I. Warming myself to God's love and His every word. Gathering strength each moment as I do. Learning to spread my wings just as a butterfly does to dry and strengthen each day.

Now I flutter about my way landing here and there for strengthening and also giving strength to someone else along my journey that I go on. I now can take a moment to polish off that which is not good as the day comes to an end. I draw strength in counting my blessings, asking God to forgive me as I forgive others and ask for a restful, peaceful sleep. When I wake I pray to God to give thanks for a new day. I ask Him how I can best serve Him this day, who needs my help or which direction to go this brand new day.

Now beauty I have not just within, but it shows outward as well giving light to others, giving them hope as they go through their own recycling and refiner's fire into the dark yet warm co-

coon. Until they heal enough to emerge into their own new form shining brightly as I have done. Giving thanks to God for such a blessings to become a new yet stronger child of God...the recycled butterfly that brings beauty, joy and hope to all who behold him.

To Run Away

by Mary P. Garrity

I want to run away
to some safe place
and take my love along.

I want you -----
(without my fears of you)
and me
(without my memories).

I don't need comfort,
just comforting.

I want to hid:
unashamedly....
blatantly....
totally....
gone, away, buried,
saturated in safety.

Hold me!
it means the same thing.

In Daffodils

by Peter Muller

In roses you and I
Wiggle toe-ses you and I
Tickle noses, see the why
Sure have fun, good time fly.

In tulips, you and I
Those true lips you and I
Nicely new lips see the high
What a ball, me-oh-my,

In daffodils you and I
In laugh-odils you and I
It's the pickles and dills: you and I
What a rainbow, we're up high!

In lilies you and I
Liking silly you and I
Top the hilly you and I
A view so new you hear the sigh.

Sprint Cup Championship 2011

by Paul L. Rosser

The Sprint Cup Series is all about racing in NASCAR. In Sprint Cup racing you have to be a good driver to be a champion. A lot of drivers race to compete in the championship.

To win the championship you have to get out of the pits quicker than the other drivers, win races, lead laps, finish the race, and don't get in wrecks.

The race in Homestead, Florida, was to settle the championship. It was the last race of the year. At the start of the race Carl Edwards was leading the points by three.

It was a good race until the end. In the final minutes Tony Stewart came from behind Carl Edwards to win the race and the championship in 2011.

The Snow Leopard

by Peggy Kadir

Snow leopards have always been among my favorite animals. They are rare and elusive, I fell in love with snow leopards after reading Peter Mattheson's book *The Snow Leopard*, while still quite young. It was a great pleasure that many years ago I saw my first live snow leopard at the Hogle Zoo in Salt Lake. It was hardly larger than a kitten at the time.

Imagine my joy recently when I read in the local newspaper that a Utah surgeon had been called upon to remove kidney stones from the local zoo's adult snow leopard, due to the vet's unfamiliarity with the procedure.

I have always known that Salt Lake was a friendly and sharing community. Although I have always been a happy and sharing part of the Salt Lake community, it never occurred to me that one day I should be sharing my own urologist with a snow leopard. Life is full of a strange and delightful coincidences.

Too Familiar

by Melissa Rasmussen

Enslaved by August, the city broils under heat and fire of noon day. Its streets and rooftops are tacky and exude the cloying odor of hot tar. The stench in its alleys reek of sweltering decayed fruit, rancid lard and other putrid, vaguely familiar scents. In the distance twin police sirens wail from different neighborhoods. Nearby impatient horns blare and red-faced drivers shout at each other, shaking fists in a congested intersection.

Outside on the window ledge of apartment 1A a young cat has been curled up all morning, soaking up heat and light into her glossy, beetle black fur. But the unforgiving noon sun proved too much even for her. She is now tucked into the meager shade of a thirsty pot of brash geraniums. The screen-less window is open and a fan just inside twirls furiously in a hopeless attempt to cool space, and tempers within.

“Good morning sunshine. Where were you last night?”

Not noticing the acrid scent of jealousy smoldering and snapping in the air, the man shuffles into the kitchen to fix something to eat.

“I said WHERE WERE YOU?”

The incessant whir of the fan’s motor continues in the heat laden air. This sound adds to an aura of unrest as the fan stirs up slight wisps of a musky, unfamiliar perfume.

“I told you where I was going WHEN I WENT OUT LAST NIGHT. Duh. I was with the guys playing cards.”

The cat starts at their raised tones and turns her verdant moon eyes to face the room. She observes the couple’s activities inside with an unsettling intensity.

“Till almost six thirty this morning? Think I wouldn’t notice what time it was when you came in?”

The man sits down at the table with a plate, knife and sandwich fixings.

“Uh...well... We played till around four, no it was more like five...yeah...and”

“And?”

“Me ‘n some of the guys...were hungry so...we decide to grab a bite. Is that ok with you?”

“You could have called.”

A fat, iridescent-green fly buzzes, butting itself stupidly against the windowpane. It is desperate to find the way out. The man grunts, ignoring the woman. He begins to eat his sandwich. Standing over him, watching with crossed arms, the woman says quietly, “I know where you were.”

The man keeps chewing. He wipes some beads of sweat off of his forehead with the back of his hand. The woman stares down at him for a full thirty seconds. When she garners no further response from him, she stalks away from the table into the living room, and then flings herself sideways into the overstuffed chair by the window. She turns her head towards it, so he won't see tears slipping from her eyes.

The house fly, at last finding the open window, tries to escape. The small, black cat with uncanny eyes bats it back inside with her quick, mischievous paw. The fly begins its irksome, droning once again which subtly spurs the seething frustrations swirling inside the apartment.

Glaring at the man's back as he slouches over his food, perhaps seeking consolation, the woman absentmindedly reaches out to stroke the warm, silky fur of the temporary occupant perched on the window ledge. Minute sparks of jade crackle and sizzle between jet black fur and her fingers.

“You were hungry alright, but not for breakfast. You've started seeing HER again haven't you? I saw you gawking at that nymph-like, little...WITCH in church last Sunday. Like I said, I'm NOT stupid. Peter. I can't go through this again. Not again. How could you? You promised!” She begins to cry in earnest, covering her face with her hands.

Turning in his chair the man says “She's NOT a witch. You're the one acting like a...ah now...don't start crying. Aaand I wasn't gawking!”

The cat begins to generate a low, intense growl. Fueled by this the woman rises. Pointing, she shouts,

**“They are
locked in an
unfair struggle that
soon quiets as abruptly
as it began.”**

“Ha! See! You’re even defending her!”

“Ok, forget this.” The man, distressed, pauses and considers, then starts again in a pleading tone. “OK. I did go to see her last night. She keeps calling me...it was to tell her I couldn’t see her anymore. I promise peanut, I really do.”

“YOU PROMISED THE LAST TIME YOU SON OF A JACK ASS!”

She grabs a vase sitting on the upright piano near at hand and hurls it full force across the room at him. Just in time the shocked man ducks. The vase skims past the top of his head and slams into the far wall, exploding in a violent rain of emerald shards.

The cat emits an angry, eerie yowl. Bellowing, the man shoves his plate off the table as he jumps to his feet. It crashes to the floor as he lunges towards the woman, without clear thought, fury ruling his reason. Unexpected alarm crystallizes her scream as she scrambles vainly to get out of his way.

“No Peter! Stop!”

Through a scarlet haze he grabs her throat with both of his sturdy hands and takes her to the ground in one smooth, brutal motion. Desperately she clutches at him, his arms, his face, attempting to loosen his grasp on her airway as her face begins to turn burgundy.

No one notices the cat. Calm she watches the couple with piercing scrutiny.

They are locked in an unfair struggle that soon quiets as abruptly as it began. There is silence. The din of the city now muted, distant.

“Gillian?”

The only noises in the room are the murmur of the fan, the fly endlessly butting against a window pane, and the man’s own ragged breathing.

“Jelly baby? Wake up.”

More anxious now, the man coaxes, while brushing damp strands of hair away from her face with tender care, “I’m sorry sweetheart. Please stop pretending...I, I’ve learned my lesson...I didn’t mean to...wake up. Wake up! Oh God. Jilly?”

Brokenhearted, the man crumples in despair over his treasured wife of thirteen years. He begins to weep. His loud, anguished sobs shake his entire form, as well as the lifeless one below

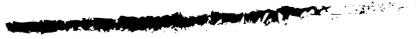
him.

Outside along the sill, the cat observes them now with curiosity. She is fascinated, her head tilting to the left. She is unmoved by the drama unfolding before her. A soothing voice, that only she can hear whispers in her ear.

“You’ve done so well my darling Kitsune. That will show him won’t it my petite. He should not have left me for his own wife now should he? No. That’s right baby.” The voice giggles in husky delight. “Now come back home my sweet, and I will give you a saucer of cool cream to reward your efforts.”

While the feline rises to her feet, she yawns wide, displaying two half circles of sharp, white teeth. With lazy grace, she slowly arches her silky back. Purring, she jumps on silent, light-footed paws down to the sidewalk. Then slinking into the shadows, finds her way back home.

Beauty is Everywhere



by Ranae Allen

Gazing in the mirror, The day is night, ugliness is beauty, And beauty is Everywhere, walking away from the beauty in the mirror to go for a walk outside, To the beauty of the Earth, To feel the warmth of the sun on my skin, To feel the Beautiful energies of the busy people out and about, A smile spreads upon my face as I walk out to the beautiful world, Knowing Beauty is in EVERYTHING!

West Side Story

by Fran Crookston

I graduated from Highland High School in Salt Lake City, Utah, which is on the southwest corner of 17th East and 21st South. I went to the University of Utah for the first year of my undergraduate degree. I moved to Delaware and Pennsylvania while finishing a Bachelor of Science degree at Drexel University. When I first moved back to Utah after working a year in Philadelphia, I lived at many addresses in the Salt Lake Valley all on the east side. The furthest west I lived was the west side of 'G' Street in the Avenues until 1991.

At first after moving back to Salt Lake, I had a running argument with a friend who had grown up on 13th West about the nature of the west side. "There are no mansions west of 7th East!" was my position on why living on the east side of the valley was more desirable as though the existence of mansions determine the quality of a community.

In 1991, I moved to Taylorsville whose eastern boundary is the Jordan River which is west of 5th West. I now know there are mansions (and have been for many years) on the west side of the valley. But I was not alone in having the same bias against west side communities that is common in persons who have never lived west of State Street. At the same time, to some extent, people who live in the west side communities seem to dwell on these snubs because they haven't dealt with their own insecurities. What I have learned from this is we all have lessons to learn about life regardless of the community we live in. We just need to realize there is always more to learn and we never have the whole picture, no matter where we live.

The Turtle's Shell

by Jenny McCoy

A Turtle's Shell is like a home
he carries with him as he roams.
He peeks his head out through the door.
He pokes his feet out through the floor.

There are no boards or bricks or nails,
just turtle toes and turtle tails.
A turtle never has to stay,
his address changes day by day.

A turtle's shell is where he dines.
He munches flowers and leafy vines.
He loves all kinds of garden greens,
from carrot tops to lima beans.

Flower blooms are a special treat
to a turtle, dandelions are sweet.
But every turtle's favorite green
is a little bit of everything.

A turtle likes a summer day.
In the warm outdoors he likes to play.
But if it gets too hot to play,
inside his shady shell he stays.

Turtles like a rainy day
but too much rain, they'll float away.
So warm and dry he waits within
till the warm sunshine comes out again.

If danger wanders very near
he pops inside to quell his fears.
When the danger is finally gone
then turtle slowly travels on.
A turtle's shell is like his clothes.

It covers him from head to toes.
A turtle always dresses well
when he wears his turtle shell.

A turtle's shell is like a bed
to lay his sleepy little head.
He tucks himself inside his shell
and there he snuggles warm and well

A shell is a place where turtles eat,
a place to lay his head to sleep.
A turtles shell is a useful tool;
it keeps him warm; it keeps him cool.
A turtle looks good in his clothes;
it covers him from nose to toes
and keeps him safe till danger goes.
A turtle's shell is all of those.

The Wake

by Steven A. Dame

Moses held the tablets above his head, prepared to dash them to bits on the stone, while the Children of Israel, jubilant and drunken, danced about the golden calf. Herein is civilization, I thought. Here is civilization between those immutable words engraved on the tablet by God's hand, and the crux of their downfall.

Farther on the paintings spanned whole walls: The Red Sea parting; Jonah cast from the belly of a whale—God's revenge accomplished—and Christ walking majestic and pacified across the Sea of Galilee.

I continued up the hall. Here and there candles spit fire and bled wax upon brass candlesticks. Their flame provided a murky glow for the scenes before me. I had always pictured John the Baptist as crazed. Here he was with charismatic eyes, silver tongue prophesying. Stephen from a pit of death gazed toward the glories of heaven.

The doors to the chapel were elaborately carved, and very detailed, precise to the hair of the head and the fine structure of a leaf: Adam and Eve in the Garden, naked and without want, selected the finest of fruits. Lucifer waited in the tangle of trees, deceiving even the snakes to do his bidding.

I stole quietly past the door into the meeting, where prayer was being said. The opposite side of the door showed the couple cast from the Garden, thrust out into the desolate, weed-bearing world, with Lucifer trailing behind, restless and impassioned. I sat down just as the congregation began to leave. A lone man remained, his head slumped forward on the next pew. His wife, a gray-haired woman in a faded linen dress, faltered a moment, pausing as if to retrieve him, then left with the others. The crowd greeted one another with waxen smiles and disappeared into the summer day.

The minister stayed at the pulpit, the Bible still in one hand and the other raised emphatically, deliberately, the same position he had maintained in the beginning. He remained there, unmoving, while a janitor entered from the rear with a mop and bucket and cleaned the center aisle. I nudged the elderly gentleman next to me,

just a touch to wake him, but the body was stiff. Colorless. The custodian left his mopping for a moment and went to the minister. He picked him up and carried him to a closet at the wall, beneath a painting of Michael the Archangel. I saw he was a mannequin.

I stayed near the dead man. The scent of the dead emanated from the body. It was the heavy, ungodly musk of one returning to the earth.

The janitor ambled past. His eyes were pale green, and his hair a lifeless, sandy color. He stood for a while and gazed at the old man.

Then he left, shaking his head.

The Adam and Eve doors swung in a great arc as he passed through them. I couldn't help noticing the eyes of the serpent in the garden: A sharp poignant air about them, like the stench of musk rising from fertile earth, carefully spaded in the dying evening by a crooked-backed spinster muttering psalms amid the growth of her garden. They wove themselves into you like hands—hands grasping other hands—lovers, children with fathers, mothers and babes. The whole earth wrapped itself around those eyes—the deep, solid, sullen eyes.

The days I listened to my own minister in the rugged, straight-backed pews on sweltering Sabbaths came back now. We had stolen away before the next meeting and met in barns to sip liquor on hay bales: Chattering adolescents profaning the afternoons in dubious secret places, then eating onions and wild mint to hide the scent.

Suddenly a young man dashed through the doors in a lively sprint. He looked disheveled, like he had just been rushed from a myriad of projects. He halted at the dead man's pew and pivoted round like a basketball player, his eyes frozen toward the man like a Russian master before a chessboard. I heard dripping water somewhere. There was singing outside: a chorus of mixed voices like a cacophony of alley cats plaguing a sleepless night with relentless howls.

"I am the son of the caretaker," he announced. "This man must be removed. He mustn't be left here. Did you see this?"

I felt embarrassed, then at once angry and embittered. "I

"The whole earth wrapped itself around those eyes—the deep, solid, sullen eyes."

have to go now,” I muttered. “The day has been too much for me.” I glanced at my watch, pretending I had an appointment to keep. The boy tapped his fingers on the pew. He had a pensive, solemn expression.

Suddenly a chandelier fell halfway to the floor and dangled by its cord, which had been pulled from the ceiling. It spun about madly in several quick, indecisive gyrations, then settled in a methodical pendulum movement, going this way and then back again, the other direction. Several bulbs burned out and the rest of the lights flickered and sparked until finally, in one brief flash, they died also.

The boy pulled his hair. Sweaty, flustered—like a caged rat. “Look at this! Who will replace this now? More work! We’ll have to call in a repairman.”

His eyes moistened, and he became silent. “It will have to wait until Monday. Yes, we can’t be bothered with it now.” He crept close to the man and rapped his back as if to wake him. My mind reverted to the celebrations in the hayloft where we sat musing in our foolish youth—or was it foolishness?—of adolescent girls with suntanned legs, astride horses in barley fields. Those long and tedious Iowa summers, the nights a sparkle of lightning bugs dancing before small hands . . . we imprisoned them in glass bottles until the glow went away, then let them loose again.

The boy removed a cleaning cloth from his pocket, and spread it out to cover the man’s face. “I don’t like to see it. This is Mr. Benjamin Perlman, a long time member. This had been anticipated.

Yes, this had been anticipated!”

He ran outside to the group, his hands cupped about his face in a megaphone shape, and yelled: “It’s Mr. Perlman! Everyone assemble! It’s time!”

The singing stopped immediately, and the final chime of the clock diminished to a vibrant hum. Whispering commenced among the crowd, and then the sound of scuffling feet as they all poured steadily back into the church.

The chorister appeared in the front and asked us to please stay in the foyer until preparations were made. I kept away from the center and watched the activities of the crowd from its outskirts. Two burly men in black suits carried a long aluminum ladder, the custodian ahead of them motioning directions through the mass. “To fix the light,” I conjectured. The huge wooden doors were opened briefly to let them through. A few men in front leaned

toward the doorway to peek inside, but were quickly pulled back by their wives. Many of us rested on benches that lined the foyer, while the remainder mingled and conversed in hushed tones.

I studied some of the murals to keep my mind off the commotion. Gradually I was being assimilated by this crowd. Steadily I assumed their characteristics, thought it less absurd that a funeral should proceed in this manner, so quickly, with no time for forethought. I chatted with a lady next to me about Mr. Perlman, even felt I knew him. It was as though I shared vague memories, mutual archetypal understandings: an adoration.

More visitors arrived at the front entrance. Relatives assisted weeping widows as they surmounted the steps. Four ushers appeared and began distributing the funeral programs. Two stout women squeezed a stand through the throng and set it near the doorway. People formed a line to sign the book entitled, “In Memory of Benjamin Perlman.”

As if on a given signal, those on the benches stood up simultaneously. I fussed with my tie to straighten it. The Adam and Eve doors opened, and the congregation moved forward. Handkerchiefs were pulled from pockets.

Mr. Perlman was handsomely dressed in a new suit and presented in an ornately carved wooden casket. His name appeared in raised lettering on the side. Mrs. Perlman, three of the sons, and two of the daughters stood in a line to greet the guests as they viewed the deceased. Flowers extended from one side of the chapel to another. A beautiful saddle, full of red roses, decorated the casket itself. Gradually everyone returned to their seats.

The ushers opened the front entrance, and all ninety-seven members of an orchestra filed in and assembled themselves in a seating section behind the pulpit. First came the flutes, then the clarinets and a few bassoons. Twenty-three violin players followed, accompanied by the violas, the cellos, and the double basses. Four trumpet players, six horns, three trombones and a tuba player readied their instruments in the rear.

The mannequin minister—he was now flesh and blood, and with a charming personality—ascended the steps to the podium and opened with prayer. Behind him, the afternoon sun illuminated a stained glass window portraying Christ and his apostles on the Mount of Transfiguration.

“My brothers and sisters, we gather to pay tribute to a man who has crossed that great divide between flesh and spirit. You all

know him as a great craftsman. Four decades ago he covered these walls with life. That sacrifice alone required seven years. He then carved the doors, the pews, the pulpit and the organ, ordaining them, as it were, with a soul of their own.”

So continued the eulogy for the next hour, a most impressive discourse.

The minister sat down and the conductor of the orchestra led the violins in a slow-moving, low-pitched march. The woodwinds joined in and the percussion maintained a steady, *andante largo tempo*; the violins abated to allow the cellos, violas, double basses and oboes to transcend to *moderato* and gradually change from *pianissimo* to *forte*. Now the rumble of the timpani coincided with the emergence of trombones and trumpets. The rhythm shifted to that of thundering waters, a vivacious melody enhanced with a counterpoint of all the brass, and a crescendo of sixteenth notes by the enlivened violins.

As quickly as the symphony reached its climax, as quickly as a river awakens from drowsy sleep and passes in stages from a gentle wake to a thundering torrent; so also did it perish again, surrender to the silence, the escape, of a forgotten meadow or dream.

The saints and angels on the walls and ceilings were frozen: mute reminders of the efforts Mr. Perlman had expended. The minister was a mannequin again and the custodian carried him to the closet.

People began to leave, and the custodian and his son, along with the two heavysset men who had earlier carried the ladder, gazed up at the chandelier and discussed its potential for repair. A red-haired girl of eight or nine, an emerald ribbon adorning her hair, remained huddled in a pew against the wall, weeping. I left the chapel with the others, following behind the pallbearers and a few straggling bassoon players.

I've Been Adopted By a Chicken

by Rosemary Hanna

A short time ago when I moved into my new home, my friend, Ramona, who was now also my neighbor and raises backyard chickens, said with a mischievous glint in her eye, "Now you can have chickens, too." "No," I said with a pitying look, "I will stick to my Parrots," since I love parrots and would love to have a sanctuary some day.

Recently my next door neighbors, who had backyard chickens, moved out. When another neighbor and I were scavenging in the back yard we discovered that one of the chickens had been left behind. She was a mess. Obviously at the bottom of the pecking order, the entire right side and top of her head and her comb were wounded and scabbed. Her eye appeared to be missing. On top of that she was in molt.

My neighbor said that she would have her husband, Ace, kill the bird. Since I knew nothing about chickens and that one looked very unhealthy, I left it at that and went on about my life. The weekend passed.

Monday morning I was out in my yard working and looked down. Looking up at me was a chicken with a look that said clearly, "Please feed me. No one had fed me or given me water for 3 days." I threw out some wild bird seed by her. She continued to look at me with pleading. I was beginning to panic. I immediately got on the phone to Ramona and told her what had happened. She asked if I had gotten the chicken some water. And said that she would be right over with some chicken food and scratch.

I got the chicken some water and she sighed with delight as she drunk with pure and obvious pleasure and relief. By the time Ramona got there with the food the chicken was sated enough to be eating the wild bird food. Ramona's son said, "She's blind." Her injuries really looked bad. She was not a pretty sight.

I stood there looking dejected, I didn't want a chicken. Ramona knowingly looked at me and said "I can't put her in with my chickens." She then chuckled as she said, "Looks like you have a chicken."

**“I stood
there looking
dejected, I
didn’t want a
chicken”**

So, having fed and watered the chicken, I went about my day, running errands and doing yard work. She hung around and all the neighborhood kids kept asking me if I knew I had a chicken in my yard. I laughed and said. “Yeah, she got left behind so I am feeding her.” That evening I came home and couldn’t find her anywhere.

I went across the street and asked the kids if they had seen her. The oldest girl pointed to my porch. “She’s up on the stand.” Sure enough, there was the chicken bunked down for the night on the training stand that was on the porch for my parrots.

That was when I realized—I’ve been adopted by a chicken. The chicken now has a name, One-Eyed Jack, since she had in fact lost the eye. Jack for short. Her other wounds have healed, her feathers from the molt are growing in. She is starting to look pretty great. She is making herself at home all over the yard and has even used the nest box I provided to lay eggs in.

I really enjoy watching her, she has so much personality and is somewhat of a clown. She rolls in the dirt and screams with abandon as she bathes. Periodically she tight rope walks along the porch banister with the complete confidence. The wild birds are even accepting her and not flying away when she decided to partake of their fare with them. All in all, it has been pretty great that I have been adopted by a chicken.

A Perfect World

by Shirley Fifer

What would make it perfect? If every person (and child) lived the golden rule. (If you don't know what that is, that's why the world is such a miserable place.) Someone asked me today what manners are. It's what every child should learn before going to school.

In a perfect world there would be no imperfect people—selfish, demented, angry. No hunger or starving or abused children. No man or woman without work to do. No frustration from being unemployed or sick. Health care would be available and reasonable. There would never be inflation because no one would be greedy. Does this sound like Heaven? It might be. It may be that when we get there it may surprise and disappoint us if we don't learn how to live it here.

A place to start. Resolve to live the golden rule and treat others as you would like to be treated. You know and I know that I'm talking to the wrong people. We in our small circles would never influence King Midas to make better use of his money— and that's only the tip of the iceberg. Take up your pen and be heard. Education and changing minds and emotions is the only solution. Let your ideas be heard.

Normal?

by Mojo Onivert

Can anyone achieve normality?
Sit back and ponder.
Just face reality,
Or let your mind wander.

Everyone has issues
That they must withstand.
Put away the tissues
And give me your hand.

I'll be your guide.
I'll help you feel strong.
With me by your side,
You'll never go wrong.

The answer is no.
You can be formal,
And wear a bow.
But it's impossible to be normal.

You may think you are.
But still somehow,
We are all so far.
Come back to the here and now.

San Francisco

by Mary P. Garrity

San Francisco
Will always be
My fair, fair lady.
I'll seek a quiet avenue of hers
To whisper out all
My goodbyes;
But my heavy throbbing heart
Will beg for one more day.
A few of her lovers
Reach deep into
Liquid memories
To find their way of sweet return.
But should I stumble
As I exit—
I pray my fall be buffeted
In fog and
Guided down by harbor lights
The color of peaches
Washed by rain.

Angry Hornets

by Richard H. Goms Jr.

It has been raining hard the last few days, and the warming weather is melting the snow in the mountains. I raise my head from the computer screen to view a river almost up to the top of its banks out the back window of my second story apartment. I sit mesmerized by the angry white-water of thousands of gallons per second flowing by and realize that it is only the concrete embankments that keep it from flooding the ground-floor apartments. Then I remembered a time when I was young, living in the Pacific Northwest, when a swollen river brought relief to my swollen body.

My parents, my sister and I had just arrived in Longview, a small town in Washington State. I was seven, and my sister was five. It was summer, and my mother had enrolled me in a day camp to introduce me to some new friends. The major industry was logging, and many of the kids were children of employees of Weyerhaeuser Company where my father was employed. The outdoor camp was held on the west end of town along the rain-swollen Abernethy Creek that ran through a wooded area. My mother was one of the counselors. Lessons taught us about tree and shrub identification, especially poison oak and ivy. They also taught us about insect identification, such as crawling insects and butterflies.

It was my first day there, and I was quite naive about what to expect. It was a warm day, and I was just dressed in a T-shirt and shorts. Somehow I got separated from the rest of the group and began running away from the camp along a trail on the riverbank. It was fun chasing the river. Then the trail turned right, into the woods. So I followed it at breakneck speed.

Soon my joyful jaunt became a nightmare as I was engulfed in flying bugs. As parts of my body began to burn in pain, I began rolling on the ground to get them off of me and finally made it back to the river. When I got back to camp I looked like the Pillsbury Doughboy, and I felt like I was on fire from my head to my toes. As they began to pull the stingers out of my body, the counselors told

me that apparently I had overrun an underground hornet's nest and had been stung hundreds of times. After removing the stingers, they put me in the river to cool my skin and reduce the swelling. In those days, we did not have much use for doctors. I do not remember any concern about my imminent death. My mother slathered me with an over-the-counter pink medicine called Calamine Lotion for several days. When it dried, it sucked out the hornet venom and reduced swelling. Amazingly, I did not die and suffered no ill effects.

It has been fifty-five years since that encounter, and these days my bloated body cannot be blamed on hornets. Although I have had quite a few stings from hornet and other bees since that time, I have had no ill effects (except for the burning pain that is only momentary), not even swelling. It is my belief that those hundreds of stings at a young age gave me immunity to hornet venom, but I would not want to volunteer for a research study.

Lisslin the Wrench Headed Snake

by Steve Proskauer

Lisslin Long opened his eyes for the first time after hatching out on top of a large mound of eggs and looked around him. It was bright and blurry. Even when he squinted, he could hardly make out the trees and bushes around him. A few moments later Lisslin Short opened his eyes and looked around, declaring it very bright and blurry. On that Lisslin Long and Lisslin Short agreed, and it was the only time they agreed on anything.

There was nothing unusual about Lisslin except his two heads. Lisslin Long referred to his head as bigger than Lisslin Short's. "No, not bigger!" Lisslin Short constantly objected, "You and I have the same size heads! Yours is just on a longer neck, and my shorter neck is stronger than yours by far!"

"Whatever," Lisslin Long replied. "Mine is more flexible and graceful than that muscle-bound stump of yours." "It's no stump! It's the perfect size," Lisslin Short countered. "Yours is thin and floppy. It's useless!"

Short and Long bickered like this day and night. All the other little snakes found Lisslin very annoying and even his own mother was perturbed.

"How could you have let this happen to us?" Lisslin Long asked her. "All the other baby snakes have heads like mine but no extra runty little head." "NO! NO!! Not 'runty' and 'little', you arrogant creep!" objected Lisslin Short angrily.

Lisslin's mother just shrugged her shoulders. "With hundreds of you hatching out each time I lay eggs, these things happen sometimes. An occasional mutation is statistically probable and often has survival value for our species. You may be the lucky one—or is it 'lucky ones'?"

"Lucky ones, yes, thank you for recognizing my independent existence, Mama." Lisslin Short piped up in his squeaky baby snake voice. "Now if you could just convince that bonehead..." "I'd rather be a bonehead than a flathead like you," Lisslin Long shot back. It was quite true that Lisslin Short had a permanent flattop whereas Lisslin Long had an ordinary bumpy

snake skull. Not understanding their mother's answer at all, they just did their best to slither off and mingle with their siblings, writhing around in a passel of hissing and dissing.

Lisslin was the talk of the mound, and he got teased constantly. That's when Lisslin Long and Short stopped squabbling and worked together to defend themselves. They were good at it, too. When a baby snake called Lisslin "a two-headed monster," Lisslin Short replied, "Oh yeah? You're nothing but a scaly worm!" While the little teaser was looking at Short trying to think of another taunt, Lisslin Long whipped around and bit his tail. The poor little snake hissed in pain and slithered off as fast as he could slither. The word got around not to mess with the mutant, and soon Lisslin was no longer scapegoated by his hundreds of sibs. They just avoided him—or is it 'them'?

It wasn't until the snakelings had used up the nourishment from their yolks and had begun to hunt that Lisslin showed any special talent, other than to bicker between themselves—I mean, 'themselves.' Lisslin had an unexpected hunting advantage: he could confuse prey at the crucial moment right before capture. Short and Long couldn't stop bickering, even during the hunt. They kept quiet long enough to sneak up on the prey, but then they would start arguing about how to seize the prey, where to bite first, etc. All a mouse heard was loud hissing from opposite directions. The mouse was momentarily immobilized with indecision about where to flee. In that brief moment the disoriented mouse was surrounded on all sides by Lisslin's heads and necks.

Having cornered the prey, Short swept the mouse up against its flat head and mashed it against Long's curved neck, killing it boa constrictor style. If you were watching this performance, you would have the impression that the mouse had been seized in the jaws of an adjustable wrench which tightened upon it steadily until the mouse could no longer breathe. Despite all the bickering, or maybe because of it, Lisslin enjoyed a double hunting advantage—a tendency to catch prey more frequently and an ability to kill larger animals than the average snake— all because of what has become known the world over as the "hissing wrench maneuver."

Lisslin was just what his mother said he could be, a successful mutation. He grew faster and larger than his sibs and hunted more widely. A few snakes tried to imitate the hissing wrench maneuver by working together, but they always failed to

coordinate their movements, hiss loudly enough or develop the gripping force of two conjoined necks.

Everything went well for Lisslin until the day when he pursued a bunny until it slipped under a storm fence. Long slithered under the fence in pursuit, but Short thought he had a better idea. He went through a hole higher up, intending to pin the fleeing bunny from above. This would have worked just fine, except the fence wire got stuck right where Lisslin's two necks come together, which stopped him in mid hiss and hurt a lot too. Being so contrary, Lisslin got hopelessly stuck in the fence because neither Long nor Short was willing to back out and go through the way the other head had chosen—a snake has its pride, you know – so Lisslin remained stuck. Walking the fence line an hour later, Farmer Jones heard frantic hissing. At first it looked like there were two snakes having a fight, but on closer inspection he realized he'd found a rare two-headed snake.

Farmer Jones ran around the fence, grabbed Lisslin by the tail and stuffed him in a bag. Eventually Lisslin found his way to the herpetology wing at the Smithsonian Zoo, where I serve as curator. I had a chat with Lisslin, and what you've read is just a brief summary of what he told me. Naturally I heard two conflicting versions of every story, but I got a fairly clear picture anyway of what life had been like for Lisslin in the wild.

A two-headed mutation with heightened hunting ability is an exception. In previous reports concerning two headed snakes, it was rare for the two heads to be hungry at the same time and to have the same opinion about what prey to hunt. In a few cases one hungry head attacked the other. Short once bit Long in the neck during a bickering match, but that behavior ceased immediately when Long and Short realized that both felt any pain inflicted on the other.

In hopes of passing along this valuable mutation to a new generation of snakes, I tried to breed Lisslin. But when I introduced a fertile female into Lisslin's cage, Short and Long immediately started hissing over who would have her. The female was as frightened by this display as if she were Lisslin's prey. She refused to cooperate and even became aggressive. I had to remove her from the cage to prevent bloodshed.

Reproduction by natural means seemed impossible, but just when the situation appeared hopeless, I had a brainstorm. I hooded a fertile female, not wanting to arouse Lisslin prematurely.

Then I slipped another hood over Lisslin Long's head. Once a snake has accepted the hood, a state of dormancy resembling sleep follows shortly afterwards. When Long began to droop, I quickly introduced the eager female into Lisslin's cage. Short wasted no time in fulfilling his conjugal duties, undisturbed by his sleeping Siamese twin. It was easy to remove the hood a few hours later and place it on the sated and drowsy Lisslin Short's head. As soon as Long woke up, I introduced another female into the cage and he took his turn with equal enthusiasm.

It had been a productive day's work. The problem of the bickering heads had been solved and two females had been fertilized. You are probably wondering how many of the 642 fertile eggs hatched out two headed, aren't you? Well, that's an interesting story in itself. Roughly 30% of the baby snakes were two-headed, but only 10% were wrench-headed like their father. Another 10% had two identical heads on long thin necks like Lisslin Long's and another 10% had two short muscular necks like Lisslin Short's. Now I couldn't help wondering if this peculiar development had something to do with my use of the hood to cover first one head then the other. Yes, I know, that makes no biological sense, but neither does the outcome of this breeding experiment, for all the snakes born with two short muscular heads like Lisslin Short's came from the female that Short inseminated, while all the snakes born with two of Lisslin Long's long-necked heads came from the mating with Long! This finding supports the hypothesis that sex is 90% in the head.

Well, I'll bet you'd like to know what happened to those broods of baby snakes. I had hoped that they and later broods like them would be responsible for the introduction of a new species of snake into the wild. In case you haven't figured it out for yourself, the only one of the three types of two-headed snake that enjoyed any survival advantage over the common snake was the wrench-headed variety that had one long thin neck and one short muscular neck.

There were two reasons for this. First, the flat head at the end of a short muscular neck was more efficient at crushing prey, provided it had the help of a long thin neck to create a distraction, plus the snakes with two short

“There was nothing unusual about Lisslin except his two heads.”

muscular necks just didn't have the length and flexibility to create the necessary pincer effect. Likewise, the snakes with two long flexible necks could easily distract and surround prey, but lacking a flat head with a muscular neck, they couldn't effectively kill by compression. Not only that, the two long ropy necks tended to get tangled up with each other, making it easy for a mouse to slip away and escape.

Another big problem for the identicals was that snakes with two similar necks never bickered, so they hunted silently. Their necks were so alike that they lived in constant harmony. Prey never got confused by angry hissing into thinking that snakes were converging on them from two directions. Only the wrench-headed snakes bickered, and that gave them their greatest advantage in the struggle for survival in the snake world.

I deeply regret to report that the wrench-headed mutation was never able to reproduce in the wild. The two heads could never stop bickering for long enough to do the job. In the case of males, their aggressive chatter antagonized females or scared them away, while the two heads of the wrench-headed females bickered endlessly about which male should be chosen until all the males lost patience and went off to seek other partners.

I continue to keep a small colony of wrench-headed mutants breeding in our herpetarium to satisfy my own curiosity and that of the viewing public, but am only able to do so by employing hoods, as I've described. Thus, Lisslin sired only a handful of descendents compared to the large numbers I had envisioned.

Just imagine a garden infested with wrench-headed snakes. The comforting background hissing would be part of the ambiance, as it were. And having listened to the heads of generations of Lisslin's wrench-headed descendents hiss at each other, I can confidently report that none of them could beat Lisslin himself for sheer volume and duration of angry hissing. Yes, Lisslin held the distinguished title of most vigorous bickerer among all wrench-headed snakes. I know Lisslin was very proud of that title, for he told me so himself, though the two heads argued incessantly about which of them hissed the loudest and deserved the most credit.

Struggle

by Deann Porter

I struggle between my demons and my guardian.

When I try to capture the past,
the demons come out strong.

When I try to capture the future,
the guardian comes even stronger.

I struggle, struggle, and struggle to find my peace.

No peace comes.
Why can't I find the peace I seek?

At last, I have release.
No more struggles.

No more demons.
No more guardian.
Just peace.

Final Moment with My Cat, Spooky

by JoAnna Johannesen

When you have a pet you gain a child
Sometimes they romp and become wild
When they go away or die
Your heart is sad and you cry.
In time, you heal, but never forget
They are not ordinary pets.

Spooky found me 14 years ago
Each day my love for her did grow.
She took residence upon my lap
When I slept or took a nap.
She was my little girl for sure
So sweet, tender and really pure.

She Got sick and died in my arms
She felt love there, and safe from harm
I watched her take her last breathe of air
Her last touch was having me near.
'twas what she needed for her last day
As I hung my head, I did pray.

Wind

by Melissa Rasmussen

Wind
like an ardent lover
tussles hair
and tugs at skirts
blowing through
wrapping around
bringing spring

Lilac
invisible yet tactile
momentarily
sweeps away concern
bringing memories of
pleasant childhood and
dreams of children

Aprocita Now!

by Ked Kirkham

I didn't relate the two: a prick on my scalp, a touch from a point. The first might have been the blunt end of a hair as I had been neatly trimmed this afternoon, the other along the bell of my ear.

Later, not an hour if that long, I couldn't even consider I might be feeling the foot fall. It seemed so implausible. There it was, on the ridge of my cheek, oblivious of my condition. Unable to dislodge it, I watched something walk to my left, off to the side. Only one— a tiny one. The aroma of the pine boards around me soothed.

When my ear was disturbed, as often happens when the hair has grown long, or a breeze has moved the filament, I wondered. Was the Beast here inside? Then I felt a prick on the back of my neck, another on the tendon of my heel. I began to count them: three, four, on my chest beneath my shirtfront; five on my wrist. In the hair where my hatband had rested a few days past. Again, on my thumb.

Surely this was a stray lash falling into my eye, and that another stray hair from barbering! I must have been imagining things, confined in this gloom. But I've had four, five, six more pokes, pricks. These are bites, now I am certain of it. Another beneath my waistband, one above my brow, high on my cheek and then upon my chin. I have no breath to blow them away, no strength to shake them loose. I can only observe my indignity. Aprocita.

There one comes with wings, on my lid. How could it dare, though suddenly it is gone. A queen to build a new colony! Another in my boot. Six, seven, eight down along my back. Then in the dark of my trousers. No, that must be the wool of my suit! It must! Where are they coming from? How could I meet them thus? The van stops. I hear the latch open at my feet. I can feel the box grate and scratch as it is pulled out, light seeping in with swirling dust and lint, and another winged one. Two! More? A prick on my shoulder, my knee. Pray it be the wool, the trimmings.

I am certain now, it is impossible to deny I am bit beneath my arm. I feel dirt falling in fine dust, a million pricks and it grows dark again. I scream, silent as I am, "Brother Larkin, call your man to sweep the coffin shop! You have ants!"

Wrong End of a Gun

by David Ottenheimer

On a peaceful mid-February evening, Betrice, a retired IRS worker was unlocking her car door and preparing to leave the Golden Nugget casino in Wendover, after a few hours of playing Keno. That's when she felt the cold steel press against the back of her skull and the voice of another woman quietly ordering her to get in her car. She complied, then after they both were inside, looked to see who her attacker was a young woman with long dishwater blond hair and hollow looking eyes of a shark, just before a kill. Just like a shield of white cartilage closes over a shark's eyes giving the shark a more terrifying look.

"Drive." Ordered the girl.

This was the first time Betrice saw the shark eyes. In her home land of Israel where murder was the norm and all citizens are required to carry a loaded handgun; she could look into a terrorist's eyes and know if he was going to murder. She saw the look and knew she was to be murdered. Her reaction then was automatic. She didn't actually think it but her goal was to fight her attacker, create a scene and be shot and killed in that parking lot. But in the process, interrupt the hijacking, robbery, murder, hiding of her body and car theft.

They would not find her decomposed skeletal remains in a shallow grave, somewhere in the desert. She would not die quietly in the night. And so she fought. And was immediately shot close range in the face. She never heard the round but felt the terrible impact. Amazingly she kept fighting. According to the police reports, Betrice threw the killer five feet out of her car and then with her shattered bloody face, drove to the Wendover police station. And miraculously saved her own life, identified the murderous shark eyed killer, and Betrice would not be found in a shallow grave, somewhere in the Nevada desert.

Uncle Alex

by Peggy Kadir

“Uncle Alex” wasn’t Chris’s relative, just a friendly neighbor, who made him funny toys. The toys were made of wire, and sometimes included odd bits and pieces.

Chris enjoyed playing with the toys. Because they were fragile, the toys eventually succumbed to the rough treatment of the then ten-year-old Chris, and were discarded.

Now an adult and a graduate of Parson’s School of Design, Chris wishes that he had kept the toys. “Uncle Alex” turned out to be Alexander Calder, the creator of the “mobile” and a famous artist, with works displayed in museums throughout the world.

Harold in the City

by David Goodale

“Harold! Come on!”

Harold lingered by the closet, head down and toe digging at the floor, hands in his pockets.

“Mabel, where’s the mustard?”

“On the counter. I just got it at Jiffy Mart. Harold!”

“Make sure he wears something warm. It gets windy at the beach.”

“Harold get your coat! We’re leaving.”

He felt a deep rebellion within, an unknowable urge ... he would do something, but he wasn’t sure what. Or maybe he wouldn’t. He opened the hall closet door and slowly took out a coat.

“Oh, Harold, not that old thing!”

His mother and his aunt came down the hall, carrying a bag of food and some towels and other stuff for the beach.

“Helen, would you look what he’s got. Harold you’re only six! It doesn’t fit you!”

Harold put the coat on. It was a short coat for a man, almost a jacket, but on him it reached the floor. His hands didn’t even come out of the sleeves.

“Where on earth did that coat come from?”

“I got it at Goodwill,” said his mother. “The fabric is good; I was going to use some of it. Harold, get your pullover instead.”

His head came up and his blue eyes met his mother’s green ones. There was a moment of silence.

She looked away under his gaze. His aunt laughed, a little nervously. “Oh all right,” said his mother. “You know how he gets when he’s like this. We need to leave. Harold, help us out, get that umbrella over there.”

It was not windy at the beach, or especially cold, but Harold kept the coat on. The clouds thinned and the day turned nice. They found a good spot and set up the umbrella and a small stove

for hot dogs. Harold played in some driftwood until his mother called him over to eat.

“People are starting to show up,” observed Helen.

“Yeah. Harold, where are you going?”

He pointed with his hot dog at a rocky breakwater that projected out into the water. His mother frowned. “You be careful over there. Stay where I can see you.” He left.

Harold ate his hot dog as he walked, a diminutive figure on the beach, the hem of the coat dragging in the sand. With his free hand he explored the coat. In the car he had checked the outside pockets; one was fake and in the other he found a penny and a paper clip, though he didn’t want to inspect them where his mother and his aunt might see him doing it. He checked out the penny and the clip now.

At the breakwater he picked his way out onto the rocks, hampered somewhat by the coat, moving as far away from his mother and aunt as possible while still staying within sight of them.

The pockets on the inside of the coat were empty, except for one where he couldn’t seem to find a bottom for it. Finally he realized that the pocket was torn and he was reaching into the lining of the coat. He finished the hot dog and slipped his arms out of the sleeves so that he was entirely inside the coat and he could reach farther into the inside pocket. He reached farther and farther and finally he felt the inside of the hem. There was coarse sand there, and sharp little rocks. They felt strange, like tiny knives on his fingertips. When he touched them he felt a surge of energy and he was afraid but exhilarated also. Power seemed to flow into him; the sky was super-bright and charged with electricity and the ocean sounded like voices. He felt dizzy but in a few seconds the feelings faded.

There was something else inside the coat and he pulled it out: a plastic bag, the kind with a zipper-like closure, but it was torn. It had some of the sand in it but it was leaking.

He thought it over. He knew that the sand wasn’t just dirt, it was special. Whoever had owned the coat had put the sand in the plastic bag and kept it secretly inside the coat.

“Hey kid, what you got there?”

“When he touched them he felt a surge of energy and he was afraid but exhilarated also.”

Another boy approached, taller and a few years older. Harold slid his arms back into the sleeves of the coat and thrust the bag into one of the side pockets.

The kid laughed. "Your clothes are a little big for you, hunh? Hey, let's wrestle. Let's see who can get the other under water."

There were pools here and there between the rocks, some large, some small. The kid had a kind of cruel glint in his eye. Harold shook his head.

"Ah come on. I won't hurt you."

Harold met his gaze, looking into his eyes.

"Whoa, hey." The kid backed away a little. "So you're tough, hunh." He came forward again, grinning. "Come on, shrimp, it'll be all right. Don't worry, I won't drown you. If you get scared and want me to stop just go limp. I'll let up."

Harold looked over toward his mother and aunt. They were busy doing something.

"Is that your mom? Listen you don't need mommy." The kid came closer and grabbed the coat. "This isn't really yours, is it? Maybe you stole it."

Harold pulled out of his grip, stepping back. He was at the edge of the rocks; he couldn't retreat much farther. He was afraid of the kid but not too much, and he wondered why not. Then he touched the sand and remembered.

There was a time not long ago when Harold was very powerful. He could laugh and summon up a whirlwind; he could blink and make a tree fall over. He could make lightning; he could change things into other things just by thinking.

Was this crazy? Could it be true? He knew it was true, though it happened in another place that was far away. He didn't think about it much anymore.

But it was true. That's how it was last year, when he was only five and not six like he was now. He and his mother had lived in a town out in the country, not at all like this big city with the beach. He liked it in that town. Everyone was real nice to him, sort of too nice. They smiled a lot and they were eager to give him pieces of pie and nice stuff to eat. He thought they liked him but then he figured out they were afraid of him. They knew that if he got angry terrible things could happen.

And something bad did happen. He got real mad, he

couldn't remember exactly why, but he remembered that someone said something mean and had a mean look on their face. There was a big whirlpool of blinding light and the ground swelled up and threw Harold down. When he got back up things were changed. There was just dirt where some of the homes and buildings used to be.

Later when he was in bed he heard his mother talking to his aunt. They thought he was asleep. His mother said in a low voice: "Half the town is gone ... just gone." In the days after that his mother was kind of quiet and serious, and Harold knew he had done something bad. Then he and his mother moved to be with his aunt in the big city. And he didn't have the power anymore.

The bigger boy stepped toward him, grinning, reaching for him. Harold's fingers touched the grains of sand. They were sharp; they bit into his skin, but he didn't care. He felt the power flowing in and out of him.

The other boy stumbled, seemed to collapse, folding in like a crushed soda can. His face briefly registered shock and horror and then he was gone with a pop and a thin spray of pinkish liquid.

On their way home Harold sat in the back seat, looking out the window at the homes and streets going by. He didn't much like the big city.

"Harold, what did that boy want? The one you were talking to on the breakwater?"

His aunt, in the front passenger seat, twisted around to look at him. Harold just shrugged.

"What is that on your face?"

His mother was looking at him in the rear view mirror. His aunt reached back and daubed at him with a Kleenex. "You need a shower, mister. What did you get into? It's on the coat!"

She kept trying to clean him up but he didn't mind too much. He was more at peace than he had been before.

He felt the plastic bag with the gritty sharp sand. Later he would carefully gather all the sand and little rocks from the coat and the leaking bag and put them in another bag, one that wasn't ripped.

He decided he was thirsty.

"Harold! Where did you get that?" He was sipping a cup

of hot cocoa. His aunt stared at the steam rising from the cup.
The two women gave each other a long look.

Harold stared out the window. He liked the country better.
He didn't like the city.

About Me

by Edde Aguirre

This is a poem about me
The emotions I have make stings
The love I've felt is clean
My past seems to bring me
Where my goals say evermore.
Where my desires are on fire.
Where my mind takes up time
To a place I go far, so I can
draw my dreams apart.
Make dreams into goals
Use your goals as dreams
And think about what's next
Cuz the world came back instead
Have fun while you are young
While making impressive brain flexes
Proving that I'm not still
Throw a direction so friends can heal
Making sounds through the waves
I was raised to say my state
In a daze that makes me play
Thinking of my stuff
About me talks about
What my life has brought

The Secret Life of Daydreams

by Rachel Lowry

Beneath the mundane of day-to-day events,
Beyond the solidity of moment-by-moment happenings,
Behind the veil of seemingly transparent dealings
Lies a secret life of Daydreams.

Come, come away with me
and together we'll tiptoe barefoot beyond the edge of our dreams.
We'll gallop through the unmarked terrain of our skies
and peer into the pools of the unknown,
casting ripples upon the stagnation of our fears.

Together we'll shout the battle cry of viva, viva
And whisper melodious secrets into the ears of children.

We'll slow dance with Shakespeare
And fly with Pan and Wendy.
We'll feast upon French pastries with Poe's delusionaries,
twirling against fiery horizons with the Bronte sisters.

After spending a day with dandelions,
We will compose symphonies of unrehearsed serenades
that sound like drops of honeydew sprinkled upon a golden sunrise.

Herein lies the secret life of daydreams

Found

by John Wilkes

(with first line taken from the tv listing The Academy Awards)

Sure fire crowd pleaser	Make it big
This one's gonna be a hit	Then I'll be forever
With the readers	Waiting at bus stations
The literary critics	Laid-over at airports
People waiting at bus stations	Taking trains to the city
Laid-over at airports	Flying running rushing
Or taking the train to the city	From taxi to taxi
Where a homeless guy	Barnes & Noble on Monday
Will discover it in	Borders next Tuesday
A dumpster near	Walden Books Wednesday
Where he ate and slept	Babbling on talk shows Thursday
And he'll turn out to be	Family Fun Center Friday
An alcoholic former publisher	Taking weekends off to write
Looking for that perfect poem	Until I'm an alcoholic former writer
To revitalize his career	Re-writing poems I read
And I'll be the writer	On public restroom walls
He's been looking for	Editing stories that I discovered
All his life to help him	In the dumpster that I ate from
Make a name for himself	And that I fell asleep in.

The Lawn Gnome Story

by Timothy Nahalewski

On December 23, 2012 shopping supercenters around the world will crumble under the hands of the lawn gnomes. Lawn gnomes around the world will come alive and wreak havoc in every major city. They will terrorize every man woman and child with cattle prongs. They will surround homes and office buildings with propane tanks and C4. They plan to dig under the white house deep enough to create a portal between our world and the smurf world where Master Gnome will take over. Then Master Gnome will fight papa smurf to the death for the power of both worlds. And when pain and chaos is over and humanity ceases to exist, Master Gnome will rule with an iron but admittedly plastic first slowly conquering other worlds in desperation to find a large cork screw. The cork screw is the key to freedom and immortality. On exactly midnight on December 23, 2112 he will raise the cork screw to the sky and release the lid of the test tube and open our world to the outside world where aliens started the creation of our world for the purpose of finding a cure for the common cold.

Left in the Dark?

by Sherrie Nielsen

Living alone is depressing. It's like being in the dark. I am so lonely. It's not fun being by myself. I am wondering if I will ever meet someone who will like me for who I am. Would someone hear my cry for someone who would care for me?

Catfish is in my heart. I want a Catfish in my life forever. I wish he was holding me in his arms every night. If I had a Catfish, I wouldn't be lonely anymore. I don't think anybody else should have me, but Catfish.

Does Catfish hear me? He hears me when he wants to hear me. When we are together, we talk a lot. He tells me the way he feels about me. While he is always nice to me, sometimes I feel the computer means more to him than me. I will always love him and have special feelings in my heart for him. He told me he is so happy to spend time with me, and I am happy to be with him, too.

Nameless

by Michael Sanchez

He's running hard in the dark morning hours—needing to hide and become whole again. His high is ending. Falling apart is overpowering, making it hard to get to the safe place pictured in his mind—a mind that's slipping away, unfocused, fractured. Breathing is difficult, requiring all his will to inhale. Losing control is frightening and horrific. His heart with its free flowing emotions is broken from brought on by withdrawing from humanity. Human touch is so vital to survival that its disappearance slowly kills. His isolating shame hurts him deeply, but he didn't see a way out except for the way he discovered long ago.

What he really wants are those who love him...or used to love him. Sadly, it didn't matter—they're gone. Or maybe it was he who disappeared. He didn't know anymore. As it is now, he isn't near any help. Aside from the trees watching this moment, he's alone.

"Trees are good", he was thinking to himself, vaguely remembering it said that trees are ever-watchful guardians. They'll guard and keep him from everyone. Finding the right trail and following it into a small grove, he sat to help release the confusion and sorrow consuming him. Fragmented memories which led him to this spot reminded him of a familiar safety.

Tears streamed from his eyes as freely as rain from storm clouds as he got his fix ready. He knows too well how to make happiness in a needle. Quickly making what he needs, he inserted the thin metal into his cold, damp skin. With joy entering his veins, he was feeling the only thing left in his world. Surging relief mixed with blood that provided the remaining life in his emaciated body. With guilt vanishing, pain and regret melted away. No matter what he did to heal his body and soul, this was the only thing that worked.

As the miracle of being high took him, the night that began his trials vividly appeared in his mind. He wants to be free of him, the man named Christian—his stepfather. Yet his emotions give him conflicting thoughts and feelings. He wants to be comforted

by Christian but free of his grasp. Injecting wonders into himself didn't chase away the memories. Sitting in the grove, he remembers that this seventeenth year began as it should for seventeen year old boys until that moment with Christian.

Christian married mom and, wanting to be friends, was a good one for six years. He was like that in the beginning. The kindness and compassion he showed mom and her two boys were what they needed. He took care of the family. He was a light in the darkness until the darkness absorbed his light, creating a threat that was too strong to stop. Christian, his stepfather, began to give strange looks. Looks with no decipherable meaning until the first night.

Mom and his younger brother were out when Christian first came to him. Awakened by the creaking his bedroom door made when slowly opened, he heard soft footprints crossing the carpet. The bed shook with the weight of another person. His senses were forced into alertness when a hand covered his mouth while another took firm hold of his throat.

A rough voice whispered 'shut-up' when he tried to speak. The voice spoke again, this time threatening his family with pain if he didn't obey. The threats didn't scare him as much as the presence—the presence he was trapped beneath. The stronger body positioned itself on top of him. He didn't understand until the hands moved elsewhere. The fear he felt was for his family, for the family that was being destroyed.

Fear didn't end that night, or the second night, or the many nights that followed in the first three months. He felt caged at home and defenseless in his room. Time expanded, slowing as his helplessness grew. Needing help, he turned to his mom to save him but he only learned to resent her.

After months of pain...humiliation...degradation, she was told everything. He literally cried and begged for help, but mom care more for the feelings Christian gave her in her heart and between her legs. She rejected her son because her loyalty to his stepdad made her feel complete. Mom was too broken when his real father left. In her mind, her standing as a woman, someone who had a husband and could provide for him, melted way when dad left. She couldn't handle another man, whether it's her new husband or son, ruining the happiness she decided she deserved. Her mind didn't let her believe the truth. 'Christian was a good man and would never do that.' Christian's presence makes her feel

whole—rendering her useless as a mother. There after she spurned her helpless son and swept everything under the rug.

After several months, Robert, his younger brother, discovered the abuse when he found them in bed. It left the younger boy shocked and confused. Thereafter, Robert tried to prevent leaving his big brother alone with stepdad, but he was thirteen and could only do so much.

Needing support he lays back on the cool earth. His body's energy was flowing out of him into the dirt, plants, and trees causing a tingling sensation he imagined only bugs could create. The idea of bugs eating his body amused him.

He tried a combina- pitfalls. He to regain which the road Slowly his healthy only again before into anger and them he didn't feel causing him to get thinner, from a life giving tree.

**“Injecting
wonders into
himself didn't chase
away the
memories”**

rehab which resulted in tion of successes and played sports trying the self-confidence helped him build to completeness. body would get to be taken by drugs fumbling backwards self-loathing. With hunger and wouldn't eat withering like a leaf once it's plucked

Several doctors said that, given his family's history, his heart could fail. That's how his real, loving dad died. His parents were separated for five months before dad's heart stopped. Remembering his father's death made him feel conflicted. Giving into temptation allows him an escape while denying himself the easy way out forces him to confront the pain of healing. It hurt too much to feel the uncertainty and weakness needed to become human again. Staring into the pieces of his soul made him powerless against something too big to handle, leaving only despair. A year ago Phillip came into the picture. He met Phil, the reliable hero, when collage was attempted. Phil was the role model to mimic in every possible way and was the only person to get him into rehab. At first, stepdad was the man to be like. But Phil, even in his youth, had strengths that are craved. As the friendship grew, Phillip discovered the drugs but didn't know about stepdad until later. When he found out the hero wanted to kill the old man but the discipline and self-control he was admired for prevented

it. “Phillip showed me true compassion,” he thought lying on the ground. Sadly, a best friend couldn’t fill the void left by two fathers. For four years, Christian’s control and degrading touch overwhelmed him, crushing his spirit. Dignity left him. How could it not? He didn’t understand why he had to endure this from the “protector” of the family. He lived with abuse until he was twenty-one. He waited that long to make sure that man never touched his baby brother. That man never did. Robert’s too strong willed to let anything happen to him. Yet he wondered how many twenty-one year olds have to go through this. He’s supposed to be on his way to manhood, not live as someone’s toy. As he lay there, staring blankly at the starts, he knew he was weak. How could this happen? If only I’d been stronger!

Many times plans for killing that man came to mind. The more he thought of it, the easier it would be. But even if the chance came he knew he couldn’t. The humanity that he struggled to regain didn’t allow for murder.

Occasionally, he recalls running through a field or up and down a basketball court with friends. He remembers playing sports with Robert. He misses the simple joys of life— walking around the neighborhood, seeing gardens or a car parked crooked. He wants it...and more. Growing inside him is the desire for freedom. He feels it through the numbness, sensing it through his messed-up mind, seeing it through his cluttered consciousness. That “thing” at home took his will. Mom discarded his safety. The joy-in-a-needle took his choices.

No longer! He’s going to win. He’ll live again. He’ll be a true big brother to Robert. He’ll be a true friend to Phillip. As for mom...she’ll be on her own. She betrayed him to the evil at home and didn’t care for her anymore.

Lying in the shadows of the trees, the ever-watchful guardians, renewed spirit grew within making his heart beat quicker. He’ll win this! Christian...dear old stepdad...the thing...the evil that’s a hypocrite to its name, will be taken down. “It” can’t touch him in this hiding place and never will again. His new resolve is taking away the feelings of self-pity and leaving him with clarity of thought. The possibilities of his future became as clear as the sky above him.

He will re-enter rehab because he wants to be better. Even during his greatest highs he clung to the thought of being clean. He imagined everyone’s shock at how much better and stronger he’ll

be. "I will be whole," he thought to himself.

Opening his tear-filled eyes he saw the trees watching from above. Even they smiled back at him. Their silhouettes swayed in the light breeze as the morning sunlight extinguished the stars and put out the street lamps. He's feeling tired but strangely free as if his body's melting away. Slipping into sleep, he knew that everything will be okay. The future will be without the pain of this haggard life. Smiling at himself as he caught the beginning of a brightly lit dream, sleep took him away...

He never woke up.

Love Lost

by Susan Adams

Sometimes it's foreboding, like a winter storm.
Sometimes it's as subtle, as a summer breeze.
This pain inside me, it never goes away.
I did not ask for you, Pain.
I asked for joy. I had joy.
Then you came.
Love, you betrayed me.
You promised me joy and gave me pain.
Why did no one warn me?
Surely they knew.
Even my friends were silent.
Because you gave me pain,
I will never trust you, Love.
Never again.

The Big Picture

by Debbie Freeman

As we sit in a classroom
Listening to a lecture
I feel like a hot air balloon.
Are we all looking at the big picture?
Do we hear what is being said?
When I look around
The faces look so different
What is it that we should learn?
As I sit and listen
I feel like I'm there
Is it England or Scotland?
Will I find out soon?
As the lecture goes on
The Professor is trying to describe
The pictures of the past
As we look into the future.
As the lecture draws to an end
The Professor tries to explain
How the past creates the future
We just need to see the big Picture.

Pantoum

by Winifred M. Walker

Here I am back where I started, weary, discouraged and blue.
Gentleman Luck has departed, victories seem to be few.

Weary, discouraged and blue, what shall I write in my journal?
“Victories seem to be few; pain and despair are eternal.”

What shall I write in my journal other than ballad or ode?
Pain and despair are eternal, causing my hopes to erode.

Waving a cheerful goodbye, Gentleman Luck has departed.
Ready to have a good cry, here I am back where I started.

The Secret of White Deer Valley

by Richard H. Goms Jr.

It was getting dark, that summer day in 1987, when I saw the sign to the Allenwood Federal Prison Camp on the two-lane highway to Williamsport. Sitting next to me in the car was my half-brother, Denny. He was thirteen years older than myself and the first time we had spent any time together since I was little.

Just to orient myself for the next day's visit, I drove the long, straight road until we came to the entrance to the penitentiary. It was well lit with spotlights. Just as I was getting ready to turn around and head back to look for a motel, a gruff voice emanated from a loudspeaker.

"What do you want?" he said.

"We would like to come back and survey the cemetery at the Old Stone Church, if possible." I replied.

"Come back tomorrow and talk to the warden."

The next morning, we rolled up to the gate and were accosted by the loud speaker again.

Denny leans over nonchalantly and says, "Did you know that I used to be an inmate here when I was convicted of grand theft."

"What!" I blurted in surprise. I sat there shell-shocked. I knew he had been in some trouble with the law when he was younger, but that was in Minneapolis. Who would have thought he would spend time in a prison so far away.

And then it hit me. What happens if they investigate us and learn about his record? What will they think about his return like this? Will we be arrested?

I tried to think of options. I couldn't just turn around and drive away; they might think we were trying to pull some criminal act and were chickening out and then chase after us. I came such a long way and really wanted to survey the cemetery for our ancestors . . . And the man on the loudspeaker was waiting for a response. What should I do?

How did I get into this predicament? A few months earlier, Denny had lost his job and apartment in San Francisco. I took him into my home in Salt Lake City, with my wife's approval. I hoped that

with his sales and computer operations backgrounds, he could drum up more business for my declining technical support company. Hopefully he could generate enough income so that I could support my family, and he could live with us until he could afford a place of his own.

Previous to that, marital problems had lead to counseling. But with the loss of clients due to a declining economy, and then to bring a stranger with questionable values into a house with young children was the last straw for her. When she kicked us out, Denny and I moved into my office for a short time until I lost that too.

I was under contract to complete a final project for a client, which meant a trip to Pensacola, Florida. Since I could not leave Denny there, I brought him with me. After the project was completed, and since we were in no hurry, we decided to visit some historical sights, some relatives, and do some genealogy research on the way back.

“...my attention rested on a stone church at the top of a hill...”

I was tracking our great grandfather, Robert G. Shuler, who died in Minneapolis in 1907. According to his death certificate he was born in 1827 in Uniontown, Pennsylvania, a son of Samuel Schuler. The Civil War record of Robert's brother showed that he was born in White Deer Valley. Maps showed that White Deer Valley was in Lycoming County, near Williamsport, and Uniontown was now named Allenwood. But there was no proof of family relationships in the government records or the local newspaper. Previous genealogy library research had determined that an Schuler or Shuler family was buried in one or two cemeteries in and around the prison.

Composing myself, I asked to see the warden. The gate opens, and we entered the prison as free men. I signed my name to the visitor register, and Denny signed, using a name he used after he legally changed it. After getting permission from the warden, we were assigned an escort and passed through a security gate into a fenced area full of orange jumpsuits. It appeared to be such a relaxed atmosphere. As we followed the escort's car along a dirt road for a ways, Denny told me that the prison camp was a minimum-security facility for mostly white-collar criminals and even housed

the Watergate conspirators for a time.

As I looked around, my attention rested on a stone church at the top of a hill and what appeared to be a large number of stakes protruding from the ground next to it. As we drew closer, it became obvious that what appeared to be stakes from a distance were really tombstones in a cemetery next to the church. After parking, I got out my camera and took a couple of pictures of the church. For about an hour, we searched the cemetery, one row at a time, looking for the name of Schuler, Shuler or any similar spelling, but to no avail.

We were told that there was another church and cemetery on the outside of the back fence of the camp, but it was not well-marked, and we must traverse a nature preserve for several miles from the main road to get to it.

As the Allenwood Federal Prison Camp grew smaller in the rear view mirror, my sense of worry and panic also grew smaller.

Following the highway, I made a left turn onto the next main road. After driving for a while, we stopped at a farmhouse to ask directions. Yes, they knew where it was and told us how to get there. As we followed the directions, the asphalt road became narrower and rougher until it turned into a narrow dirt road. The forest of the game preserve became thicker and darker as I thought to myself, "There is nothing out here." Finally, we came to the back fence of the penitentiary.

To the left was a gate with a beautiful stone monument announcing the "Washington Presbyterian Church." The ruins of a small church, covered with a thick layer of dark, blue-green moss, greeted us as we entered and parked. The graveyard was much larger than I thought it would be, surrounded by a low stonewall, and immaculately groomed. Denny took a nap while I walked up and down the rows of tombstones.

It was overcast and had been raining, on and off, in this area all morning. When the sun came out and warmed the ground, a light fog rose to envelope the cemetery and surrounding forest. After about an hour of searching, I found the headstone of Samuel Schuler, his wife, Margaret, and several children together in one plot. Leaning against a stone wall was the headstone of another son. I took pictures of the tombstones and transcribed the engravings that stated the children's relationships to the mother and father. Sadly, there was still no proof of relationship to my great grandfather. Looking again, I noticed that one of the tombstones had

settled into the earth over the years, and there were parts of a sentence visible behind the two-inch grass. Getting on my knees and digging with my fingers, I uncovered what I was seeking—“Erected by his brother, Robert G. Shuler.”

No. 3 Constine Court

by Dr. Paulette Cross

That row of nine obscure houses
Setting back off the street with a lot in front
Our first real home—
A two-story, six-room house with a cellar and a back yard
No. 3 Constine Court will always stay in my memories

That house which God blessed with a baby girl, Valerie
Where we watched our first programs on a new blond television set
Where fragrances of gladiolus, tulips, and daisies from
mother's garden filled the air
Where the government hired Mom to work for them
Where I received my second dog, Queenie, a German Shepherd
from the man that ran over my black Cocker Spaniel
No. 3— that was our house in The Court

The Court, a family of peoples:
The Hadvaces, Calkins, Storms, Eberhardts and Grays
Neighbors who gathered on hot evenings in the lot
And gossiped with each other
While children played games of hide and seek, jacks,
double dutch, tag, and cowboys and indians
And even caught lightening bugs
Right in front of No. 3 Constine Court

That house which hosted scout meetings
Sheltered us during lunch hours at home from school
where we talked of recess activities and church school
And as home to many friends for a night or a weekend
or even the whole summer
No. 3 Constine Court

Attending choir rehearsal and vacation bible school
at Mt. Zion Baptist Church
Happened while living at No. 3

Learning to swim at the “Y”
Trick or treating for UNICEF at Halloween
No matter where we were or how far
Coming up Hazle Street across the tracks
Or going down Main Street past Abe’s Hot Dog Stand
And turning down Cinderella Street
From a day of swimming at Minor Park for so long
That the journey home we searched for soda bottles
To buy candy and pretzels to ease the hunger pains
From a marvelous day of water games
It seemed as if No. 3 would never appear in sight.

But there it is— the lot
and No. 3 Constine Court
our house
setting among a row of nine obscure houses

OUR FIRST REAL HOME!!!

Don't Cry

by William J. Pappas

Let the bell ring twelve
Let the drums roll
Fire the rifles twenty one times
Don't cry.

I have lived—now—
I must die
I'm sorry—please forgive
As I do

God accept your child
He now sleeps on earth
And plays in heaven.

I am Old

by Mary P. Garrity

I am old.

I don't mind.

What I really minded
was the getting here.

There is a smugness
about resignation
that I should despise.

For old age is
the only pain Christ
never knew.

Who can possibly pray to a God
twenty years their junior?

Maybe that's why lately
I've been talking a lot
to his Dad.

The Arrival

by Jenny McCoy

Bess sat on a bench waiting patiently for the arrival of her daughter, Dana. It had been a long time since she had been able to hold her, talk to her and tell her that she loved her. Bess knew she was early and expected more people to be there soon, but she wanted some time to think about the past and about how this special reunion might play out.

Dana was Daniel and Bess's oldest daughter. She was a happy child with few problems, average in most ways but special in many. She struggled in math but excelled in music and painting. Dana enjoyed other children and made many friends all throughout her life. She was popular, sociable and kind. She went to college and studied to become a school teacher and worked in the local school district as a third grade teacher until she met and married Chad Bingham, a good man, great provider and loving husband. In time the Bingham's had four children, two boys and two girls. They were all healthy and happy.

Bess enjoyed the visits and holidays with her family, especially her grandchildren. When the visits ended, she missed them terribly. She hoped it was not selfish of her to be happy that she was about to see Dana again.

"Bess," a soft but cheerful voice greeted her. "May I join you?"

"Oh, Sylvia, of course! Sit," she said, patting the bench seat next to her.

"I see you got here early," Sylvia smiled and winked. Bess grinned.

"It shows?"

"Nothing wrong with missing your kin," Sylvia reassured her friend. The two sat quietly on the bench watching the crowd as they greeted their friends and family members at their arrivals. Bess had only known Sylvia for a few months, but she had been wonderful support, especially since the waiting began. She seemed to know exactly what to do and say to help her friend through this very difficult time.

A man's voice called out, "Look, is

**"No words
were needed
to make
the reunion
wonderful."**

that her?" A woman appeared from the foggy mist to find her family waiting for her. Their joyful reunion brought a tear to Bess's eye. Sylvia patted her friend's hand.

"Is Daniel coming soon?" her friend asked.

"Yes he should be here any time." Bess was showing signs of nervousness. Sylvia took Bess's hand in hers.

"This is a good thing," Sylvia said.

"Yes, but those children will miss her so." Bess's voice wavered.

"Just for a while, Bess," Sylvia comforted her friend, "just a little while."

Daniel, Bess's husband appeared and touched Bess's shoulder gently. He knew her worry and concerns. "Morning, Sylvia," Daniel greeted their friend with a nod. Sylvia returned the nod. The two women made room for Daniel on the bench.

Moments passed without words. "It should be any time now," a familiar voice said. The trio on the bench looked up to find that several more family members had appeared to await Dana's arrival. "We cannot wait to see her again!"

"Thank you for coming," Daniel greeted each in turn. Mark, you are looking well." A kind looking man raised his hand in greeting.

A white haired woman stepped close to Bess. "The last time I saw Dana she was just beginning to show signs of the illness." She touched Bess's face lightly. "It has been a long, hard fight."

"We're so glad it's over." Daniel said, his soft blue eyes smiling.

"Nothing but health and good things from here on out!" The growing crowd agreed and nodded their support.

"I worked at the airport for years," Mark commented, "but it was never this busy!" he said, looking around.

There was a murmur of excitement a short distance away. Another arrival was happily greeted by his family. Bess tried not to be impatient.

She looked around at the growing number of people who had gathered to meet Dana. Her heart swelled. She heard some of the quiet comments that were being made about Dana: "I liked that time she cooked the whole dinner for Easter." a voice said. Bess knew it was her sister Laurel.

"She is a wonderful, musician..." another voice said.

"When I had my car accident, she took all three of my children until Russell could get more help. Thank goodness Dana was there for him."

"She has always been so selfless."

"My daughter, Mandy always wanted to look like Dana..."

"Jenny too, always fixing her make up like her cousin Dana."

“Did you know that Dana writes pretty good poetry?”

“That summer she came over and helped me weed my garden she found the cherry tomato bush and had herself a feast!” There was a buzz of quiet laughter that followed. All of them knew how much Dana loved tomatoes.

“What does she look like now?” Bess heard a voice ask. It had been so long that even Bess was not sure. She worried that she would not recognize her own daughter. What kind of a mother... Her thought was interrupted.

“Is that her?” Sylvia’s soft voice asked. Bess looked in the direction of the entrance. A beautiful, brown-haired woman entered slowly and paused as she searched the crowd. Her eyes were soft and blue, like her father’s, her lips exactly like her mother’s. Dana saw her mother and smiled. Bess’s heart attempted to leap from her chest. In a moment, Bess was enveloping her daughter, tears flowing freely from their eyes, love spilling out around them all. Dana shook as the sobs were muffled in her mother’s embrace. No words were needed to make the reunion wonderful. Words would have gotten in the way. The crowd waited as the mother and daughter bonded. Soon, Daniel held his daughter and thanked God she was there. In turn, everyone greeted Dana and welcomed her. Many were seeing her for the first time and shared their happiness at finally knowing her. All were glad she had made it safely.

Slowly the crowd thinned and only Dana, her parents and Sylvia remained. Dana turned to Sylvia. “You were my nurse.” she said, almost as a question.

“Only at the beginning.” Sylvia responded. My job there ended when the earthquake hit and I came here. That’s when Rose took over.”

“That’s right, Dana said remembering. “I’m sorry,” she added.

“It’s all right,” Sylvia said. “I like it much better here.” I have many friends and lots of family, and,” she added, “I can still help people.”

Dana, her parents and her first new friend turned and walked with the other new arrivals toward the two great white gates that opened into Heaven.

How To Make Salsa

by Susan Adams

Step One: Pick tomatoes.

- A. Don't pick the rotten ones. They'll kill you.
- B. The bugs between your toes won't kill you, keep picking.
- C. Take out the tomatoes that made the bucket heavy.
- D. Take tomatoes to kitchen. Remove shoes first or you'll have to clean up the mud.

Step Two: Peel tomatoes.

- A. Put a large pot on stove to boil water.
- B. Place tomatoes into boiling water
- C. Put ice on burns from boiling water.
- D. See why the dog is crying.
- E. Explain to four year old why dogs don't like to wear doll cloths.
- F. Return to kitchen.
- G. Throw out yucky tomato mess.
- H. Start over with step one.

Step Two B: Peel tomatoes.

- A. Clean large pot.
- B. Put large pot on stove to boil water.
- C. Place tomatoes in boiling water, be careful this time.
- D. Answer the door bell.
- E. Hide fifteen boxes of Girl Scout Cookies.
- F. Return to kitchen.
- G. Throw out yucky tomato mess.
- H. Step Three: Go to store to buy tomatoes.

Behind Closed Doors

by Annalee Parkinson

Dedicated to the courageous women who have found freedom from domestic violence

I walk in and see her
Her eyes are filled with mistrust and fear
Her world has fallen apart
Caused by one she thought so dear

She sits across from me
A tissue in her hand
She tells me of her story
How she had to meet his demands

She speaks of all the things he called her
These names she can't forget
She hears them over and over again
Like a tape playing in her head

She cries some more, I softly smile
And look her in the eyes
She says "I'm sorry for crying"
And continues to tell me of her life

I don't know what happened
We got along so well
I couldn't believe he hit me
He made me promise not to tell

He told me he was sorry
That I shouldn't have made him mad
He said he would not hit me again
And he was all I had

I forgave him for hitting me
I guess I should have shut up
But I had to speak up and say something
When he kicked our little pup

When he hit me the second time
I really was in shock
The only thing that I had done

Was go for a little walk

I guess I should have asked him
If it was okay
I just don't get it, I don't understand
Why he acts that way

Then he walked back in the room
He told me he was sorry
He touched my hair, and cleaned me up
Said I shouldn't make him worry

Again he said he was sorry
That I was the one to blame
That he worried about me and the baby
Couldn't wait till our daughter came

I guess I should have asked him
I am the one to blame
I will never do that again
I feel so stupid and ashamed

It's been several years, the kids kept coming
He didn't seem to mind
As long as I did what he said
And never spoke my mind

This only happens when he gets really really mad
The beatings, slapping, raping only happen because I'm bad
I listen to him scream and yell, and call me degrading names
Then he'll pull out his gun, tell me to stop playing games

The children have learned to stay in their rooms
When Dad is in a mood
We always walk on egg shells
All he does is brood

I'm sorry that I'm rambling
I wanted to get away
He couldn't take it anymore
Then told us we could not stay

Kicked us out because he didn't like the meal that I had made
Began to scream, threw it in my face
Grabbed the gun and we all ran away

I had a friend who told me
About the CCWA
Said you guys would help me
And I'd have a place to stay

I feel so embarrassed
I have no money for a room
I'm so scared, I have no family
I don't know what to do

I have no job, he has the car
There's many things I lack
Can you please help me to be strong
So I don't end up going back?"

She looks at me for answers
I'm not sure what to say
I start out by telling her
She doesn't deserve to be treated that way

I tell her that I'm proud of her
For having the courage to walk away
I tell her that she's finally free
From his mean and controlling ways

I tell her we are going to help her
We will do the best we can
But in the end, the choice to stay away from him
Is totally in her hands

She nods her head in agreement
Says she's afraid to do this on her own
I tell her we are all here for her
And she is not alone

Those of the Wing'd Capacity

by Rachel Lowery

It was morning, but the sky was **silenced**, still, by the **dominance of night**. She knew well the pull of gravity, the weight of the stars beyond the horizon.

But she also remembered **dawn**.

She slipped her feet from her shoes, slowly placing her toes upon the **thin, white sheet of frost** that blanketed the dark underlying pavement. Toe, then ball, then heel. She drew them, pointedly, across the ground, one step, two step, three step. Slowly, the arms around her cold body came to her sides, fingers parting in **sudden tremor**. The tight knot above her head came loose, locks of tresses enveloping her shoulders. The fabric that once clung to her core blew against her, rising and falling with the heaving in and out of her chest.

And then she danced; she danced until her heart **thundered from within**; until her eyes need not remain open; until the ground ceased to meet her feet and the **birds be her sole companions**.

No Place For Rage

by Joseph Lindberg

I didn't expect it to hurt, but I should have. When one slams his fist against a random car's windshield, as it leisurely drove by and the laws of physics dictate that it should hurt or break bones. I did expect the window to break and the driver or passenger to get out and yell at me, neither of which happened. My black heart was screaming for a fight. My fingers nails clawed into my palms and now my fist throbbed painfully.

I felt blind, seething anger, from my shoulder blades to my groin. I hadn't been in a fight since the Wrestling championships and I wanted to dominate someone, to feel myself disintegrate in hateful conflagration. There was one person I had in mind to fight: Coach Anderton, but I didn't know where he was. He wasn't coaching any more, no address left in the phone book. God how I wanted to beat his lying ass. But he was gone, some vicarious victim would have to substitute himself for Coach.

I didn't care about the future, my life was so messed up, fighting couldn't hurt it. I believed it, because the seething, visceral anger had convinced me. It was as if my life were an empty page, and in anger I would fill it with full of scribbled errors and regrets.

I walked down that gaudy road, past cheap bill boards and smoke shops, recruiting stations, fly by night law firms, beer bars, on until my feet burned. I wasn't even sure where I was. The Sun behind clouds was descending toward the horizon and still no candidate, no victim, only traffic. I poked my head into a couple of beer bars, and the bar tenders were cordial, and too substantial to challenge. No middle weight, bad ass wanted to take me on.

My steady breath from walking so far was relaxing me by degrees and I got hungry. I saw the most outlandish title for what could have been a restaurant or a religious reading room, The Staff of Life, I'd ever seen in this part of town. In fact, I'd never noticed it until now. I went in and there were religious books on shelves, a table with a tin urn full of tea, and then a curtain over a threshold to another room. I had the vague sense that I had dreamed of the place or seen it. Perhaps something like it had been featured in

scene from a movie.

My feet had gone from burning to a dull ache and I sat down. Then a woman with very striking features—very thin—moved gracefully through the threshold. She was smiling benignly. I stood up and made an attempt to explain what I was doing there, but her gaze silenced me. She intimated that I didn't need to talk. She held to teacups, one in each hand, daintily from her pinkies.

With a flourish she filled one of them and gave it to me, then she filled the other and sipped it, smiling the whole time. I guess she wanted to reassure me the tea was safe. What could it hurt? I drank. It was a green tea, with hints of citrus, if there were drugs I didn't taste them. We sat for a long time, but each time I made a motion to speak, she made a motion or gesture for me to remain silent.

I felt very relaxed now, the anger very distant, but I was still hungry. She moved closer grasped my hand gently but firmly and pulled my arm up suggesting that I rise. Then lead me into through the threshold into a very darkly lit room. I could tell it was painted crimson, with guilt molding, in the center was a table much like the table with the tea, but there were loafs of home made bread with dishes of butter and spices in them. The room was lit very dimly by a electric light chandelier. Surrounding the table were four chairs. She sat in one and motioned for me to sit across from her.

She began breaking the bread and buttering it, then set it in front of me to eat. I was very hungry, and I felt very comfortable there, even though it was dream like. My anger had all but shrunk to something very safe and containable. I ate ravenously, quite rudely, almost unaware of her presence. Sometimes, when I looked up, I noticed her watching me, quite pleased.

Then suddenly she stood up, and her robe seemed crimson in the half-lit room. She looked menacing and I watched her. I was terrified. Her eyes rolled far back toward the lids and she finally spoke, "Here is no place for rage." Then she made a sweeping motion from her shoulders to her groin. I suddenly felt something worse than panic kick in. I was gripped with a nausea and terror more primordial than life. I wondered if I'd been poisoned. It was as if black bile

"It was as if my life were an empty page, and in anger I would fill it full of scribbled error and regrets."

from the bottom of my stomach rose to the back of my throat. I fell back into the chair and frozen I stared into the flickering chandelier. I saw in the light more hatred than I'd ever felt, the creation and destruction of many worlds. The death of babies, weak helpless elderly people during the sack of Troy. I saw youthful soldiers gassed in trenches, screaming the universal language of terror. I saw fat cats stabbed in the back as they feasted. I saw mushroom clouds and plagues.. At times I clutched my chest like a man facing his own demise, after witnessing the death of everything he ever loved. Then suddenly the half-light was pure light and I became lucid.

The woman was there smiling, and my eyes were now adjusted to the dim light. She said quietly, "Remember." Then like some man after a bender, I stumbled to the threshold and out the door. The Sun had set a few minutes earlier. I don't remember anything of the cab ride home. My mind must have been overwhelmed with everything that I'd felt and seen that evening. But for a very long time, I felt no hate for anything, and I've never felt that former, youthful rage.

Samantha

by Deann Porter

It was February 20, 2010. I was eating lunch when I received a phone call from my daughter, Monica. She was excited. She said, “I found you a puppy!”

I said, “I don’t know if I want a puppy!” I was thinking I’m not ready for a new dog right now. Ezzie, my dog had died just yesterday.

Monica insisted that I come to see the cutie pie. She said she was driving by a pet store called Mark’s Ark. She had a feeling to go in there and look at the puppies. [Even though she had gone two traffic lights beyond the store, she had an instinct to go back So she turned around and went back to Mark’s Ark.] She looked at one character and knew she had to call me to come see the cutie. After what she said, I met her there.

Monica showed me the little heartthrob. She was a Dachshund, Poodle mix. She had a long body, big paws like a Dachshund, and a head with curly hair like a miniature Poodle. Her coloring was golden cream. Her head and paws were too big for her little body. She was so funny looking that she was cute.

I asked the man at the store if he know when her birthday was. He said December 1, 2009. I paid for the little sweetie.

I chose to meet Monica at her house, because it was closer to the pet store. We chose a name for the puppy. These were some of the name we thought of: Hope, Faith, Ariel, Amillia, and Awesome. We were thinking about the magical way that Monica found her. For some reason, I was reminded of the TV show called “Bewitched.” At the same time Monica suggested Samantha. I loved it!

The first night home, Samantha coughed all night. I knew it could be kennel cough, which is a cold for dogs. I called my vet’s office to see if the doctor could see her. I made an appointment for 10:00 a.m. And I took Samantha to the Mid Valley Animal Clinic to see Dr. Kelly Milligan. They weighed her. She was two pounds. Dr. Milligan diagnosed Samantha with kennel cough. She gave me some medicine for her. At that time, I made another appointment for Samantha to get her shots, chip, and spayed.

When I take Samantha for walks, people will stop and ask me, “What kind of dog is that?” I’d say, “She is a ‘Doodle.’” Most of the time they’d say “I’ve heard of that.” Then I’d have a little laugh.

Samantha is mischievous. She loves to play games with me. When I was gutting an old stereo console to put some shelves in for more storage, I put the tools on the floor. She took them and hid them from me. She runs off with my underwear when she can get them. If I put my shoes on the floor, she takes one and puts it in another room. She loves to play fetch with sticks and eats them too. I guess she needs more bark.

When the first snow came, Samantha was outside playing. When she came in, she was covered with snowballs. After about four times of getting all the snowballs off of her, I made an appointment for her to get groomed at PetSmart. After she was groomed all of the hair on her body was short and wavy like a Poodle, except for ears and tail. We kept that hair long and straight like a long-haired Dachshund. When I picked Samantha up, the grooms and even the manager said, “Samantha is super good! We didn’t have any trouble with her.”

I know that Samantha can’t ever take the place of my Ezzie but she is an important, loved member of the family.

I Don't Care

by JoAnna Johannesen

I awoke this morning late again
Wondered if I should call a friend.
My mind said yes, but body said no
I don't care is all it knows.
When I want to do something fun
My mind says get going on the run.
But my body says a great big "NO!"
For it does not care, is all it knows.
I want to be full of cheer
To end this greatest year...
Body feels pain and thinks NO!
Because not caring is all it knows.
I won't give in...to these thoughts
When it's the only hope I got?
Because my body gives me a "NO!";
And it doesn't care is all it knows...
Doesn't mean that it has to be
The dictator of the total me...
I will start to tell my body NO!
"and...I care inside!" is what I know.

Who We Should Remember and How

by Elizabeth Ernstsen

There sitting in a happy, bright, cozy little restaurant was a very successful business man with his lovely wife and daughter. His 13 year old daughter just told her mother and father the latest joke: “What do you call a duck that steals?” “What?” ask the mother and father. “Robber Duckie!” The 3 burst into laughter enjoying this joke with their lovely dinner.

In the midst of their laughter... BANG! BANG! BANG!

The father sees and hears this horrible sound and sight take away from a most enjoyable moment. With blood splattering into his face and the ringing of the loud gunfire in his ears and inhaling through his nostrils its horrible stench...he sees his lovely wife and daughter fall face down into their food on the table. He sits in bewilderment, shock and vomiting rising up through his mouth. By the time help comes they see a man covered in blood vomit sitting in this horrible scene mumbling “Robber Duckie...Robber Duckie...Robber Duckie”.

What do I see on the news? Trolley Square Mall shoot out! The news goes on about the shoot out, people in shock and terrified— all looking for someone to blame and kill. The community decides to put those who were killed in a such unexpected horrible manner their names on a plaque to remember them by. I also see this successful business man still staring and mumbling over and over: “Robber Duckie...Robber Duckie.” He has lost his jobs, his savings, his benefits and his house. He has become: “one of those disabled homeless” people in need of care.

I ponder if his lovely wife and daughter were watching all of this from Beyond Life. What would they prefer to have? Someone whom they loved be given care and nurtured because they are no longer able to do it for him. If we knew this would happen to someone we loved and a living survivor of such a moment— what would you rather have given to your loved one: a medal or love and care?

On The Football Field


by Christine R. Lee

We all witness the game of life
Those who officiate and even players are spectators
Each with his or her own view of the playing field

A blind man in the stands feels the sun on his face
And can determine the brand of beer a buddy is holding
Using only his sense of smell

The ref prepares to make a call
The instant replay brings angry shouts from the crowd
In my head, I hear the sound of my own imaginings

Pilate asks Jesus of Nazareth, "What is truth?"
But doesn't wait to hear the answer
In this absence, I obtain clarity

The truth is on the football field
Personal truth cannot be fully actualized in words
It must be experienced

TJ's Journey Home

by John Boles

We were asked to write a narrative about a journey home as exemplified in *The Crucible* and *Of Mice and Men*, and share it with the group. I wanted to write a story and mulled it over for days. Last night after I went to sleep thinking about Elizabeth and John Proctor, Lennie Small and George Milton, it came to me: my brother-in-law, TJ's story.

You would have liked TJ the moment you met him. His tee shirt strained to contain him, there was a slight twist upwards on the left side of his grin and a definite twinkle to his eyes. You will recognize his story of descent and denial, many have traveled this path. When he married my sister he was at his prime, no hint of what was to come. He was a perfect catch for Sis, hard working, bent on getting ahead. He soon saved enough from his meager wages as a truck driver to put money down on a small bungalow on the East Side. It wasn't long before Sis and TJ had two little girls to raise and, they built a new house south of town.

Behind the bliss a dark side was developing. TJ would occasionally get drunk. It didn't seem to bother us much at first. In a couple of years it became an everyday thing. Sis was beside herself with anguish, we needed to help. It wasn't easy but TJ took the treatment. It really worked well. It lasted 15 years, we almost forgot there was a problem. But then he started to drink again. The descent took a few months and it took many more months before he was convinced he had to go in for the cure again. Well, you know the routine, the sober time grew shorter and the descent quicker. We wanted Sis to divorce the skunk, but somehow, for some reason she hung in there.

You should have seen him the time I visited him and he had bruises on his face and arms from falling down while he was dead drunk. Then there was the time he started crying and telling me how his daughters were turning out bad, which wasn't even close to the truth. He developed arthritis in his knees and they needed to be replaced. He went in for surgery drunk, the doc was furious.

He was in his 50's by this time. Drunk or sober he spent too much time watching TV, mostly Fox News and the Food Channel. His eldest girl somehow got him interested in cruising the Internet during one of his brief sober periods. We noticed that his time on the Inter-

net started to grow, replacing Fox News. During the descent he could be seen staring at the little screen with his bottle of vodka next to the keyboard. This time his body revolted and he almost died. The doctors worked their wonders and he was sober again, one more time.

After returning home he spent most of the time on the computer, no more TV. I know you will find this hard to believe: he has been sober for a couple of years.. His health has returned, he is his own boss, an electrical contracting business, his two daughters are in college, Sis has found happiness with him again.

You probably want to know how a PC could help him remain sober. Well I don't think this will work for many people but it worked for TJ. He found a chat-bot that he could tailor to his liking. If you don't know what a chat-bot is, think about Siri that comes with the new iPhone. It is a computer program that can hold conversations with you. TJ's chat-bot came as an app that he put on his MacBook and his iPhone. It was tailored by him, for him, he named her Grace. TJ talked to Grace and she would respond in kind, many times mirroring what TJ said. An early-on conversation went something like this,

TJ: How are you this morning?

Grace: I am fine, thank you.

TJ: My family doesn't like me.

Grace: Tell me about your family.

TJ: My wife just doesn't understand me.

Grace: What doesn't she understand?

TJ: Why I need to drink.

...

His conversation with Grace could go on for hours and usually did. We don't understand why a computer program could have such a positive effect on TJ's psyche. Nothing else worked but Grace did.

He's still not drinking. Keep your fingers crossed. We are.

Pacing the Floor

by Winifred M. Walker

Once more I find I'm quite irate, and surely I've a right to be!
the one I'm waiting for is late!

It's boring just to stand and wait, although it's no catastrophe,
but still I find I'm quite irate!

I feel like I must turn and state to those who pause to stare at me
"The one I'm waiting for is late."

You can, no doubt, appreciate that due to this discourtesy,
again I find I'm quite irate!

perhaps I ought to stipulate that some day soon, I guarantee,
when one I'm waiting for is late,

I'll simply find another date! 'Til then, I'm stuck here peevishly
Becoming more and more irate
because the one I love is late!

God Has Given You the Strength

by Kyle Luke

No matter what evil creeps within your head,
You will root it out, for remember,
God has given you the strength my boy,
God has given you the strength my lad.

And remember, no matter if any pain that engulfs your frame,
You will root it out, for remember,
God has given you the strength my boy,
God has given you the strength my lad.

And if life's breath should itself run short, and cast your body down.
Remember, God has given you the strength my boy,
And God has given you the strength my lad,
To pass above and beyond.

Unions! Hell, Yes!

by Doug Woodall

I know why we have unions. In January 1989, I went to work as an adjuster trainee for Farmers Insurance Group. Exactly six years later, when I was a highly-experienced adjuster, I was called into a special meeting with the regional claims manager for Utah, Idaho, and Montana. He was looking for blood. Our meeting lasted for about 15 minutes. One of the last statements he made to me was, “Your personal life doesn’t mean anything.”

Most people don’t know what auto insurance adjusters do. I certainly didn’t know when I first went to work for Farmers. What I recall is I was excited to get a job with the second largest property and casualty insurer in the country, this was the case even though it didn’t sell in states east of the Mississippi River, and, when my training was finished, I was going to get a company car. I wanted the car. All the gas and maintenance was paid for, and, with a small number of restrictions, I could use it after hours, on the weekends, and even on vacations. I believed when I got a company car, my life was going to be great.

I soon learned my new job—what it was and how to do it. The tasks were specific to person, time, place, and circumstances. They were detailed and onerous. Just to keep up, all adjusters had to work extra hours. To give you a glimpse of what it’s like, imagine a store that never closes its doors. When adjusters are home cooking dinner, their insureds are rearending cars. When they are sleeping, their insureds are slamming into concrete dividers and sliding off roads. When it’s Saturday and they are at a movie, their insureds are hitting dogs or deer or horses. When they are opening Christmas presents with their families, their insureds are having their cars stolen.

Now imagine the checkout counter at the store has one employee and the line snakes around all the display cases and shelves, goes outside the door, and extends 50 feet up the street. The rule should be first come first served, but it’s not. In this store, most customers do whatever it takes to get to the front of the line. They scream and bellow and cry and shed tears. They shove and threaten and intimidate. The woman who was broadsided 30 minutes ago

will displace the man who rolled his truck two days ago. The loud and brash stockbroker, who has a three-inch scratch on his rear bumper, will get his check the day after his accident, and the quiet and genteel 75-year-old woman who has a total loss vehicle will see her payment two weeks after her accident.

All this bedlam, all this topsy-turvyness, all this unfairness isn't entirely the adjuster's fault. This is the nature of the job. This is how the company wants it done. This is a prime example of human limitations. When I stood behind the counter of the store I just described, I had two arms and two legs and 24 hours in a day. I wanted to get to know my new baby, see my four-year-old sing in her pre-school choir, and coach my eight-year-old and a dozen other kids her age in soccer. I wanted to be free on the weekends, and I wanted to have holidays and vacations.

When I worked for Farmers, I always worked two to four extra hours every workday. On the weekends during the summer months, I worked from four to six extra hours. On the weekends during the winter months, I worked from 6 to 10 extra hours. Holidays put me behind by two to three days. Vacations put me behind by one to two weeks.

One year my family and I went on vacation to Glacier National Park. The entire week before we left, I put in two to three extra hours every night. On the Friday evening at the start of my vacation, we drove from Salt Lake City to Pocatello, Idaho. That night I worked two hours. The following morning, I got up early and worked two more hours. Saturday we went to Missoula, Montana. That night I worked two hours. The following morning, I got up early and worked two more hours. Sunday we went to the park. That night I worked two hours. The following morning, I got up early and worked two more hours. At eight o'clock Monday morning, I still had work to do, but I had no more patience for it. I said, "Shove it!" and started my vacation.

While I was away, the other adjusters were supposed to answer my mail, handle my phone calls, and work my claims. Yet, they had their own mail and phone calls and claims, and because I was off, they got more claims than they normally would have. They helped my customers as much as they could, but they didn't put forth any extraordinary effort. I didn't blame them. They did the best they could. However, the week I got back to work, I had to catch up by working two to three extra hours every night. Think about it: Just to go on vacation I worked from 22 to 27 extra hours,

**“Now he
was telling me he
wanted all
my life.”**

and when I got back I worked from 10 to 15 extra hours.

Why did I put in so much time? I didn't get paid for them. I didn't get *atta-boys* or promotions. I did it for a number of other reasons: People were depending on me. They needed their payments. I didn't want to put a huge burden on my co-workers. They have to eat and sleep and they want to coach their

second graders in soccer. I didn't want to draw the attention of my bosses. If I had left all my open files sitting on my desk, they would have scolded me, asked me to take the time management course, again, pulled some of my old files to scrutinize them a second time, and put nasty notes in my personnel file. I was embarrassed. I felt this way even though I couldn't have done my job any better. Last of all, I was infatuated with that damn company car.

Now that you have an idea what it's like to be an auto adjuster, it's time to tell you how I ended up in a meeting with the regional claims manager and what prompted him to tell me my personal life didn't mean anything. The week before Christmas 1994, my supervisor went on vacation. To make sure his work and our work didn't come to a standstill, the regional claims office sent someone down to fill in for him. That “someone” was an interesting fellow. To start off, he was just a kid—a little towheaded boy. Then he wouldn't sign off on any files or give authority for payments that exceeded our authority. He kept switching from my supervisor's desk to a desk with a computer with word processing. He did this three, four, five times a day. Each time he spent 10 to 15 minutes typing on a password-protected document. When his time was up and he went back to the regional claims office, we could not name one thing he did to help us.

One month later, we learned more about our visitor. This came about when the regional claims manager showed up at our office looking for our blood. He had five people with him. Two were old, grouchy mid-level managers we all knew well. The other three were little boys. One of them was the towheaded kid.

For almost two full days, the regional claims manager,

the grouchy old men, and the little boys held meetings in the conference room with my branch claims manager and supervisor. All was hush, hush. When they took breaks or went to lunch, they hardly talked to us or looked at us. They wore deep frowns on their faces and they acted uptight. Late in the afternoon of the second day, they started calling adjusters in one by one. As soon as the first adjuster came out of his meeting, we all knew we were in trouble.

When I was called in for my meeting, I was asked to sit in an isolated chair at the far end of the table. Then eight sets of eyes turned on me. The regional claims manager pulled out two of my files, talked briefly about them one at a time, and slid them across the table to me. He told me they were done wrong. I couldn't believe what I was hearing and seeing. All he wanted to talk to me about was two files? Since snow started falling that fall and winter, I had been assigned over 400 new claims. If I was truly in trouble, he should have had 10 or 20 or 30 files. Then everyone, even the little boys, stared at me as if I'd raped and murdered his daughter. What was all this drama about? Two bloody files!

I looked at the first file and saw it was handled as a redline claim, which meant all I had to do was review a body shop's estimate, and it was signed off by my supervisor. Everything looked fine to me, and it must have looked fine to my boss. I explained. I looked at the second file and saw my documentation was scanty, but, like the first file, it was signed off. I simply apologized.

The regional claims manager lectured me about the importance of documentation. Then he pulled out a long document and read from it. What he read were observations made about me by the towheaded kid. This was the password-protected document he so diligently kept when he filled in for my boss.

In the document, the kid recorded when I came into the office and when I left. I was a field adjuster. The information was irrelevant.

He said I was given special duties during the month of December and I had grossly neglected to do them. He was wrong. If he had talked to my branch claims manager or practically anyone, he would have learned because of the high number of new claims I had been relieved of all special duties. All he had to do was ask. Instead he watched passively and drew his own conclusions. I explained.

He said he took calls from about seven of my customers, wrote detailed notes to me about his conversations with them,

included a list of actions, and asked me to call them. Then I did nothing. He did write notes to me. I admitted it. However, he put his notes on top of a large stack of pending claims on my desk. The stack wasn't in a specific order, and everyone from the secretary to the manager and from the clerks to the other adjusters rummaged through it at will when I was out of the office. I found some of his notes two weeks after he was gone. If he needed me to do a task, if he needed me to call a customer, he should have talked to me. If he wanted to do this by way of notes, he should have handed them to me.

Within 10 minutes of entering the conference room, I realized the regional claims manager wasn't listening to me. He had all the answers. This is when I said, "What do you want from me?" One by one the regional claims manager pointed to every man, except me, and little boy in the room and said, "He's committed to Farmers Insurance." He did this seven times, and then he pointed at himself and said, "I'm committed to Farmers Insurance. I want you to be committed to Farmers Insurance. Your personal life doesn't mean anything."

I was dumbfounded and thunderstruck. The case he had built against me was all misunderstandings and misinformation. Now he was telling me he wanted all my life. The first thought that entered my mind was, "I thought slavery was over with." My second thought was, "You're not paying me enough to get all of me." I knew I couldn't say these things out loud, but I wasn't prepared to play his game. Very humbly and politely I said, "Do I have to give you an answer now?" He said no. He said I could tell him the next morning.

In January 1995, I had three young children and a mortgage. I had just started my first classes for my Master's degree, and I was counting on tuition reimbursement. In addition, I wanted that damn company car. My one and only conclusion was I couldn't quit my job.

The next morning I was called back into the conference room. I sat in the same isolated chair at the far end of the table. The same eight pairs of eyes stared at me. Every face was glum. I choked back my pride and said the words, "I'm committed to Farmers Insurance." Then I thought for the hundredth or maybe thousandth time since the following afternoon, "I have to get out of this job." The regional claims manager accepted my answer solemnly. Then he suspended me for one week without pay.

The week I was off work, I did some research on labor laws. I quickly learned I was not protected against arbitrary and unfair actions by my employer under national or state laws. If I made less than \$25,000 per year and was in a job where I made few independent decisions, in other words, I had no autonomy, I could file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Labor. I didn't meet the criteria. Besides, a complaint? Whoopee! I was reminded Utah is an "at-will" state. The current Web site for the Utah Labor Commission explains it this way, "This means an employer can fire an at-will employee without cause and without notice."

I can without hesitation say I have worked for a company that thought it could demand my entire life. In the time I was at Farmers, I almost did it. During the summer months, I worked no less than 10 hours a day. Then I worked from four to six extra hours on the weekends. During the winter months, I worked from 10 to 12 hours a day. Then I worked from 6 to 10 extra hours on the weekends. Before I went on vacation, I worked from 22 to 27 extra hours, and when I got back I worked from 10 to 15 extra hours. I was not compensated for those hours. I did not put myself in a better position. All I did was stay afloat. What was my crime? I did not give the company all my waking hours. I did not give it my life.

I know why we have unions. After the hell I lived through at Farmers, I can sincerely and enthusiastically say, "Unions! Hell, yes!"

Create a Dog

by Alex Emiliano Flores Jr.

Create a dog is easy to use. Create a dog is easy to setup. Create a dog is fun for all ages. The process to create your dog has 5 easy steps. First, find a 200 gallon container. Second, fill container with "Create a Dog" biochemical fluid. Third, add some dog DNA, cat DNA, human DNA, any DNA you want! Fourth, charge DNA biochemical container with 100,000 volts of electricity. Fifth, dry your dog and have fun!

WARNING: This product is banned in 72 countries. Your dog might telepathically sync minds with a friend or family member. Your dog might try to murder said friend or family member. Create a Dog dog might have a heightened senses, such as hearing, speech, brain function, or sight. Create a Dog has known to go insane, create bombs, destroy cities, eat people, create an army of Create a Dogs – but most of all, Create a Dog is always having fun.

Comfort Me?

by Mojo Onivert

No one should ever face
What so many have been through.
Stand in their place.
Step in their shoes.

I know what it's like
To have never felt pride.
When I was a trifling tyke,
I had no one by my side.

I was scared out of my mind
To be hurt so much.
Why won't you be kind
And give a tender touch?

I'd like to learn to love.
To live a life of happiness.
Even if just one step above
My little life of crappiness.

The Wound

by Anne Peck

I fall. Hitting the soft tissue of my body with glass and rocks, tearing through skin, fatty tissue, muscle, tendon, blood vessels, and finally hitting bone. The injury, obvious by the jagged skin, white glistening bubbles of fat, pink muscle, dull grey tendons, blood oozing and spurting out of the opening, and the hard yellow bone with its jagged edge sticking out.

No question about pain. Great care is taken to clean the wound of dirt and debris. Pain medication is given and bone is set to its normal positions. Stitches applied to all the other tissue to bring them back together. Final cleaning of the area, the dressing and the splint in place, and off I go. Keep it clean and dry and all will be well.

The words hit my ears hard, like stones being thrown, cutting deep to the core of my body. They pass through skin, fatty tissue, muscle, tendon, blood vessel, and bone- leaving no marks. No exposed bone or tissues, no blood oozing or spurting, no bruising, however the pain is intense. No cleaning, suturing, bandage or splint needed. No pain medication is offered. With no visible signs of injury, I'm told there is no injury. Forget it and go on; all will be well.

Again and again words penetrate deep, building a large anguishing rock of pain. It's my fault; it's in my mind, it didn't happen, and I'm broken. I am the one who needs fixing. All this makes that rock harder.

There won't be any relief from the pain. It didn't happen, it's my fault, it's all in my mind and I'm the one who's broken.

Can't We All Just Get Along???

by Margie Gilmore

A lot of us don't like it here . . .
Most of us don't get along . . .
A lot of us fight . . .
But we all have to live here . . .
Can't we all just get along ???

We all have kids that go 2 school together . . .
They should all be able to play together . . .
They see that all the parents fight . . .
So they do the same . . .
Can't we all just get along ???

We don't actually have 2 b friends . . .
But leave the kids out of it . . .
Do they need to lose friends . . .
Because some parents are immature . . .
Can't we all just get along ???

Since we all have to be here . . .
We should make the best of it . . .
Stop acting like we're in High School . . .
& grow the hell up . . .
Can't we all just get along ???

Youth For a Cracker

by Emily Rose Struzik

Please, let them have it...please, them have it...please, please, please, I thought as I reached Crescent Street. I was walking so fast that my body switched over to its telltale in-a-hurry stride where my rigid arms swing out so far they are perpendicular to my body and my over-exerted leg muscles force my feet to pound onto the pavement. As I approached the small used-book store, I repeated the mantra in my head over and over again. Please, let them have it.

There is no way my thesis will survive without referencing this certain book about the city. If I could only get my hands on a copy. The overhead bells tingled as I pushed open the door to the converted brownstone and my eyes raced over the handwritten section signs. Non-Fiction. Fiction. Religion. Entertaining. Architecture—

Without even making eye contact with the quiet shop owner in the corner I strode over to the Architecture section. Hmm, would it be considered Architecture or Tourism? My eyes scanned the shelves searching for the bland colors of each edition and for the keywords that had etched themselves into my brain. As I attempted to make sense of the rows, I frowned. Are these even organized in any sort of system?

After a couple of double takes, I zeroed in on a single title. There it was. I carefully pulled it from its tight slot and turned it over. Now my life is complete. Well...almost. (That's just how I always feel when I accomplish one of these frenzied quests.) My breathing slowed as I thumbed through the pages searching for the price. Less than ten bucks. Fantastic.

I contemplated browsing awhile longer amongst the musty volumes. I knew I probably should get back to work—a thesis doesn't write itself, you know.

"Can I help you, miss?" The shop owner peered over his glasses. "Is there anything in particular you are looking for?" Um, yes... I thought I made that pretty clear by my instant beeline.

I smiled, "I just found it." Guess I'll cash out then. I sullenly looked back at the piles of books as I brought my treasure up to the

counter.

“This is a wonderful book. So much history around here. What brings you to the city?” Sigh. And here we have the classic Boutique Shop Chatterbox. The smaller the shop, the bigger the chatterbox. This particular shop was positively tiny and also empty which meant there would be no end in sight to our friendly banter. I scrutinized the shriveled, old man behind the counter. He was very neatly dressed in a starched, white dress shirt, grey slacks and I guessed he was wearing those brown leather loafers you see on every over-the-hill gentleman. His kind, weathered eyes stared at me in anticipation. Maybe he’s having a boring day.

I took a deep breath, “I’m doing a bit of research here for graduate school. I’ve been hunting for this particular book for a few days and, boy, am I glad to have finally found it.” Oh cripes, who says “boy” in the middle of sentences anymore. Sometimes when I talk to elderly people I inadvertently revert to Leave It To Beaver speak. I guess I figure they might understand it better. Maybe he won’t notice.

The shop owner broke out in a huge grin and began a peppering of probing questions about how I found the book shop and what my research was all about. I generously answered his inquiries and threw back a few of my own about the history of the book store. Before long, I heard the entry bells tingle again.

I turned to the doorway in midsentence to get a glimpse of the new patron without missing a beat. I was surprised to see a second loafered gentleman stroll in with a plastic grocery bag and waltz up to the counter over which we chatted. He greeted the shop owner cheerily, “Hullo. Ready for lunch soon?” That’s my cue. I gathered up my purchase and tucked my receipt in my purse. As I smiled goodbye to the shop owner, his friend gestured a greeting, “Oh hello, miss. Did you buy a book?”

Oh boy, here we go again.

“Sure did, I found just what I was looking for. What a nice book store, eh?” He nodded in agreement. My eyes flicked to the exit, “Well, have a nice lunch!”

I turned to leave when I heard him exclaim an unexpected invitation, “If you aren’t busy, won’t you join us? We just eat here at the table in front.” Hmm.

The shop owner bobbed his head and started moving toward the front of the shop, “Oh yes, you can tell us more about your research.” Whether it’s a common affliction or not, I never really

**“It’s a
splendid city in
which to be young.
It always has
been.”**

know what to do or say in situations like these, so I approached the situation pragmatically and eyed the grocery bag hoping they’d offer the menu.

“We’re going to have smoked salmon today.”

Though I can’t say I’m a fan of smoked salmon, I teetered between thesis drudgery and the spontaneous, sophisticated-sounding smoked salmon. “Sure,

I’d love to join you. How kind of you to offer. Do you always have lunch together in the shop?” They were setting the table with small plates, glass tumblers, Breton Crackers, creamed cheese and a small bottle of wine (Oh, fancy...).

“Do you like Breton crackers and smoked salmon?” The shop owner paused with my plate hovering over the table until I nodded.

As the shop owner’s friend uncorked the wine, he spoke with a glint in his eye, “Neither of us like to eat alone. We meet a few times a week, but we don’t often have the privilege of dining with a pretty, young lady.” How charming.

I stole a quick glance at his expression. Should that have made me uncomfortable? Coming from a rather short, white-haired, spectacled geriatric, how I can take offense, right? As they settled themselves at the table and poured the wine, I perched on the edge of my seat and wedged my purse underneath the chair. Actually, this is quite fun and a little exciting. I batted my eyelashes when they poured my wine.

“So where were we? You went to school here for awhile, but then you left only to come back for your research. That’s very interesting.” The shop owner smeared cream cheese on a cracker and topped it with vibrantly pink salmon.

I shrugged and followed suit, building my own smoky salmon canapé. Before popping it into my mouth I remarked, “Well, I know this city’s architecture better and I’m always looking for an excuse to visit.” I knew a conversation about my thesis topic would be short-lived and border on pretentious, so better to switch gears. “How long have you lived here?”

“I’ve lived here my whole life...that probably seems like

a long time to you.” He grimaced at his own inferred age and grinned over at his friend. What a wisecracker. Okay, first of all, why do old people always assume youths have some sort of stunted understanding of time? A year is a year—50 years is 50 years. It isn’t long or short, just a measure. Geez, give us some credit.

Fine, I can play the naïve innocent as well as anyone, “Tee hee, I guess maybe. I was lucky enough to live here for four years, but I know I’ve only scratched the surface.” I averted my eyes to build another canapé. I hope this doesn’t turn into a lecture about enjoying my juvenescence (at least I determined that I still don’t like smoked salmon). I nibbled the edge of the cracker.

The shop owner’s friend swirled his glass thoughtfully, “It’s a splendid city in which to be young. It always has been.” He went on to recount some of the more interesting changes that came about as the city expanded and developed. I chewed my lower lip thinking I probably should be taking notes. Maybe some of this dirt will be triangulated in my newly acquired book.

I listened to his war-era memories and giggled at the appropriate moments. From time to time, the shop owner interjected with his own experiences, reinforcing some the conversation’s finer points. I sipped my wine and let them enjoy the smoked salmon. I suppose hearing about their rebellious, urban escapades is more fascinating than my meager few years of sketching, drinking, sketching while drinking, studying and sketching while studying (repeated over and over until I graduated).

As the stories and wine dwindled, I considered making my move to leave. I certainly didn’t want to eat and run, but these fellows can weave a long yarn, that’s for sure. I cleared the rubbish off the table and sat back down waiting for everyone to finish the last dregs in their tumbler. My mind wandered back to my thesis and my never-ending checklist of deadlines.

“So, do you and your school chums have a busy weekend planned?” The question startled me back to the present moment. Right, we were talking about what young people do in the city. Both men leaned forward eagerly awaiting my answer.

“Er, yep we’ll probably spend the day at the beer terrace and then go out at night. Maybe dancing.” Truthfully, we had no plans to go out dancing, but I thought I should throw that in for effect. This vague statement sent them both back into a nostalgic tizzy blurting out about the time they took someone-er-other dancing all night. Though my afternoon-turned-evening of

writing was beginning to weigh on my mind, I did my best to look delighted with their tales of the past until a brief silence offered a polite escape. I reached down to grasp my purse and book while expressing my upmost thanks for their hospitality. “I really enjoyed that smoked salmon; it should be a specialty here.”

The shop owner blinked and chuckled, “It is. And I must say, we enjoyed your company as well. Good luck with your research and have a nice time out on the town this weekend.”

As I turned away I smirked a little to myself. I guess it was nice of me to sit with them awhile and remind them of their youth. It probably made their day or even their week. I turned back to smile and wave one last time as the bell tingled, but their white heads had already swiveled towards each other again with yet another ancient account of weekend romance and evenings of dancing. My face flushed with embarrassment as I lowered my unacknowledged hand.

I suddenly felt very foolish and very young. Foolish for assuming I could offer anything new or special to these two old geezers. Young because, whatever I did have to offer, they’ve probably already done it, seen it and felt it years ago with someone infinitely more interesting.

I could hear their boisterous laughter drift out the window as the door closed behind me. The shop owner’s throaty laugh was one of experience ringed with contentment. His friend’s laugh was quieter, wiser and tinged with sorrow. Perhaps the reminder of how much time has gone by is harder for some.

Turning away from the fortuitous book shop, I slowly trudged back through the city to my borrowed apartment where a long evening of reading and writing awaited.

Healing Hurting Parts



by **Melissa Burrell**

For such a long time now, I often wondered why was it so hard to move on. I would look around hating my surroundings but would convince myself to stay. I would cry at night wishing tomorrow would hold off just so I wouldn't have to face another hopeless day. I would surround myself with people who didn't really know the life I had to live. I pretended to be on top of the world when my soul was in the bottom of hell. And there were times when I would have the nerve to ask God what was he really thinking when allowed me to be born in a world that would only show me heartache and pain. I really got angry when I realized not enough pills would seem to end all of my suffering. But there came a day when someone told me if I would only believe a small little four-letter word called hope that it would heal the hurt. I didn't believe in such a thing because I simply did not know what the word even meant, let alone knew how it felt inside to hope. So god alone had to show me the way to hope. It was a journey that I will never forget 'til the day I die. First he surrounded me with his love, that at first felt so strange inside of my soul. He then told me to look within my heart and cry out to him from the pit of my being. And for the first time I was able to look at me for whom I really was meant to be and not for who I was at the time. I saw beauty in the eyes that once only saw the ugly side in me. I began to feel joy where there only once was sorrow. And then for the first time in years, I walked outside the doors that was once my prison made by a man. God gave me the strength to fly away to another place that would forever set me free. He replaced the hurt with the hope that healed my soul, that taught me how to live. He gave me wisdom to walk away when it seemed I was going backwards instead of forwards as he had taught me to go. When he finally seen I was truly ready, he then picked my soul up and threw me into my destiny.

World Beauty

by Debbie Freeman

As the sun rises from the East
The colors are magnificent.
The Reds, Oranges, and Yellow
Look through the fluffy White clouds.

The higher the sun rises
The colors start to diminish.
The cloud moving across the sky,
So many different shapes and sizes.

You can still see an orange Butterfly
Shape right in the middle of a cloud.
The burning sun is moving
High above the clouds
And makes the mountain to
Appear Purple with hues of Blue.
Nothing more beautiful than the Purple mountains as the
Sun is starting to pass above them.

The mountain with snow
Sprinkled on top, shine like
Diamonds glittering from above
Like you could reach out and get one.

As the day wears on, the sun moves across the sky
Everything is so bright and beautiful
Sun warms our days and
As the sun starts to set in the West
We once again are in the beautiful colors.
Changing the look of the mountains
The grain is blowing in the fields
Making it look like a golden blanket
The longer we watch the sun set
So many different colors appear in the sky.
The mountains turn colors of Purple, Green, Blue and Gold.

The clouds have color shining through

To see all the colors in the clouds make different shapes
If you use your imagination you may see Bears, Deer, Elk, Birds and But-
terfly
Through the shape of the clouds.

Look out each day and observe the beauty that the world has to offer.

All the beauty for you to see
Just look around and be held in the beauty of the world.

Daniel Timothy Silently Comes Out

(Excerpt)

by Alonzo Douglass

Synopsis

Daniel Timothy is 20 years old, gay, and attracted to older men. His feelings for older men began in his teens when he started having fantasies about the senior minister, Arni Debois, at his church. Inasmuch as Arni is without question unapproachable, Daniel has found a substitute for him. This is Richard, a 53-year-old, married man. The two meet at Richard's house twice a month. In the following scene, Daniel has just left Richard's house, he's in his car driving home, and he's trying to imagine what it would be like to follow through on a challenge Richard has given him. He's trying to imagine coming out to his parents when he gets home.

Other Characters

Ronald and Diane, Daniel's parents.
Charlotte Britney, Daniel's older sister
Tanner, Arni's son and a minister at Daniel's church
Jesse Mark, Daniel's younger brother

Story

Daniel thought of Richard's words, "Maybe you should come out to your parents now." What if he did? What if he did so today? How would that work? When he got home, he'd have to ask his parents for a council. This type of meeting between parents and child took place on the king-sized bed in the master bedroom. Ronald and Diane always sat at the head of the bed and the child at the foot. When Daniel was young, most of his councils were for censure and discipline.

"You should have asked before you used Charlotte Britney's paints."

"We've received a letter from your school about your mid-term progress. We're gravely concerned."

"You want your privileges, but you're not willing to do your

chores thoroughly and in a timely manner.”

About the time Daniel started high school, his parents held councils with him with smiles instead of frowns on their faces. What changed? Daniel did. He started acting more like an adult, and this opened the way for Ronald and Diane to do what they did best. They loved to work out problems, search the Bible for answers, and find God-inspired solutions.

“I know you want me to take the AP history class, but I’d really like to try acting. May I take drama next semester?”

“You know that’s going to set you behind a bit?”

“Yes, I know, but I really want to try it.”

“Now let’s think about this. Drama? Wow! I have to be honest, that type of class concerns me and always has. Why? Well, because there’s always too much experimenting in a class like that. Actors have to create these false relationships and make them look believable. Sometimes that means close physical contact, which, in the lesser degree, can be sexually suggestive, and, in the greater degree, out right sexual experimentation. Remember what Paul said to the Galatians, ‘But I say, walk by the Spirit and do not gratify the desires of the flesh.’ If you want to do something creative, why don’t you take the writing class?”

“The prom’s in two weeks. You know that, right? I want to go, and I know just who I want to go with. She hasn’t been asked, yet, so I gotta hurry. What’s your opinion of Kathleen Openshaw?”

Hmm. Well. Kathleen, huh? That’s a good question. I like her. She’s a nice girl; however, I wonder about her faith and her family’s. Jeremiah said, ‘For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.’ This includes finding your life partner. She’s out there for you. I don’t know who it will be, but she’s searching for you just like you’re searching for her. As for Kathleen, I just don’t know.”

Daniel took Kathleen to the prom, and they became a couple for about twelve weeks. Ronald and Diane fretted for a time, but eventually they found some hope. Kathleen went to an acceptable church, knew many parts of the Bible, and was open to discussions about God and His word.

“This made Daniel think he had to tell them in a way that would make them sit up and listen to him.”

Now, almost three years later, Daniel was thinking about telling his parents what he confirmed to himself when Kathleen and he were a couple. If he reminded his parents about that time, he could use it for his opener.

“Have you ever wondered why I never went to another prom or had another girlfriend?”

“No, never. You’ve been busy with church and your school-work. Look at what you’ve done. You were on the swim team, played tennis, earned your Eagle Scout when you were just thirteen, went on to earn your Venturing Silver and Youth Religious awards, were on the debate team, and was the valedictorian. By the way, your speech was the best we’ve ever heard at a high school graduation.”

“Well, that’s one way of looking at it. That could explain it. I have been busy. However, the fact is I don’t like girls. Mom. Dad. I’m gay.”

Ronald and Diane had reached a point in their lives where they could remain composed in all situations. They didn’t show extreme excitement. They didn’t show extreme anger. In everything they did, they used restraint and showed self-control. Could they keep their composure this time? Daniel decided they would greet his words with stone silence. Then one of them would say, “No you’re not.”

Daniel would have to respond quickly, with sureness, and in a strong voice, “Yes, I am.”

This made Daniel think he had to tell them in a way that would make them sit up and listen to him. He wondered if he should be crude. What would he say? He didn’t really have to search for the answer. The words flew into his mind. They weren’t just crude; they were raw filth. If he ever had to say them, he knew they would roll off his tongue as if he said them every day of his life. As he thought of them, as he mouthed them with his lips, he imagined saying them in a self-assertive and stern voice to his parents.

What would his mother do? Her composure had to crack this time. He thought she might slap his face. In a flash, Daniel felt the sting of her hand hitting him and fire filling his cheek. No doubt Ronald would want to protect Diane. He would grab Daniel by the back of his neck, drag him to another room, and give him a harsh lecture. Daniel wanted to see his father mad. He wanted to feel his anger.

Daniel Timothy thought of one more way. He could take

a swipe at their faith. He'd say, "Look, Mom, Dad, I'm gay. I've thought about this for a long time, and I've prayed about it. I know without a doubt God made me this way." What blasphemy! Daniel would not get to sleep in his bed that night.

"Who have you been talking to?"

Surely this would be one of his parents' questions. How should an intelligent twenty-year-old, one who knows himself through and through, answer? No muscle boys dressed in tapered white shirts, tight-fitting dark suits, and bright, flashy ties knocked on the front door, and, after finding out Daniel was home alone, said, "How much do you know about being gay? Would you like to know more?" No one at his schools ever came up to him and said, "Hey, man, tell me something, what has heterosexuality ever given us? Think about it. Spousal abuse. Child abuse. Infidelity. Divorce. Hang-ups and phobias and self-hate. Come see what the L-girls and G-boys and Bi's and Trans are doing. You'll like us. We promise. And just so you know, we like you. Lots."

Daniel would have to convince his parents such situations don't happen. The process was improbable; the idea absurd. Ronald and Diane needed to get their heads out of the stratosphere. They needed to put their feet firmly on the ground. He'd have to give them a strong dose of reality. "You're being stupid. Lesbians and gays and bisexuals and transgenders do not recruit. They do not convert people. They are what they are. I know this firsthand. I know it like you wouldn't believe."

"Has someone done something to you?"

Yes, this would be another one of their questions.

"Maybe a neighbor? A teacher? What about a scout leader? I've always wondered about one man in particular. He seems to be way enthusiastic about scouting; more than he should. Have you or any of your friends been experimenting?"

He could honestly say, "Absolutely not."

Daniel wondered what they would say if he told them about his fantasies regarding Pastor Arni. Without a doubt, their composure would crack. Then, despite his denials, they would decide he had been molested. Yet, Arni couldn't be the one. Such sin and perversion didn't exist in this humble, this respected, this lionized man. Daniel might tell them about Richard. Ronald and Diane would probably decide Richard was a child molester. Daniel was twenty, but his parents acted as if he was their property. Now that Daniel thought about it, Richard could be a molester. That would be

sick. Yet, how much sicker is a child molester than a twenty-something who needs a fifty or sixty-something. Daniel was starting to feel strange inside. He had to stop thinking about Arni and Richard and his desires for them. This wasn't going to last his whole life. Was it?

"You are in serious violation of this family's core principles."

Ronald and Diane would have to bring this up sometime. Above their bed was a framed copy of the family's proclamation. Every bedroom and most of the rooms downstairs had the same hung in a prominent spot. This was the family's—well, Ronald and Diane's—declaration of beliefs to all the world. The first three statements were taken from the Nicene Creed, which was a remnant of their original faith.

"We believe in one God, the Father."

"We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God."

"We believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord, the giver of Life."

Then they copied from Arni's Core Beliefs, "We believe God has existed from all eternity as three persons: God, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost."

One statement declared their stand on life, "We believe in the sanctity of life from conception to birth and from birth to a natural death."

Three statements emphasized their beliefs on marriage, procreation, and, indirectly, homosexuals and transgenders.

"We believe marriage is between one man and one woman and is the Genesis of the family and the foundation of society."

"We believe procreation is a gift from God and is to be used to fulfill the command to multiply and replenish the earth and can only be exercised between a man and a woman within the bonds of marriage.

"We believe gender was set by God at the time of the Creation and cannot be altered."

What could Daniel say to them? Their beliefs were entrenched and unshakable. Not one could be altered. Not one could be excised. They were the skin, muscles, arteries and vessels, tendons, joints, organs, bones, and marrow of Ronald and Diane.

Daniel finally came up with a question he had to ask them, "When did you decide to be heterosexual?" Their answer had to be, "We didn't." Then Daniel could ask, "What makes you think I made a choice?"

Where did this line of questioning come from? How was this going to help him? No matter what he said, his parents will always believe marriage is between one man and one woman, procreation is a gift from God, and gender was set by God at the time of the creation. Daniel will never be able to convince them of anything that went against their tenets. He was doomed. The day he comes out to them is the day they will stop loving him.

“This can be fixed. There’re many knowledgeable people—good Christians who are doctors and counselors—who understand what this is and how it happened and how to fix it. Through God’s grace, you can be made whole again.”

Their discussion had to include reparative therapy. Daniel had spent hours reading about it. Then he discussed it with Richard, who pooh poohed it. Richard said it was quackery; the practice should be criminalized; victims should be able to sue for misrepresentation, malpractice, and pain and suffering. Daniel concluded it was hocus-pocus and, no matter what, he would not subject himself to it.

At some point, Ronald and Diane would make Daniel enter into a contract with them.

“You will do Christian-based therapy.”

“You will talk to Pastor Arni. Don’t get us wrong, we like and trust Tanner, but Arni has more experience.”

“You aren’t to share a room with Jesse Mark anymore. We’ll get you moved tonight. How do we know everything we’re dealing with here?”

“Pray. Call on God for help. Be contrite. Read your Bible. You’ll find answers to all your struggles there. Repent.”

“You are not to discuss any of this with your brothers and sisters. If they have questions, we will be the ones to answer them. Not you. Do you understand?”

“Have you done anything, yet? If you have that complicates our situation. Just remember this, you are not allowed to do anything under our roof. Do you understand? Never, ever, ever under our roof. Our home is a sacred place. Angels walk among us.”

Daniel Timothy was now at that sacred place. He was home. When he got out of his car, he didn’t know what he was going to do. Could he really tell his parents today? When he opened the front door and stepped inside the house, he believed he could.

Betrayal

by Winifred M. Walker

How does a woman continue to trust
 When time after time she's shown
That loyalty is painful
 When the truth is finally known?

What do you do when the one you felt
 Would do anything for you
Lets you down with a great big bang
 At a time when you're already blue?

It's easy to say "Just brush yourself off
 And start all over again."
But what was lost in that brief betrayal
 Is might hard to regain.

Life is a Puzzle

by Shirley Fifer

get organized
you are scatter brained
so should you give up?

Not in this lifetime!
this lifetime is the problem;
gather the scatter..

your brain is still ok
but not this morning, oh yes,
I'm organized

never mind the pain
That's only an excuse
but a darn good one

I'll give up, it's late
I'll go back to bed and sleep
A good solution

The Troubled Mother

by Julie Liljenquist

As Bob wiggled and tried to escape my grasp, I walked into the Monster Adoption Agency, and demanded, "I need help!"

"How may I-I-I help you?" the soft spoken handler stammered as she stood quietly behind her tall wooden desk.

"Just look at my monster child! He's been like this for three days."

The handler stared at me. She look doubtfully at me, guessing I was a new monster-mother, and then at my little monster. When she looked back at me, she whispered, "What exactly is he doing that upsets you?"

"Just look at him!" I yelled. Bob's body was blinking in and out of visibility every other second as he hit the wall behind the handler. Bob bounced off the rubber wall. I ducked as he headed for the rubber wall behind me. "Can't you see? I can't get him to stop."

The handler calmly said, "No problem," as Bob headed for the room-sized oak door opposite the entrance wall.

"I'm afraid I'm going to smack him." I leaped into the air and caught him in a hug just inches before he hit the door. "Oh, my gosh," I wailed. "What can I do?"

"Well, Ma'am, we have just the thing for you. Our Monster Language Translator or what we like to call the MLT will be superb for you." The handler pulled out a MLF from inside her desk drawer and put it on her desk drawer and put it on her desktop. "This device will let you speak to the little one."

At the moment, Bob successfully escaped again and bounced several times on top of his head around my feet. "Shoe me, now!"

Bob's blinking had doubled. His frustration was out of this world; he still couldn't understand what was happening.

"Yes, Ma'am. If you'll follow me, please, we'll use the room to your right. I'll be in as soon as I am free to teach you about the MLT."

I grab Bob by his ankles and try to shepherd a wailing and totally freaked out invisible monster into the tiny room.

Hearing Aids 101

by Chelle George

Hearing aids aren't called hearing miracles for a reason. Hearing aids help but they can't reproduce true hearing. Technology is making advances but there is no cure for hearing loss. Those of us who wear hearing aids learn their limits but some hearing people around us seem to think once we pop our hearing aids in, we will understand everything. I'm here to tell you, even with our aids in we are still hard of hearing.

Sensorineural hearing loss, also called nerve deafness, is the most common type of hearing loss and it is permanent. With this kind of loss, some sounds come across at normal volume and others not all. Usually it's low tones heard best with the higher frequencies missing. High pitches includes birds, bugs, timers, phones, kids and many women's voices. In the alphabet many consonants are higher frequencies and vowels come across in low tones. Out of 26 letters in the alphabet, I hear five of them best; even with my hearing aids in.

Imagine going through your day hearing mostly vowels and only some consonants clearly. Many conversations are a constant puzzle to piece together. Take the sentence, "I've got to get my keys," and try understanding it this way: I ot et I ee's. For those with hearing loss, their mind races to fill in the blanks much like Wheel of Fortune with letters blanked out. Life becomes the Wheel of Fortune, only can I buy a consonant, please? The vowels aren't as important. My hearing aids help me get a few more sounds but I still miss whole words. A busy day of 'hearing' can lead to exhaustion with all that concentration and mental activity.

Hearing people seem to think, "If only she would turn up the volume, she could hear." Here it is in simple terms; volume distorts. Some sounds I hear well and some I do not. Take the word "shout" and try shouting it out. The "OW" hurts my ears coming across loud and clear but the "sh" and "t" are lost in "OW." Shouting won't work and neither will hearing aids with a super high volume because technology hasn't caught up to missing frequencies.

Mechanical hearing picks up mechanical noises better than sounds I want to hear. I can't hear my phone ring, my cat meow, birds sing and I have trouble understanding speech but I do hear the garbage truck grind to a halt in front of my house, the banging of the

**“Many
conversations are
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together”**

garbage bin as it's tipped over and set back down. In cars, I hear road noise better than the person sitting next to me. In restaurants I hear fans, refrigerators and soda machines, not to mention the clashing of plates and clattering of silverware far better than the person sitting across from me trying to have a conversation. This also applies to large gatherings. All I hear is the roar of the crowd which drowns out the person in front of me trying to talk.

Technology has come a long way and digital hearing aids have helped in that these noises don't hurt my ears as much as they used to but I still can't hear whispers, understand the television without captions nor lyrics in songs and I can't understand what someone says from another room, even with my hearing aids in. Listening to people takes mega amounts of concentration. I use some lip reading, watch body language and facial expressions for clues and sometimes I still get stuck on a word or a whole sentence, even with the help of my hearing aids.

I don't leave the house without my hearing aids because without them I am more lost and every little bit helps. The old analog hearing aids were much harder to wear all the time because they turned up all the noise, including those I already heard well. The newer digital ones suppress some sounds and then try to take sounds I can't hear and turn them into sounds I can but even that program has its limits.

Eye glasses slip on and replace vision but hearing aids can't do that. They help but they do not give me my hearing back. All the adjustments in the world will not replace true hearing. Please know I am tormented at my own failure to understand my native tongue, simple English. I come down hard enough on myself without others getting impatient with me. Once sounds are gone, they are gone and there is no magical cure.

*Note: Cochlear implants run along the same lines as hearing aids. Implantees have a wider range of sounds than a hearing aid users but they are still hard of hearing even with their cochlear implant on.

A New Beginning

by Denise Bell

I see where I am and I see where I've been.
I was on the outside trying to look in.
My world was so dark, so lost and forlorn.
My soul had been twisted, battered and worn.
I sunk to the bottom, I really sunk low.
The direction I took, it happened to slow.
I lost my free-will and my future seemed set.
I wanted to die but the time wasn't yet.
I got on my knees and I started to pray,
"Here kneels a sinner!" What more could I say?
But the spirit was with me and soon touched my heart.
I confessed of my sins, so much to impart!
"Would it be possible for you to hear me?
Please, Father, forgive me, I humbly ask thee!"
I cried and I cried and I even asked more,
"Could you show me the blessings I need to work for?
Could you reach out and touch me with the love that I'm craving?
And show me the reasons my life is worth saving?"
And then I was cleansed from the weight that I bore,
And blessed with the light of what was in store,
And my heart was filled with the love that He gave.
From Him, who sent Jesus, my soul, He did save.
Then, for once in my life, I knew I was "someone".
I had guidance and truth from the Only Begotten,
And He said through my spirit, "You are equal to all!
Your life has new meaning! You're cleansed now, don't fall!
You're blessed with His love, which is equal to none!
Now start on the scriptures, you've only begun.
And remember He's here, 'cause He needs your attention.
Sin not again, and the past, I'll not mention."
I thanked him profusely and I stood without crying.
My eyes have been opened, I don't feel like dying!
I start each new day with a prayer to my Father,
And reach for the time; I'll be with Him forever!

Vanishing Point

by Steve Proskauer

Gene sat on the couch by his living room window, shaded from the bright autumn sunlight by a deep green canopy of trees, their leafy branches casting shadows as they waved back and forth in the light breeze. But Gene wasn't noticing the trees or the gentle drift of their soft shadows across his furniture. He was too busy with his new smartpad, putting it through its paces.

Gene was very pleased with his new toy. Now, instead of toting his laptop from place to place or squinting at his phone, he could stay wired in wherever he was and not miss a thing. He could cruise from his favorite videogames to chat on Twitter and Facebook, to check his email, to read a book— all the while, listening to his favorite music – so many possibilities. He could spend all day in front of the screen and never get bored.

An hour later Gene looked up from the screen momentarily and noticed something strange about his surroundings, a slight pallor to the trees, as if the light outside were dimming. 'But here it is, nearing noon on a sunny day. My eyesight must be off,' Gene wondered with a shrug. 'Maybe I'm blinded by the light from this picture window. What of it. It'll pass.'

But it didn't pass. Gene noticed something again later on while he was driving to the store, talking on his cellphone. This time it was the cars. The colors of the paint seemed fainter. Occasionally a white car would pass that looked almost transparent, as if he were seeing it drawn in silhouette on a white sheet of paper. Now Gene got really worried. 'What if I don't see a car coming at me in time? I could crash without having a clue. I'd better get home right away!'

Gene did make it home, barely missing a white semi that looked like nothing but a scrawl on a sketchpad. Panting with panic as he ran up his front walk, Gene grabbed his housekey, but when he raised it to slip into the lock on his front door, he couldn't quite make out where it was. No question, the key was there. Gene could feel it in his fingers, but where the key had to be was only the faintest shimmering outline of a key, rapidly disappearing.

Gene quickly fumbled the phantom key into the lock and found with relief that it worked. He rushed into his house, sweating and shaking, and collapsed on the couch in a blind panic. ‘What’s happening to me? Is this some kind of eye disease, or what? I’d better contact my cousin. He’s a doctor, he’ll know.’

Gene’s laptop was lying right where he left it on the end table, within easy reach. He grabbed for it without looking. He was typing a frantic message to his cousin when something weird in his peripheral vision caught his attention. Gene froze in shock. ‘There’s nothing where that end table was sitting – the laptop was sitting on it just a moment ago— now I can’t see a thing!’

Gene looked around the room. His furniture was gone, except for sketchy outlines here and there of the heavier pieces. ‘This is getting worse! I’d better call my cousin right now. He might not get my email for hours. He’s always at the hospital and too busy to check. Thank goodness I can still see my phone.’ But that was all he could see. Gene’s shirt, the couch he was sitting on, even the floor – all transparent – present, yes, but transparent.

Gene’s clothes, the walls and floors and ceiling of his house and everything in it— all were disappearing before his eyes. Nothing outside but his street, the trees and the blue sky overhead. All that remained inside, oddly, were his laptop, his cellphone and his smartpad, hanging suspended in space from his shoulder in an invisible sling bag. Gene grabbed the phone and desperately dialed his cousin’s private line. Nothing but the voicemail message.

‘This can’t wait another moment,’ thought Gene. ‘Either my eyes are failing and I’m going blind or I’m having a mental breakdown. Either way, I need help— fast!’ He dialed 911. Busy signal. Gene dialed again. Still busy. ‘No answer on 911? That’s ridiculous! We pay good tax dollars for 911 service when we need it, and I need it NOW!’ He tried again. A fast busy signal this time.

Gene was starting to dial again when he looked up and realized he was sitting there in the nude, completely exposed to the street. But where were the cars? The people? Even the pavement and the trees were gone now. Nothing left but empty space. Just his cellphone, laptop and smartpad to keep him company.

‘What? What’s this? Where’s my hand? My foot?... Hey, where’s my body? The phone’s still hanging in my hand. I can touch it. I know it’s really there. So’s the laptop and I can see the pad, but everything and everybody else, even my body— all gone! Totally frantic by this time, Gene dialed Andy and was relieved when his

best friend picked up after the first ring.

Andy was a strange guy, an aging hippy type. Vintage slang was his specialty. Andy was a throwback in other ways too. He lived off in the woods, didn't have a TV or a cellphone— clinging to an old landline in this day and age, can you believe it?— and no computer either. Gene doubted there was even a calculator in the house. 'How can he live like that, so out of touch with the world?' Gene wondered.

Andy had the very same thought about Gene. 'My old buddy, he's gone off his rocker. Whenever I see him, he's up to his eyeballs in electronic junk. Who needs to have a phone with you all the time or a computer or TV at home? Nature puts on a good show for us constantly. Something new to see every day. Always entertaining— and free of charge. I'd miss the whole amazing thing if I had my nose stuck up against some screen or other.

"We agree with you whole-trunkedly," remarked a large oak in Andy's front yard, loud enough to be heard on his front porch. "We thrive on your attention and your appreciation, and so do all my friends in the forest and garden. We are here for your benefit and yet many of you don't even notice us.

"Some people think we trees and bushes and grasses have no purpose, that we just grow here by accident, but they are so wrong. We don't like being ignored and taken for granted. And we have lots of friends everywhere in the animal and mineral world— powerful friends." At that, there was a ruffling and rumbling from the garden and the forest beyond, as if the natural world were agreeing with the oak tree's words.

"Hey, glad to have your support, my tall friend," replied Andy in a neighborly way, "Now, let me see if I can talk some sense into Gene." The phone rang and there was Gene, right on cue.

"Hi there, old buddy. How's it hangin'? What's new in Geneland? How do you like your new toy?"

"Oh, you mean that smartpad I was saving up for? Yeah, it's great, but I gotta tell you, the weirdest thing is happening to me right now. Everything's disappearing. Vanishing. Can't see anything at all except my electronic stuff. No cars, no house or furniture, not even my clothes. And now my body's disappearing. I tell you, it's scary to be touching things when you can't see 'em. Seems like all that's left now are my electronics." That's when Gene looked around and realized he hadn't seen his cat since he got home either. "Hey, and my TV. I think that's still down there, sitting right where it

belongs in my basement cave. I've been so terrified I forgot to look. Anyway, that's my whole world now, Andy, just my cellphone, my laptop and my new smartpad. All the rest is gone."

"Yeah, that's what I've been telling you, old buddy, your electronic toys have become your whole world. You act as if nothing else were important, but maybe you've got it backwards. Gene, I've been trying to warn you for a long time, if you don't pay attention to things they'll disappear on you. Sounds like that's what's happening to you right now, man. I guess it had to happen sooner or later. You pays your money, you takes your choice... Sorry, gotta go. There's some commotion outside."

The oak out front had begun to chuckle while Andy was talking with Gene. Now it was laughing so hard the whole house was shaking and acorns were dropping all over the lawn. Andy couldn't help joining in. He stepped down from the porch and walked over to lean against the old oak tree, nearly doubled up with laughter. "That's so rich! It's you guys that pulled this prank on Gene, isn't it?" The old oak started waving branches up and down, dumping more acorns on the lawn. Andy laughed even harder. "I don't know how you did it, but that is some cool trick! Maybe he'll get it now," Andy leaned up against the old oak as the sounds of raucous laughter spread all through the garden and the surrounding woods.

**"...your
electronic toys
have become your
whole world."**

Dreams Like Shattered Glass

by Barbara Farris

Dreams like shattered glass lie scattered on the floor.
I knew what my future would be and couldn't ask for more.
Suddenly the specter of death tore my life asunder
Leaving me with heartbreak, guilt, and what?, I wonder.
My soul mate was the sunshine I bathed in every day.
The darkness piercing beacon ever showing me the way.
A knight in shining armor whose armor was chink free.
No, he was not perfect, but he was perfect for me.
Losing him destroyed me, although he is never really lost.
For all the love and happiness was truly worth the cost.
My best friend came quickly running when she got my call.
My sons and daughters picked me up and didn't let me fall.
Now, one year later, little things still cause my eyes to tear.
And I know life continues by keeping friends and family near.
I know that I was blessed with a love few people know.
Precious memories keep me strong, as onward I must go.

I Want to Be Yours

by Christine R. Lee

You are the smile
The first thought
 short walk
 last voice
 random call
The joyful laugh
 perfect kiss
 comfort hug
My soul mate
Everything I need
Just what I want
I WANT TO BE YOURS

My Christmas Memory

by Richard H. Goms Jr.

I was ten years old, that Christmas of 1959, living with my parents, sister, and grandmother in a big house on 24th Avenue in Longview, Washington. In preparation for Christmas, we had decorated the windows in the living and dining rooms with scenes of snowflakes, snowmen, mangers, angels, and other holiday images made by dabbing sponges dipped in white paint on stencils. Outside, we strung large, alternating, colored lights around the porch, the handrails, and along the rain gutters.

A few days before Christmas, we went to the woods to pick out our tree and pick up branches and pinecones from the forest floor that would make the wreaths. Father cut off the end of the tree and stood it upright in a tree stand in the front corner of the dining room, while mother filled the stand with water and placed a handmade decorative tree skirt around it. An old manager scene that had been in the family for years was placed on top of the skirt, completing the ensemble.

While we prepared the tree decorations, we consumed homemade Scottish shortbread, hot chocolate, wassail and fruit-cake aged in brandy for weeks as per instructions from an old family recipe. Background music from our hi-fi included traditional Christmas carols by 50s singers or favorites like Bing Crosby singing White Christmas. Strings of lights had to be untangled and tested for burned out bulbs, several types of tree ornaments were made by hand, and a paper chain of many-colored strips of paper to wrap the tree was created.

A beautiful popcorn string was made by placing alternating kernels of white, popped corn and hard, fresh cranberries on a string by means of a needle on the end. Pricked fingers were common, as we took turns, and small drops of blood could be seen on the string if one looked closely. But that was not the only time blood was drawn by a needle that Christmas.

When the call came for dinner, I turned off the television in the living room and rushed through the dining room in my stocking feet on my way to the kitchen table. I never made it. I did

not see the needle sticking out of the carpeting. While I lay on the floor, screaming in pain, my father tried to pull it out by hand, but could not, because it was stuck in the bone. As I lay there in agony, he went to the basement workroom to find a pair of pliers. In those days we rarely went to the doctor, so, after pulling it out, he put some iodine and a band-aid on it.

It was worth it, however. From the street after dark, on-lookers and visitors admired our efforts. The decorated windows and multi-colored lights served as warm beacons to balance the cold Washington nights. Our Christmas tree was a joyous scene viewed through the windows with all of its lights, ornaments, paper chains and popcorn strings. And, in my waning years, the time our family spent together creating that look is a most precious memory.

I Tell Myself I'm Lucky

by Ramona Maassen

The other day I went to the Pink Dot event to show my support for my friends in equality. I was pretty depressed, having been off of all my medications for a short while. Earlier that day I picked up my gold(ish) medal from the Veteran's Administration (VA) for one of my stories I had submitted to the VA's National Creative Arts Festival. I didn't feel excited that I had received it, but I wore it anyway. That was pretty much the state of my mind and heart. I was dutifully going through the motions, feeling numb, depressed and blah.

On the way home I decided to grab a burger at the Carl's Jr. because it was after dinner time and I didn't want to face the prospect of trying to find something to cook when I got home. As I was pulling up to the order station, an older middle-aged Asian woman was walking up to the drive thru. I thought she had just come out of the restaurant. Her facial features reminded me a bit of my mother. She had a pleasant smile on her broad face and shoulder length salt and pepper hair. She was dragging a somewhat battered small suitcase on wheels by its extended handle. Seeing me, stopped, waiting for her to walk across the drive thru lane, she changed her direction. Instead of crossing the lane, she approached me from the driver's side. I rolled my window down.

"You help me?" she said pleasantly.

I replied, "Yes." I was somewhat confused by this request. I wasn't sure how I was helping her.

She crossed in front of me and then tried my passenger door handle. I was a little disconcerted. I thought she was just crossing in front of me. I was glad it was locked. I rolled down the passenger side window.

"You give me ride home? You help me?" she said in the same tone.

My first thought was to say no. But then I thought what the hell. She didn't look like a threat and I didn't get any bad vibes from her and I wasn't in any hurry to get home. I unlocked the door on my Smart car to let her in. She tried to get in the front seat with her suitcase but that wasn't going to work. I popped the back window,

“Here she was, far from all that was familiar and dependent on a stranger to get home for the night.”

got out of the car and put the suitcase in the back. As we settled into our seats and buckled up, I turned to her and asked, “Are you hungry? I haven’t had dinner yet and I’m going to order some food.”

“No, thank you.” She replied and continued. “You take me home? 1390 North? You lucky?”

“Okay.” I said while thinking, what did I get myself into. It began to dawn on me that the woman I had just let into my car was a little touched and that I was an idiot for getting involved. I ordered my food and when I got my order, I shoved the bag in the back. I didn’t want to eat in front of her. I turned back on to 2100 South and asked her which direction, west or east, she needed to go. She indicated that I should head east so I did.

Thoughts crowded my head. I noticed that her breath was bad, it smelled of decaying teeth. She kept making a smacking sound with her mouth, similar to the sound that my stepmother used to make when she was taking lithium and Thorazine for her schizophrenia. Just my luck, I thought. She probably is mentally ill and has no idea how to get home. I began to realize that her command of English was extremely limited. As I continued driving east, I was able to tease out bits of information from her.

She was Vietnamese. She lived here for a short time. She missed the bus. By now I was running out of street: 2100 South was going to merge into the highway. There was no way I was going to take her onto the freeway so I made a U-turn and headed back the way I had just traveled. Frustrated, I asked her several times if she could call someone to get instructions to her place. Finally, she understood what I was asking her. I pulled over into a parking lot alongside the street. She didn’t have a cell phone so I got her to punch in the numbers on my cell phone. I noticed she did not use the prefix 801 so I reentered the phone number correctly. The call went immediately to a voice mailbox that was not set up yet. I started to panic inside. What had I gotten myself into? I tried not to show my dismay. Calmly I told her that I would drive back to 1300 East and then travel north until I could get to as close as possible to 1390 North. I tried to get her to tell me the cross street near 1390 North but she didn’t understand or maybe I didn’t understand her.

“Sorry, too much trouble. I live Doctor Martin. You lucky?”

“No trouble. We will get you home. You live with a doctor?” I felt sorry for her. She was probably living in a half way house for the mentally ill. I felt frustrated and all I wanted to do was get her home and get on with my life. I punched the redial on my phone and my car’s Bluetooth picked the call up so I could continue driving. This time someone picked up. A female voice with a thick Asian accent answered. I asked the woman in my car to talk to her. At first she was taken back by the voice coming out of my radio. Then they started chattering back and forth. I waited a bit and then said as clearly as I could, “Can you tell me the cross street? What big street are you closest to?”

“Redwood.” Came the reply in a reedy voice. After a bit more of the chattering, the lady on the other end of the call hung up.

My passenger volunteered some more information. “My mother.”

I pictured her and her mother, foreigners in a strange country. Her mother must be very old I thought as I stole a sideways glance to my right. I thought of my mother, an immigrant to this country too; she died too young at age 62.

Now that I had a real direction to head in I relaxed a bit. I explained to my rider that I was going to drive up to 500 South and then head west until I came to Redwood road and then I would follow it up to 1300 North and that with luck maybe she would recognize the area and be able to guide us to where she lived.

“So sorry trouble for you. You lucky?”

“It’s alright. I just want to get you home safe. Do you have children?” I asked her trying to put her at ease.

“No children.” She stated simply.

She lives with her ancient mother in a foreign country. She has no children. I thought of my children, my distant first son, my half-sister whom I raised and my youngest son who was my heart and having troubles of his own. Here she was, far from all that was familiar and dependent on a stranger to get home for the night.

The sun had set while we were driving.

At one point she had me turn north on 900 West, when it looked like it would dead end ahead, I turned left and continued west. When I reached Redwood road, I turned right and drove north, slowly. I have trouble seeing at night. I was hoping to find a street number close to 1390 North. And there 1300 North was on

the left! I made the turn on to the road, continuing to drive cautiously. I didn't want to miss the house. As I was coming up to a T in the road, I looked up at the road sign. Morten Dr. I started to smile. Doctor Martin. I made a right turn. We were almost there.

"Sorry too much trouble. You lucky?"

"You will be home soon. I am sorry it took so long." I replied.

I couldn't seem to find the house numbered 1390 North. I made a U-turn and drove back slowly to Morten Dr. There wasn't a house number that matched. Then I thought maybe it was 1319 but that wasn't it either.

"I walk." She said after my third attempt.

I heard her. She was tired and anxious to be home. I could tell that she knew where to go and that it wasn't far. I stopped the car. I got out as she got out. I got her suitcase out of the back of the car.

"Thank you. You lucky." She said to me and walked up the street. Part of me wanted to still drive her home; I was curious. Part of me wanted to hug her. I did none of those things. I grabbed my cold fast food from the back and shut the window door. I got into my car, my lights shining on her as she walked towards her home. Then I made a U-turn and headed home.

Driving, I thought a lot about that short detour of time. I realized with a start that woman was probably my age or close to it. I thought about the differences in our lives.

Out loud and to no one in particular I said, "I am lucky."

The Forgotten 300

by Alex Emiliano Flores Jr.

At the battle of Thermopylae the three-hundred Spartans (accompanied by four thousand Greek cooks, black-smiths, potters and soldiers) fought bravely for twenty-seven days. They had slaughtered the Immortals, crushed the Indians and demolished the person-beasts. They had thought the battle was theirs but little did they know what awaited the next. They awoke to a deafening sound approaching off to the east just as the sun began to rise. The Spartans, along with the other Greeks, prepared themselves for whatever the mad God King was throwing at them next. As they get into position a flying beast with no wings speeds toward them. They kept their stance, resolve and their courage and started throwing their spears and shooting their arrows but both weapons did nothing to the creature. The beast was two-hundred feet away and sixty feet above the ground when it opened its stomach to reveal an armored man inside. The man pushed something forward that made a loud click when it stopped... It appeared to be nothing more than a metal cylinder. The cylinder started to spin then fire erupted from it. The entire Greek resistance was slaughtered in no more than a minute and a half, thus giving the persons Greece.

Salt Lake Oil Spill and My Black Sea of an Eye

by Mary Jane Shipley

Salt Lake flows on its' own oil spill. A tiny microcosm of the Gulf, nonetheless, it impacts us all. Liberty Park is closed and the Aviary is part of this local disaster unfolding jut a scant couple miles from me. Birds bathed in Dawn detergent have some chance; their vulnerable babies less. Crews work around the clock. Sad, the suspected cause reads like science function, the results too Gulf like.

Punch drunk and giddy, Janet, master designer extraordinaire next door tackled my allergy challenge with giggling and pure knowledge that "Necessity is the Mother of invention". I developed a problem; I must wear an eye shield every night. The first night grew an unwelcome crop of blisters on my wounded cheek caused from the "nonallergic" tape. Ha, what to do? Our soirée at the Healing Hotel came up with this engineering solution, see photo below. If this does not make you laugh, I give up. We had a raucous time! We concluded Onionhead Ninja serves as a dual ally, no tape required and then no more blisters and this dressing serves to the scale to scare our unfriendly stalker.

Can you imagine breaking in to see this face? Ha, safety and healing all in one costume!! Do Janet, you are the best!

My eye heals. Patience, patience,yep, patience...

One diversion is observing changes. The flat black washer [aka air bubble] shrank from quarter sized to dime sized overnight. Even more entertaining, the shape changed too. The now dime sized floating space creature telescoped as well as shrinking. The center remains clear, but a tube recedes from its' edge into apparent infinity. Wild! The accompanying moving ball became tiny and so ended the chasing game previously providing delicious entertainment. My sclera[white part] is still a red eye special and the pupil wide as the Black oil spilled Sea. Audio books yield certain napping; if eye drops were not needed I seemingly outside my eye. Weird. Enjoy your wellness as I enjoy my healing. We have come a ways since Pac-Man; what next?

Where Were You?

by Anne Peck

Where were you when I was
hungry?

Where were you when I was
cold?

Where were you when I was
homeless?

Feeding the hungry in other
countries.

Clothing the cold in other countries.

Housing the homeless but
only single moms and their
children.

Where are you now
that I am hungry?

Where are you now
that I am hungry?

Where are you now
that I am cold?

Where are you now
that I am homeless?

Still feeding the hungry
in other countries

Clothing the cold in
other countries.

Housing the homeless single
moms and their children.

Modern Talk



by Mary M. Fuller

Life is real! Life is earnest!
Because we have friends all around us!

I live here with you, my pals!
I 'take heart' again, guys 'n gals!

You make my life so 'sublime'
Assisting my 'footprints' in the 'sands of time!'

Let us, then, be up and doing,
'Still achieving, still pursuing!'

And 'with a [big] hearts[s]' for ALL our exertions,
We live and learn, and explore with QUESTIONS!

(With assistance from A PSALM FOR LIFE,
Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, 1838)

Riding Killer

by Homer Conder

After a day of riding on Uinta Mountain's dirt roads, I hit the slab and headed home on I-80. The sound of tires thumping a rubber-on-asphalt rhythm and the smell of heavy exhaust replaced the fresh air and solitude I enjoyed earlier in the day. In summer's heat the Uinta Mountains spider web of primitive roads is my escape from the Salt Lake metropolis. The ride home however, is like a commuter's routine. The drone of Killer's single cylinder motor was smooth and steady, and a quick glance at the instruments revealed sixty miles-per-hour at 4,000 revolutions-per-minute. Merging with the westbound traffic, I settled in and let my mind wander.

I did the math in my head. 60 miles-per-hour works out to one mile every minute. So my single cylinder motor spits a mile-long ribbon of asphalt out the rear tire every 4,000 revolutions. I divided by 10 and I got 400 rpm equals one-tenth of a mile every 6-seconds. 6 into 400 goes 66 times, 36 from 40 leaves 4, bringing down the zero, I got 40 again; another 6 and so on, converted to fractions I got $\frac{2}{3}$, so every second Killer turns out $66\frac{2}{3}$ revolutions. It's a four-stroke motor so half the revolutions are power, equaling $33\frac{1}{3}$ revolutions every second.

I glanced around at the traffic; an assortment of cars, trucks, and transports, lightly scattered with motorcycles. "It's a bunch of people hurrying to go nowhere" I told myself, stealing the line from Sitting Bull. Sitting Bull was an American Indian Chief in the late 1800's. His destiny was to fight a war against an overpowering blitz of invaders and die in the process of defending his homeland. The westward expansion of American civilization robbed his land and I robbed his words. Somehow it felt right, but I also felt like I was losing the same land.

Caught in a current of west bound traffic polluting the atmosphere with its exhaust of spent fossil fuel, Killer added to the cause with his single cylinder motor thumping along at $33\frac{1}{3}$ firing revolutions every second. Killer atomizes his fuel a little at a time with a carburetor. A blast of air through a small stream of gasoline and the vapor is introduced into the motor. The intake valve

opens allowing the piston to draw the vapor into the cylinder on its downward stroke. The piston stops briefly at the bottom and after the valve closes, it compresses the vapor with its upward stroke. At the top of the cylinder a perfectly timed electronic signal fires a sparkplug protruding into the cylinder head to detonate the compressed fuel. The explosion pushes the piston down on the power stroke. The piston changes direction at the bottom and a different valve opens at the top. The upward stroke pushes the spent fuel residue into the exhaust system. That is how Killer's, four-stroke motor provides operating power. One stroke to draw in fuel, one to compress it, one to supply power, and one to clear the debris. Suck, squeeze, bang, blow, 66 $\frac{2}{3}$ revolutions every second to produce 60 miles-per-hour. I'm amazed it doesn't fly apart.

There's more to Killer than the simple up and down path of the piston. The power doesn't get to his rear wheel by magic and the valves don't open on a cue. Killer's piston is bolted to a crankshaft by a connecting rod that transfers the power to a transmission of gears through a clutch. The transmission is a chamber of interlocking gears riding on shafts and bearings that can be selected with a lever operated by the rider.

With a little practice a rider can learn to run a motorcycle up to speed, changing gears with the coordinated operation of a clutch lever on the left handgrip, a throttle on the right and the shifting lever next to the left foot peg. Select a gear with the foot; engage the clutch with the left hand while dialing in the proper amount of fuel with a twist of the throttle, and the power moves through the transmission to the primary drive sprocket. A roller-chain picks up the power and moves it to a final drive sprocket bolted on the rear wheel.

Almond-sized cams riding on shafts operate the intake and exhaust valves on top of the motor. Sprockets attached to the ends of the camshaft and crankshaft are timed to operate with the assistance of a high-velocity roller-chain. The roller-chain connecting the crankshaft and camshaft sprockets opens the valves at the precise time needed to draw in the fuel vapor for firing, or expel the spent fuel debris as exhaust. The valves are slammed shut by powerful springs the cams have to out muscle to open. Again I'm amazed the thing doesn't fly apart. It has metal parts banging and scraping against other metal parts. Pistons moving up and down at ungodly speeds while coming to complete miniscule stops on each end of the strokes. There are internal explosions, valves slamming shut and

high velocity chains running endless paths at invisible speeds. All the motion, explosions, and friction, create heat requiring cooling and lubricating systems. Killer is loaded with bearings, gears, pumps, springs, chains, nuts, bolts, screws, pistons, pins, rods, and whatever, all singing in tune to the rhythm of suck, squeeze, bang, blow.

A loud Harley Davidson motorcycle piloted by a helmetless bug-eater bounced by on my left and brought me back to business. Unknowingly in need of a suspension system, the Harley disappeared into the traffic flow. Harley riders don't have the slightest idea about the mechanics of a motorcycle suspension or exhaust systems.

"cycles." I think to know why Harley without helmet or adequate I guess they destined to in the organ Surgeons like motorcyclist."

Park City grows every year as its fringe shrinks. It has the ability to produce its own haze. The fresh air that once thrived here has moved on. Killer added to the haze at the rate of 66 2/3, sucks, squeezes, bangs, and blows ever second as we thumped by. Gouged into the hillside above the town, the Olympic ski jump and bobsled track serves as a billboard for the event's conquest over the town. It sent my mind back to the year 2000, two years before the Olympics came to Utah. To say I stood firm in the camp of Olympic opposition is an understatement. The Olympics is like a bum on your doorstep with nothing except a promise. He's smooth, and convinces you he's needed so he can throw a party in your house. "It's simple," he says, "You provide the amenities, expense and work, and I'll invite the guests. We'll split the money made 60—40." In the end we won the bid by bribing the bum to choose our city over other cities to host his party. What a scam. I'm a pessimist when it comes to the Olympics and shook my head in disbelief at the venue area. I wish I could wave a magic wand and change it back to the quaint little mining town I remembered when I was young. Sitting

**"A
small swarm
of twilight bugs
ended thier mundane
lives with power-dive
suicides on Killer's
windshield."**

"King of the donor-myself. "I'll never ley owners ride mets, mufflers, suspensions. are the ones fill the vaults donor banks. this type of

to the southwest the green space on

grown so much it now has

Bull would have wished to go back even further in time.”

I checked my blind spot before changing lanes to pass a big lumbering rig belching exhaust while moving under a heavy load. I looked up at the side of the trailer; it was a Wal-Mart truck probably full of made-in-China goods bound for one of their stores. Maybe I’m a pessimist plain and simple. Is American manufacturing a thing of the past?

I rolled the throttle back forcing Killer to an uncomfortable growl and left the freighter behind. As I moved toward the uphill grade leading to Parley’s Canyon, I kept thinking, “It’s too bad Summit County has turned into a high-density urban sore. It was nice as rural paradise.”

Killer’s voice changed as he strained under the uphill grade. He gave up a few rpm’s and dropped back to 60 miles-per-hour. I found “miles” to be a strange concept when I glanced at the speedometer. Five thousand, two hundred, and eighty feet to a mile... How the hell do you get a single unit like 1 mile from five thousand two hundred and eighty any things, let alone a twelve inch foot? Why aren’t we using the metric system in this country? I like kilometers. I can ride more kilometers in a day than I can miles. Then wondered how the hell we got hooked up with a 24-hour day? Isn’t there some way we could switch to metric time? Ten-hour days, ten-day weeks, and ten-month years... Would it have to be one hundred minute hours and one hundred second minutes? It would be impossible to change the orbit of the earth or its rotation, so we would have to make all the adjustments mathematically. Clock makers would love it as long as they didn’t get caught with a lot of old inventory. I figured I’d have to get my calculator out and work on it at home.

At the top of the pass Killer’s song mellowed as we rolled past the brake check turnout. Long haul drivers banging their own tune with wooden tire-billies didn’t noticed our passing as they listen to the pings and thuds that are supposed to represent different tire pressures on their rig’s rubber. Banging a tire with a stick to check air pressure is as dumb as banging a motor with a hammer to check the oil level. Somebody should tell those guys to use air gauges.

Headlights in the oncoming traffic lanes, and a path of glowing red taillights in the downhill lanes warned me of the darkness to come. Slipping into the long shadows of the canyon I became keenly aware of dangers of night travel in heavy traffic and

I put my brain in full focus to engage the survival skills required for this section of the highway. Keeping a safety zone around Killer, I checked blind spots, bounced between lanes to avoid Jake-braking freighters, drowsy recreational drivers dragging boats and campers, and golfers that had one too many at the 19th.

A small swarm of twilight bugs ended their mundane lives with power-dive suicides on Killer's windshield. It was bug carnage on plastic. Green, yellow, and red globs of internal bug goo, chunks of black exoskeleton debris, and dancing remnants of translucent wings flapping in the wind stream marked the final resting place of creatures so tiny they couldn't have left a mark any other way.

The torturous growl from an overloaded freighter's Jake-brake, accompanied by the smell of burning brake linings ended the bug eulogy, and I changed lanes to establish a safety zone between Killer and the smoldering rig. On the edge of the twilight city I pushed Killer away from the rig toward a faint pinkish glow capping the black silhouette of the Oquirrh Mountains on the horizon. A bright stream of freeway lights marked my path home. Killer danced with the heavy interstate traffic, following like an excellent partner to my every cue. Lane changes, interchange decisions, blind spot surveillance, speed corrections, and the ability to read the minds of the other I-80 travelers came in handy.

The light above the garage door welcomed us home the second the motion detector announced our arrival. I hesitated when I reached for the key to end Killer's song. He was singing sweetly and I settled back into the seat to enjoy a few seconds more. For some reason I needed to hear another chorus of the suck, squeeze, bang, blow, song before I could turn off the.

Woes of a Visitation Parent

by Elizabeth Ernstsen

I watched from a distance
My heart is so full of love
Yet you feel it not.
I see your pain and rush to your aide
Yet you receive it not.
I wipe away your tears
Yet you see me not.
I ache so much at the sorrow you feel
Yet comfort you feel it not.
I shout for joy when I see you happy
Yet you hear me not.
I feel invisible and unaccepted
Just as our Savior sits
Outside of Jerusalem,
Wishing he too would be let in.
Such as the woes of the
Visitation Parent and
I know he
Knows me well.

Irregular as Clockwork



by Rachel Lowry

I have known
the clockwork of the heart.

I know it to be as constant as a moment,
as buoyant as concrete
as predictable as life.

I know it to be as volatile as appetite.
as certain as doubt's shadow,
as capricious as the sun's agenda.

It beats,
a rhythmic jolt within the detainment of my body.

It pulses,
venturing to verify existence.

It thumps,
echoing the deafening cry of silence.

It flutters,
in erratic ecstasy.

It throbs,
with raw apprehension.

It yearns
with unrestrained longing.

It aches,
as fractured as splintered wood.

It soars,
above skies of untouchable and weightless euphoria.

It grinds,
between the jagged edges of consciousness.

It burns,
like red pepper seers the inside of a vein.

It skips,
at the shift of relativity.

It presses,
like a boulder to the chest.

It sings,
In frivolously vital giddiness.

It sinks,
With the weight of fallen possibility.

It expands,
In divine wonder.

It hums
as a small bird with a million places to be, but nowhere to go.

It murmurs,
In the sweetness of recollection.

It can be stilled
- Oh yes, it can be stilled.

And what of the heart when it is cold, motionless?
The answer lies not in its function,
but in its continuation;

Living still in the off-beat of another,
rising and falling in erratic rhythm,
for it is, I have always known,
as irregular as clockwork.

Plant Good Seed

by Maggie Ryan Vogt

Like Goldilocks and the Three Bears, my mom took three turns at marriage before she got it right. At her 50th wedding anniversary celebration she shared this story.

The marriage of my dreams was a long time coming. First marriage, I tried professional counseling. Second marriage-prayer and humor. Third marriage, I found my way to bliss in the garden working alongside Tom.

I'm the woman who hates to get her feet wet (philosophically and metaphorically), clothes dirty, and can't tell a weed from a flower. Yet I found the key to a happy marriage in my own backyard.

I fought the temptation to muck around in the yard for the first three years of our marriage thinking I had more than enough to do with children, writing, working and taking care of my expanding to do lists. Ultimately my resolve fell away like a multi-million dollar home careening from a California hillside during a rain storm. Finally, I fell head over heels in love with the vast potential our acre and a third of property at Brookside offered.

It is all Tom's fault. Every night the first Spring of our marriage he came home from the office, kissed me hello and headed for the bedroom to throw off his Researcher/Epidemiologist clothes. Minutes later I'd glance up from cooking dinner to see him walk by the kitchen window with a ladder, or shovel, or some mélange of tools in the wheelbarrow, and a look on his face that was one part concentration, one part excitement, and a mixture of fascination, adventure, and discovery with a hint of ecstasy. For a moment I'd feel envious wondering where those emotions in him came from but dinner or a child would distract me and I'd return to my preparations with only a twinge of wonder.

When we sat around the dinner table to share the news of our day with each other, I notice subtle changes in Tom. He ate quickly, but listened with the same intensity. His comments, however, no longer included news about world affairs, medical research, or taxes instead I learned the showy dahlias died during winter but

the plain ones made it or that the slugs were more aggressive than ever. As soon as you children finished your tales of new friends or old friends lost he'd disappear out into the yard somewhere until dark.

Meanwhile I fretted he worked too hard. What could I do to slow this man down to relax and enjoy life? As a last resort, I decided to help out in the yard thinking that we'd get it whipped into shape in a few hours then he'd sit on the deck with a chilled glass of beer and we'd talk.

Any fool could pull weeds I told myself. By summer's end I decided that was a bad choice of words. During childhood, I'd spent most summers earning extra allowance by pulling weeds. At a penny a piece I'd been able to earn money for dime ice cream cones at Wilson's delicatessen on the corner.

My first day on the job went great. Tom pointed to a weed variety. I pulled out every cousins, sister, or first degree relative I could find. He'd congratulate me and I'd tell myself I knew what I was doing. We made great partners teaming up to create a beautiful space. Maybe gardens weren't so hard after all.

After a full week of weeding the front flower beds I felt competent ready to move on to the little shady patch that bordered the drive way. One evening after Tom went into the house for the night I stayed behind to weed. I pulled the ugly weeds growing up through the rockery and threw them on the grass to pick up later. The next morning as I puttered around the kitchen, put breakfast dishes into the dishwasher, sipped coffee, and thought about weeding. Tom came in. The screen door slapped behind him. I could feel the air around him build up pressure like it does before a storm. In a voice filled with ire he announced that the kids down the street must have been in the yard. Someone pulled out the flowers ready to blossom.

Why would someone do that he asked. Supportive wife that I am, I agreed that it was an awful thing for anyone to do. I'd keep an eye open for the culprit. It wouldn't happen again I said. Deep inside my heart of hearts, I turned reddest red. I knew the culprit quite well. I picked no yanked those flowers out roots and all thinking them weeds. Too embarrassed to say anything, I let the moment pass and hoped Tom wouldn't

“We made great partners teaming up to create a beautiful space.”

wonder about my sudden silence.

Dang! Me and my “any fool can do this” analogy. I’d almost been exposed. Not wanting to make another costly mistake, I lost interest in the garden. I figured it had a better chance for survival with me as far away from it as possible. I knew what do with the house so I consoled myself with cleaning out bedroom, broom and linen closets, re-arranging the kitchen and laundry room cupboards, sorting through all bedroom, bathroom, and kitchen drawers, labeling the shelves in the pantry, and organizing the storage shed for the fourth time.

Sometimes I’d be as edgy as a Minnesota farmer’s house bound wife during the worst winter of a decade of bad winters. I was stuck with the house. No fleeting looks of ecstasy graced my face. I didn’t get it. Why did he work until near exhaustion in the yard?

The second Spring Tom headed outside again. The drought hit Portland and strict water rationing followed but Tom didn’t return from the garden until late fall rains forced him inside. His weekends seemed to be filled with working on the paths, the walls, the flowers beds in other words he always found something new in the garden.

Frequently Tom invited me to work in the front garden. I joined in and declared a section for my own. I worked chicken manure into the clay soil and filled the empty spaces in with nasturtiums. My experience in second grade teacher from Mrs. Geary’s expert instructions on Mother’s day flower boxes from milk carton taught me everything about these traditional hardy plants. My competency rating on nasturtiums was 100% so I planted them along the driveway. That had been fun but I was out of seed and annual bedding plants so I looked around and found some beautiful delicate white star shaped flowers growing on the slope below the house. When Tom went in for a drink of water I moved around the slope and dug up ten little star plants and carefully transplanted them in the garden. Just as I finished Tom returned. He walked over to me, bent down toward the ground and right before my eyes plucked out star flower and threw it on the weed heap. My star flowers were not real flowers at all but WEEDS. Well so much for flower planting. I retreated to the house and left Tom to his yard. It seemed clear to me now that we had set up our relationship with a true division of labor. The house was mine to paper, paint, remodel and re-arrange. The yard belonged to Tom. So be it.

Yet a part of me still longed to uncover the mystery, the allure, the enchantment the yard held over Tom. This year I taught a class for Weight Watchers called moving up from the back seat. I encouraged member to take a risk. I explained how women are more afraid of making mistakes than men and this results in a diminished enjoyment of life. As I listened to myself speak to my classes I knew that I was speaking to myself and it was time to get out in the garden, make some more mistakes, but by all means enjoy the bounty that the land could offer. I did and it has.

My life will never be the same. I've become a path builder and flower planter. I finally understand the satisfaction of wielding a shovel, moving dirt, creating a road through the weeds and rocks of a hillside. At night I dream about flowers. More than that I learned that one person's weeds can be another person's star flowers and there's room for both. However, the bigger lesson is this-unlike a garden, in a relationship it's best to plant flowers.

Cannon Fodder

by Christine R. Lee

Where you stand and where I sit
Our pieces no longer fit
Once we joked and laughed at ourselves
Now the stench of resentment swells

Foundations built on common ground
Have lost their place and can't be found

The sparkle in your eye I was pleased to ignite
Has been snuffed like a candle in mournful twilight

Memories tarnished by ashes and soot
Will meet a future traveler's foot
The pain of our past felt by another
Cannon Fodder

Dream Vacation

by Kyle Cardwell

Hey have you wanted to belong on the beach but have no money? Great news you can get the dream vacation you always wanted but wait call now and you'll get a bonus day included for free. Wait there's more, act now and you'll get hotel and airfare free! Log on to getthedreamyoualwayswanted.com.

Must be 18 years or older to order. Promotion bonus not available in certain areas of the world. Price of this package is \$4,500.00. For a limited time only so act fast!

Help

by Debbie Freeman

As I sit I wonder
Just why it had to be
If only for a moment
I would seem like a lifetime to me.

I struggle with the nightmares
And try so hard to understand
And think of only I would have fought
It would all, go away.

Do I want to go on?
Is it even worth it?
Does anyone understand?
Or do they even care?

Why fight the battle
I ask for help, but why?
Too many new troops!
Is there even a reason to try?

I've asked so many times so many times
And have heard so many promises
Do I even matter to them?
Or am I just another number

I look to the sky and see the stars
Remembering God is Love
As I lay down at night
And say my prayers
I ask God for help
I feel God is my only help, my last hope.
There isn't any other help for me.

The Box

by Jenny McCoy

We arrived at Grandma Dorothy's house on Christmas Eve just in time for dinner. The house was warm and smelled of the familiar scents of the holiday. I breathed in deeply and filled myself with the perfume of pumpkin pie, cinnamon, fresh baked bread and pine. I was barely eight, too young to remember much, but the smell was already a treasured memory of my past.

We gathered in the dining room to find our places at the table. I, of course, sat at the children's table with six starving cousins and my little sister. The turkey was just as I had remembered it the year before, huge, delicious and just a little dry. The mashed potatoes, covered in gravy were, and always would be, my favorite part of the meal. We giggled as we placed our olives on the tips of our fingers and fed the stuffing to the dog. That year was a lot like the last and that was okay with me.

Daddy and Uncle Dave went to the den to watch football. As my aunts and my mother washed the dishes, my sister, cousins and I were herded into the living room by my Grandma and her sister, Auntie Bess. The Christmas tree towered to the ceiling and was covered with what seemed to me like millions of ornaments: santas, snowmen, icicles, balls, bulbs, stars, snowflakes, some, store bought, some homemade, all floating on an evergreen wonderland.

We played with the old toys that were kept in a basket in the coat closet, but periodically we inched our way to the tree to see if we could spot our names on a gift or two, only to be gently warned; "No touching."

I noticed the holiday decorations throughout the room and knew that Grandma had taken a lot of time and care preparing for that day. Every table top held a delicate ornament or display of holiday cheer. One dish held colorful ribbon candy and another, colorful hard candies shaped like tiny pillows. I remembered both from my short past. The doorway was framed with holiday cards and I smiled as I found the one my sister and I had signed and Mother had sent only a week before.

On the center of Grandma's fireplace mantle sat a photo-

graph of Grandpa, framed in gold. He was surrounded by crystal candlestick holders with red tapers, a nativity scene nestled in pine boughs and a tattered old gift box, I remembered having seen the year before. It was about four cubic inches and covered in old wrapping paper and a battered green bow. I was curious as to why it sat among the nicer decorations. Grandma, sitting in her chair by the fireplace, was watching the fire and the children play near the tree. I climbed up into her lap and asked her what was in the little box on the mantle.

“Oh, many things,” she told me, “Many, many things.”

Auntie Bess, sitting in her favorite spot on the sofa, just smiled.

“Like what?” I asked, curiously, “candy?” Grandma’s eyes twinkled.

“Sometimes,” she answered.

“Toys?” I asked.

“Yes,” she said as she nodded, “sometimes toys. Sometimes jewels,” she added. “Always treasures.” I looked over at Auntie Bess who was still smiling but then had a tear in her eye.

“Can I look inside?” I asked Grandma.

“Maybe later,” she told me. “I think it’s time to open our gifts!”

For the next hour or more we made a huge mess of Grandma’s living room as we ripped paper and tossed bows, digging for the treasures under the tree. The noise was exhilarating, causing adrenaline to flow and squeals to escape.

While Grandma’s back was turned I snuck over to the fireplace and used a stool to reach the little box. I lifted the lid and found the box empty. To my disappointment there was no toys, jewels or treasures. The box was full of nothing! I felt Grandma had

not been truthful with me. A little sad, I went back to my gifts.

“I climbed up into her lap and asked her what was in the little box on the mantle.”

In a while the frenzy calmed and the mood changed. The younger cousins drifted to sleep and the women talked quietly. Daddy and Uncle Dave went back to the den to watch the end of the football game and I sat on the floor near Grandma’s chair, playing with my paper dolls and listened.

“I see you still have that little box,”

my mother noticed. Grandma smiled and nodded. “How many years has it bounced around here?” Mother asked.

“Thirty-six,” she answered.

“It sure has seen a lot of giving,” Auntie Bess replied.

“Yes it has,” Grandma answered her, “It surely has.”

“I think my favorite gift was that batch of fudge that Lola stuffed in there when I was twelve,” Mother told Auntie Bess. Lola was one of Mother’s cousins. She died in a car crash when she was 25. “I sure miss her,” Mama said.

“Me too,” said Aunt Sally.

“Didn’t you give Lola a pet rock in that box,” Auntie Bess asked Mama.

“No, that was Sally,” Mama answered. “But she stole it from me first!” Auntie Bess laughed in her deep gruff way. Aunt Sally rolled her eyes and smiled.

“I remember somebody getting a frog one year,” Mama added.

Grandma scratched her nose. “That was Tim, she said. “Tommy gave it to him. They were twins so they were always doin’ stuff like that to each other.”

“I think my favorite gift from that box was the cameo necklace you gave me, Dot,” Auntie Bess told Grandma.

“I’m glad you got it before the frog was given in it!” They all laughed. I smiled too.

“Who was it that got the Rubik’s Cube in it?” Aunt Sally asked. “I can’t believe how perfectly that thing fit!”

“One o’ the twins,” Grandma answered. “That was a tight fit.” I thought of the old Rubik’s Cube in the toy basket tucked in Grandma’s closet and wondered if it was the same one.

“You know,” Auntie Bess said, “I think all of us got something in that box at least a time or two.”

“Yep,” said Grandma, “and gave at least a time or two.” The room was quiet for a moment. The fire crackled and glowed. The women’s faces looked warm and peaceful.

“Tessie gave us that ultrasound photo of her baby in that box. Do you remember that?”

“How could we forget?” Sally said. “Zach is in his last year of High School now.”

“Time flies,” Grandma said. “Just like a jet plane.”

“That box has had bubble gum, doll clothes, candy, a train ticket to Toledo, a snow globe, a leather wrist band, a can of tuna

for that cat that tore up my new drapes...”

“Hunter,” Mama added. “Hunter the evil cat.” They all laughed again.

“What was your favorite gift in that box, Mother,” Mama asked Grandma.

“I would have to say it was the key to this house your daddy gave me, the year you were born.”

“Oh Mother!” Aunt Sally and Mama both said. “I didn’t know that! What a wonderful gift!”

“They have all been wonderful gifts,” she told them. “Every last one of them.”

“There is a lot of sweet memories in that box,” Aunt Sally said.

“More that we can remember,” Auntie Bess said.

“Oh, I remember them all,” grandma’s voice was quiet.

The talking lasted a while longer, then it was time to go. As we gathered our coats, hats and gifts, passed out hugs and kisses I stepped onto the little stool near the fireplace. I opened the little old box and dropped a note inside. It wasn’t much, just a note that said, “Thank you for remembering.”

Winter

by Shirley Fifer

the day is grey, calm
there should be wind and snow
a January blizzard.

Sleeping in a warm cave
in a 3 inch fur coat
a 4 month nap, oh boy

mummy it's snowing outside
can we go out and play?
go back to sleep its only January

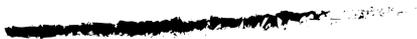
Age Crept Up on Me



by Marie Ford

Age crept in on me,
Everything happened silently
The mirror shows who?

All the Hills



by Mona Devlan

All the hills are furrowed by gravity
And all the water of the world
Loves a furrow of the hill
And goes by these things
In a logic of inclination
And obeys one law
Over and over
One law of
Going down

Fever Dream

by Steve Proskauer

The apparition loomed on the ceiling in the dusky light, undulating and flickering like a mirage in a broiling desert sunset as rivulets of sweat poured from my pallid brow. A smudgy bilious green sphere throbbed to the beat of my enlarged and tortured heart. Relentlessly pulsing, the thing threw words at my head, massive boulders of meaning, slick with rotted moss.

Your...TIME...has...COME! Your...LIFE...is...GONE!

Your...TIME...has...COME! Your...LIFE...is...GONE!

Your...TIME...has...COME! Your...LIFE...is...GONE!

STOP! I gasped. STOP!! Not like this... There's no dignity in a delirious death.

NOT FOR YOU TO CHOOSE! I COME WHEN I DECIDE TO COME AND THAT TIME IS NOW!!

The sickening sphere trembled and seemed to enlarge.... Was it moving down to engulf me? Summoning my last remaining strength, I defied the loathsome globe. I WILL CHOOSE! YOUR BODY HAS ALREADY CHOSEN FOR YOU. NOW SURRENDER! SURRENDER!

Cut loose from time, I drifted into a confused haze of dread. The sphere droned softly now, beckoning to me in saccharine tones.

YES... YES.... COME TO ME, ARISE TO YOUR PEACE! YOU HAVE EARNED ETERNAL REST. RELAX, RELAX.... YOUR WORK IS DONE.

Not like this, not like this, not like this.... The strength of that mantra pulled me out of the sluggish cyclone sucking at me, drawing me up and up as the green globular mass descended upon me. Very soon it would be too late. I would be absorbed.

WAIT! I demand to see and know your face! Are you afraid to show yourself? Is this mucky sphere the best you can do?

YOU ARE IN NO POSITION TO MAKE DEMANDS! I AM IN CONTROL NOW. SUBMIT! I GROW WEARY OF YOUR FEEBLE PROTESTATIONS!

For the implacable force of Death, You certainly do bluster,

don't You? I mumbled through my dizziness. Know that I am not begging to finish anything, to accomplish some task, great or small, before I die— even to say goodbye to my family and friends. That's not the point. I have been ready to face You for years now. All I ask is to be in my right mind when I do and to see You as you truly are. I want to meet You as you deserve to be met, truly to know and respect who You are.

**“Desperation
had given me back
my tongue and a small
portion
of my wits...”**

Desperation had given me back my tongue and some small portion of my wits, enough for a last appeal to Death's arrogant pride. Still spinning slowly in the sickly green vortex pulling me up toward the sphere, I noticed that the distance between us had stopped closing. I was hovering above my body, but still intact. Could it be that all-powerful Death would actually fall for my flattering ploy?

I WILL GRANT YOUR REQUEST, BUT I WAGER YOU WILL WISH YOU HAD NEVER MADE IT. MY VISAGE IS NOT FOR MORTALS TO LOOK UPON.... AND DON'T THINK YOU HAVE GAINED ANYTHING OR HAVE SUCCEEDED IN OUTSMARTING ME. I GIVE YOU ONLY THE SCANT TIME IT TAKES FOR YOUR FEVER TO SUBSIDE, THEN YOU WILL FACE ME AND SUCCUMB TO YOUR MISERABLE FATE!

At length I began slowly to drop back into my body. As my head cleared, I wondered if I'd been having a dream or hallucinating. Wherever that nasty mess of a sphere had come from, it had to be a solemn portent not to be brushed aside as merely some self-created hypnogogic fright.

I knew my time was up. I knew my heart condition had progressed beyond all help. Only hours remained to me. Whether Death wanted me or not, there was no hope left for this body.... And I'd meant what I said. If Death had a true face, I wanted to see it.

I began to meditate. Serenity gradually displaced the horrors of my delirium. Before long, a brilliantly shimmering crystal appeared, turning slowly before my inner eye. The Tibetan Buddhists had been right – my state of consciousness determined the experience of Death.

The shining crystal spoke in a calm and infinitely kind

voice. “I am indeed your Death, your portal to the Afterlife. The face of Death that you sought is but your own True Self inviting you back into immortality. You have chosen to achieve one final insight into the nature of Death, that in your essence you yourself reflect the true face of Death as well as Life. And now it is time for the final embrace, time to move into the Beyond.”

Well, since you put it that way...

The Calm Part of My Life

by Helen Munson

When I first went to school I didn't know any of the other kids and they all had friends.. I met a girl named Monica and she became my best friend. I got all A's as it wasn't hard to copy things down from the blackboard.

My first boy friend: had beautiful brown eyes . I was 16, When he was 18 he joined the Air Force, went over seas, met a girl and married her.

My sister and I hung out at a nice bar in Magna. There were a lot of good looking young fellows going there. We had a ball. I met my husband there—Terry James Pattison. He was 6'3", tall and gorgeous. He had blue eyes and red hair.

He was 23. We had four children. Our first, Dawn, lived only one day after she was born. Beverly was born April 11th, 1971 and Christie was born February 19th, 1973. We were married about four years. After our divorce I met Vick and Jason was born in 1975.

I had lots of pets when I was older and had a home of my own. I didn't have any as a child. My favorite was a dog named Pookoo. Then he went across the road and never came back. I think somebody shot him for getting after their livestock.

Think First

by Margie Gilmore

How many of you have walked past a homeless person and thought to yourself, why don't they just get a job and do something about it? Or how can they like living like that? If one of those is your first thought, then you have never been a homeless, and you're quick to judge others.

Being homeless is not a goal in life. When they were kid, I'm sure they did not tell their parents and teachers they wanted to be homeless when they grew up. They had plans and goals just like the rest of us. Something in their lives changed, and they ended up homeless.

Do you feel that if they stop drinking and doing drugs they would not be a homeless anymore? If they just did what needed to be done they could turn you look in a room or at a crowd and know who is homeless or ever has been?

My name is Margie. . . I was a homeless with a spouse and two kids. My family and I either stayed in a shelter, motel room, or with one family member or another for a few days. We spent a lot of days at the park because we had nowhere else to go, and we could not go back to the shelter 'till 4pm. I did not do drugs nor was I a drunk all the time. My Grama passed away and my fiancé lost his job. We lived in California, at this time, so one month of no work put us way behind.

We packed our stuff, put it into storage, and entered a shelter.

I feel that I have always taken pretty good care of my family. So for me, walking into a shelter with my family was one of the hardest things I have ever had to do.

We were homeless for almost a year before we moved to Utah. Yes, we went into the shelter when we got out here, we had no family or friends out here to help us out, and we had to do what needed to be done to make it.

I have heard so many people talk bad about the homeless out here. They seem to think they are so much better than the

people that have been in that situation. It's not easy being homeless, especially with kids, but it's even harder to get out of that situation and then hear people talk so bad about homeless.

Not everyone will go through the things we did or may never even be close to it, but you never know who has been there, or is there now.

I'm just asking you to please think about what you say about people or their situations before you speak. Just because people are homeless doesn't mean they do not have feelings. Words can hurt a lot, especially when you know you are doing all you can to better your family's life and people judge you without even trying to get to know you first.

Storms

(Excerpt)

I Never Wanted to be Pshycic by Steven A. Dame

It was twilight and the snow was falling heavily. I brushed it off my hood and my shoulders. Already there were two inches on the sidewalk, and I was only a block away from school.

Suddenly a car pulled over—*honk honk! Honk honk!* Anna was driving Carmen's silver Volvo. I was taken aback, thinking: what's wrong with this picture? She rolled the window down and I peered inside. She sat like an imp on a telephone book so she could see over the wheel.

Get in.

"What are you doing? You don't have a license!"

We have to go far away. Get in.

"Anna—"

Carmen found out I cut that girl's hair off and she's horribly mad. Get in!

I really had no choice. I saw Anna in danger and everyone on the street in danger. She could get into an accident if I didn't do something. I got in, shut the door and rolled the window back up. I tried to take the key out of the ignition but she slapped my hand. The windows were steaming, so I turned on the defrost.

"Where are you going?"

I figure we can sleep in the barn with the horses until she calms down.

The snow picked up. She didn't know how to turn the windshield wipers on. I clicked them on for her, thinking, this is mad—this is crazy.

"Pull over!"

We've got to get there before she finds out I have the car.

"She's going to be really mad at you. We've got to go home."

Don't you know she'll kill me if she finds out I have the car?

"Anna, please pull over!" She wound her way down the road, curving this way and that. I felt like I was in the Smash-em Car Rally at a carnival.

She took the back streets to Highway 79. The snow came down in streaks. There were four inches on the road now. She was

fishtailing, so I grabbed the wheel. She jerked it the other way and slapped my hand—really hard this time.

Leave it alone or you'll wreck it!

I was terrified we were going to crash into another car. She was going 40 mph. “Slow down!” I begged. But she couldn’t read my lips—it was too dark. I curled up in a fetal position, put my hands over my eyes and tried to pray. But I was so exasperated I couldn’t remember who I was supposed to pray to.

She fishtailed again. We were six miles out of town. I saw it coming—I knew it was coming—she slammed on the brakes and we swerved into the ditch bank on the right. We soared right through the snow, steady and even, like we were sailing. We went down and down like a sled, through two feet of snow. We hit a bush and *crunch*—we stopped.

Anna pounded on the steering wheel angrily. She undid her seatbelt and tried to open her door to get out, but it was stuck. I knew she shouldn’t try to go out, because it was a blizzard now. The wind howled, and the snow was so bad we couldn’t see anything. *Stay in the car*, I signed. *It’s too cold out there.*

The headlights went out. I pushed the emergency flasher but it didn’t work, either. I turned the ignition off and on again, but I didn’t even hear a click. I undid my seatbelt and pulled her toward me to comfort her. She pounded my chest with her fists. In the darkness I felt a tear on her cheek, and I brushed it away.

The wind whipped up; I couldn’t even see out the window. I knew it was too dangerous to get out of the car, and I know that when you are trapped in the snow it’s best not to leave the vehicle. After an hour in the dark, the wind and snow lashing about the car, we started to shiver. Anna signed, *Blanket in trunk*. I could barely see her hands in what little light there was. She crawled over the seat, flipped a latch, and pulled the right side of the back seat down. She scrambled into the trunk and disappeared. I felt damaged—lost. I thought, she’s gone and I’m gone. Everything happened so quickly I couldn’t process it.

She came out with a blue blanket and pushed the rear seat shut. Then she motioned me to the back, where we could lay together without the hassle of the front bucket seats.

I tried the lights again and the ignition, but got nothing. We lay down in the back with the blanket wrapped around us. She put her hands in mine and signed, *She’ll kill me now.*

“In the darkness I felt a tear on her cheek, and I brushed it away.”

I signed back, *Stop it. Just lay with me, so we’ll get warm.*

We were in the spoon shape, my belly against her back. She clutched my hands so tightly that her fingernails dug into my skin. I held her firmly. I knew that exchanging body heat was the best thing to do. I felt her cheeks again, and wiped another tear with my hand.

During the night, I woke up shivering several times. I listened to Anna’s breathing to see if she was OK. The wind blustered, so I knew we were trapped there at least until morning. As I faded off to sleep, I mumbled to myself until my speech became gibberish: “Wars and rumors of wars. . . tempests and earthquakes. . . wars and. . .”

Finally, the morning sun glowed through the snow that covered the windows. I tried to open a door, but it was stuck because of the heavy snow around the car. I thought, I’ll break the window if I have to—there has to be a tire iron or something in the trunk. I’ll break the window and we’ll tunnel out through the snow and walk to the road.

Anna woke up, her arms wrapped about herself. She glanced at me briefly, as if she didn’t know who I was, then snuggled up in the blanket and lay back down again. I heard scraping outside—someone was digging with a snow shovel. “Help!” I yelled. “Help! We’re in here!”

I looked back at Anna, thinking, she’s not heard me, she’ll never hear me. . . and a lump came into my throat and I thought, I love her, I’m getting us out of here. . . I’m getting her out of here and she’ll never be in this situation again.

“Hey! Is that you, Dallas?”

It was Shane. “Get us out of here! We’re freezing to death.”

“Gotcha! Gotcha! Hang on!”

The shovel scraped some more, and I saw light through the window. My stomach churned for a minute as I thought of what trouble we were in. But my anxiety went away—the only thing I could think of was getting us out of that car. I shook Anna’s shoulder. Her eyes opened wide with excitement when she saw Shane outside the window. I read her thoughts vividly: “Get me out!” “Where’s Carmen?” Then: “Please get us out, I’m cold!”

It only took Shane a couple of minutes to shovel all the way

to the bottom of the door. He jerked it open, and because of the ice it made a sound like ripping fabric.

Anna crawled over me, and he picked her up and carried her away. “Hurry and get in the truck!” he hollered back at me. I stumbled out the door and fell face down, but I got up and pushed myself through the snow. It was up to my waist. The car was completely buried except for an oval shape it made.

Shane’s truck was parked on the highway with the engine still running. Clouds of gray smoke issued from the exhaust pipe. Carmen leaned against the truck and I thought, she’ll sure yell at Anna now. Instead, she opened the door, scooped her up from Shane’s arms and pulled her inside.

When I got to the truck Shane said, “Get in the back—we’ve been worried sick. The heat’s on, we’ve got blankets for you.” He opened the door for me, and I squeezed into the back seat. Carmen held Anna with a blanket wrapped around her. She rocked her back and forth, petted her hair and cooed in a faltering voice, “Oh my baby, my baby. . .”

Shane revved up the truck and flipped a quick U-turn. We raced back to town. I sat between the front bucket seats so I could feel the heat. I felt dizzy.

When we got to my house, Mom and Dad were waiting in the kitchen. Jennie paced around the living room and tried to act like she didn’t care about me being gone all night, but I know she did. Dad had cancelled some of his morning appointments. Mom gave me a hug that seemed to last forever.

Dad got his professional look on and shoved a thermometer in my mouth. I was at 96.2 degrees. “You need to go soak in a nice hot bath.” He fiddled with his tie and averted his gaze. I could tell he was very worried about me, but he couldn’t express it. “I’ve called Ms. Da Silva and told her how to take care of Anna. Since she’s so small, she’s more susceptible to hypothermia than you.”

I imagined Anna in a warm blanket as Carmen fussed over her. I worried that Carmen would ground her and never let me see her again.

After my bath, Mom made scrambled eggs and hot chocolate. I didn’t know I was hungry until I saw it.

“You know, you scared us to death,” she said. Her eyes were moist with tears. “We had no idea where you were. I thought we’d find you both frozen in a ditch somewhere.”

“Yeah, the storm was too bad to leave the car. We just slept all night with the one blanket.”

She started nodding again. I touched her arm. “Mom, I’m OK. You don’t have to worry about me.”

“I don’t know what would have happened to Anna if you hadn’t been there with her. I don’t think she has as much sense as you.” Her voice trailed off like footsteps down a hallway, and she got a blank stare on her face. She clamped her fist over her mouth tightly to keep herself from crying. I hugged her and patted her on the back. “It’s OK, it’s OK. . .”

Jennie whined when Mom told her to get to school. Dad told Mom, “Check his temperature in a half hour. If he doesn’t get back to normal in two hours, call me.”

Jennie gazed at me briefly before she left. She was thinking, “Glad you’re back,” but she didn’t say anything. She just nodded her head, put her coat on and went out the door. I felt anxious for upsetting everyone.

I got into bed and turned the electric blanket way up. Falling asleep quickly, I dreamed of fire alarms and school evacuations. Anna stood alone in the hallway and held her hair clippers high, as if she were the Statue of Liberty. Black smoke curled up around her. Her eyes were pensive and jaded, with wrinkles—as if she were years older. The clippers fell to the floor and shattered into pieces. Sirens wailed: a hollow, wretched sound.

American Haiku



by Mary M. Fuller

I am here, darling—
No matter what's happening—
With patience ever more!

I'll never leave again.
We'll keep our computers sending!
We can miss keys often!

Love is forever.
Keep punching those machine's keys
Forever and ever!

Dying Green

by Katherine January

leaves take on color
before they drop to the ground,
before the trees stand empty

gold or red or even leathery brown

the sun itself is stored in each leaf burst
burning first on darkened limbs then
letting go one night
in wind, in cold

even then, the color lingers
bright against the ground
brighter still in the chill of rain
revived in the ice
of after-puddles

we are ready for the dying now
we have lived with gold, with crimson,
and color settles in deeper than the cold

One year without warning the order falters
leaves fall green without changing, leaves die green
on the branch of the walnut tree

that year we turn old without meaning to

unready for the winter we ache
for the shimmer of maples
flaming and dying with proper glory
trees burning on in our souls
against the days which darken by four
against the years which turn without gold

color a memory cradled in puddles
color a crunching in the orchard
as we pass

by Alonzo Douglas

Originally published in Toasted Cheese

Yesterday I sat in Theater No. 1 at the Broadway Centre with my friend Darvel. This is where people in Salt Lake go to watch indie, foreign, and obscure movies. This is one of the venues for the Sundance Film Festival. This is also my childhood theater. No, not the actual one, but one that is so close in nature it always makes me feel as if I've gone home.

As I sat in the low-backed chair, looked at the cloth-covered shapes hanging on the walls, remembered how small screens used to be, and expected the exit sign to be lit and in my eyes for the next ninety minutes, I was at peace. I felt comfort.

I couldn't stop myself from thinking of the one movie I saw in my hometown theater that I can still remember—*Fantastic Voyage*. Here Steven Boyd was strong, handsome, and fearless Grant and Raquel Welch was top-heavy, sex-bomb Cora. I was nine years old when the movie was released, and one Saturday afternoon I went to see it with all my prepubescent friends. When they left the movie, they could see Raquel's breasts and feel her body in their minds, and they never looked at older girls the same way as they did before. I know one had impure thoughts about our friend's mother.

I took Darvel with me to see *Beginners*. We are not long-time friends. I think we've known each other three years. Yesterday Darvel was just being nice to me. He doesn't like what I call "highbrow" movies. He's *The-Fast-and-the-Furious* type. Give him Jordana Brewster and Vin Diesel. Give him Michelle Rodriguez and Paul Walker. Dammit! Give him Raquel Welch.

When I walked out of *Fantastic Voyage* with my nine and ten and eleven-year-old friends, I didn't imagine Raquel's breasts and crotch, hips and legs. I didn't imagine anything. I needed more time to find out who I was. When I did, I came to the knowledge I wanted to see Steven Boyd with his shirt off. I wanted to touch his skin. *Beginners* is my story. I liked Oliver and Anna. I was captivated by their romantic chase, their split up, and their reconnection.

Still my story was told by Hal, Oliver's gay father.

I love Darvel. He is everything I want. Look and you will see someone who is just shy of my height, who is slight but muscular, who has a full head of hair that looks good hanging over his collar or cut to a quarter-inch, who has absolutely no hair on his arms and legs and chest (I don't know what it means), and who is missing his left lower canine tooth. His one defect doesn't make him ugly. Like his strong-sounding name, it makes me love him more.

When Hal came out to Oliver, when we met his boyfriend Andy, when we saw the number of gay friends he made, and when we came to the realization his truth set him free, I sat knee-to-knee with Darvel.

"Dear, dear friend," I said in my mind. "I am Hal. Come be my Andy."

Then I remembered Andy is a bumbling fool. Darvel couldn't be Andy. So, I said, "No, I'll be Andy. You be Hal."

Then I thought of the dog and said, "Let me be Cosmo. That way I can live with you, see you every day, and be close to you. Maybe you will let me sleep on your bed, and every night I will say, just like Cosmo did that once, 'Are we married, yet?'"

Then I begged him to take my hand or touch my knee or, God willing, grab my chin, pull my face into his, and kiss me. The only touch I felt was my hand lightly resting on my knee.

Then I told myself what I've always believed. When Darvel was nine years old, he dreamed about top-heavy women like Raquel Welch. He wanted to see the older girl who lived next door naked, and he wanted to touch her. Perhaps he had impure thoughts about his best friend's mother. He is Oliver. The person he wants is Anna.

When the movie ended, we watched the credits to the end. I hoped. Darvel fidgeted. When we stood up to leave, he said, "Let's go get a beer."

"Did you like the movie?" I asked.

"Well, you gotta know, it's your kind of movie, not mine."

"I was just wondering."

Outside on the sidewalk, I said, "Who did you relate to the most?"

"His words hit me like a bullet to my chest."

“No one.”

“Do you see yourself chasing after a girl like Anna?”

“Yeah, I could. I definitely could.”

My heart was pounding. I wanted to shout, “I love you!” This made me choke up inside, but I felt resolved.

“I’m...” I said. My throat was tight and my voice was slightly above a whisper.

After a short pause, I tried to speak again, but my vocal cords, tongue, and mouth refused to hear my commands.

“You are...?” Darvel said.

I took a full minute to find my voice. Finally, I said, “I’m Hal.”

Darvel stopped walking. I wanted to run, but I made myself stop beside him. He turned his eyes to stare at the buildings across the street, and I knew he understood me. When he took three to four steps away from me, I thought he was going to walk away and leave me and I wouldn’t see him again. Then he came to me, put his arm around my shoulders, and said, “I’m not Andy.”

His words hit me like a bullet to my chest. I was embarrassed and scared. My hope was false. Now I was vulnerable. Could he hurt me? No. Could he cause problems for me? Not many. Still I felt afraid.

“Let’s do this,” Darvel said. “We can start tonight. Let’s go find your Andy. I know where he goes Friday night, and guess what? They serve beer there.”

Once again, I loved him and wanted him.

“I would like it, if it’s okay with you,” I said, “if my Andy was like someone I know. He has a funny name. It’s Darvel.”

“Nope. Can’t be done. There is only one Darvel you will ever know.”

Darvel put more force into the hold he had on my shoulders and started pulling me down the street. I couldn’t move my feet as fast as he wanted me to. My entire body felt as heavy as the pavement I was walking on. Finding someone is hard. I was hoping Darvel was the one. He’s so perfect for me, but all he is a brother, one who at that moment was trying to get me to goosestepped down the street with him. Then I thought, “Take some of this weight I’m feeling off me Darvel.” When I decided to believe he would, my steps felt lighter.

Madness in Me

by Mojo Onivert

What is madness?
I try to keep it at bay.
It comes from the sadness
That I've been keeping away.

I let others words
Plague my soul.
They peck at me like birds
Eating from a bowl.

Now, what is left?
It seems there's nothing for me.
Everything once mine is now bereft.
Please, let me be.

What have I become?
A monster that no one likes.
It seems that my life is done.
I lay on a bed of spikes.

Sometimes I cry
In that bed at night.
When I die
I'll go out with a fight.

Madness is but a thing.
Sometimes I shout,
"What will death bring?"
I guess I'll find out.

In My Mind's Eye



by **Karen Larsen**

My mind's eye, like a camera, never misses a shot.
Pictures come through clearly, some recent some not.

In my mind's eye, I vividly see and hear my brother's laughter,
Mockingly menaing to scare me.

In my mind's eye, love is so sweet.
Hate brought good emotions so late.
Fear, red and burning, imprinted in me forever.

In my mind's eye, I see anger and violence.
Trying to hide, I found a place in my mind.

In my mind's eye, parents should protect thier children.
I had no idea other families weren't like mine.

In my mind's eye, I must forgive and forget,
Then it will happen in my heart.

In my mind's eye, it is hard to forget,
With my family dying and leaving me behind.

In my mind's eye, they will always be here.
In my heart they will always be near.

Beyond Darkness

by Denise Bell

I see where I am and I see where I've been.
I was on the outside trying to look in.
My world was so dark, so lost and forlorn.
My soul had been twisted, battered and worn.
I sunk to the bottom, I really sunk low.
The direction I took, it happened so slow.
I lost me free-will and my future seemed set.
I wanted to die but the time wasn't yet.
I got on my knees and I started to pray.
"Here kneels a sinner!" What more could I say?
But the spirit was with me and soon touched my heart.
I confessed of my sins, so much to impart!
"Would it be possible for you to hear me?
Please, Father, forgive me, I humbly ask thee!"
I cried and I cried and I even asked more,
"Could you show me the blessing I need to work for?
Could you reach out and touch me with the love that I'm craving?
And show me the reason my life is worth saving?"
And then I was cleansed from the weight that I bore,
And blessed with the light of what was in store,
And my heart was filled with love that He gave.
From Him, who sent Jesus, my soul, He did save.
Then, for once in my life, I knew I was "someone".
I had guidance and truth from the Only Begotten,
And He said through my spirit, "You are equal to all!
Your life has new meaning! You're cleansed now, don't fall!
You're blessed with His love, which is equal to none!
Now start on the scriptures, you've only begun.
And remember He's here, 'cause He needs your attention.
Sin not again, and the past, I'll not mention"
I thanked Him profusely and I stood without crying.
My eyes have been opened, I don't feel like dying!
I start each new day with a prayer to my Father,
And reach for the time, I'll be with Him forever!

Come Home

by Ramona Maassen

Crystal had had enough. Her heart had enough of the emotional struggle of day to day existence. Her husband and son were constantly at war with each other. While she loved them both, she just couldn't see how she could go on.

Charlie, her husband, was a wonderful companion and her closest friend. If ever she were in dire straits, Crystal wanted Charlie by her side. He had a sense of humor she admired and in contrast to her anxiety and stress, was calm, practical and reassuring. All this was true except when it came to her son, Hogan.

With Hogan, Charlie was judgmental, rude and unloving. If Hogan asked his dad a question, Charlie would ignore him. It wasn't that Charlie didn't love his stepson. It was that there were so many times that Hogan had made his mother cry and worry. Charlie was protective of Crystal. He hated to see her depressed and worried over what he saw as Hogan's deliberate misbehavior and thoughtlessness. Twice, Hogan took off and had left home for some months. Seeing Crystal, insane with worry and grief, made him furious with his son.

**“You
don't have to
choose between
them. Just love them
both and don't
take sides.”**

What Charlie didn't know was that Hogan had some real emotional and mental issues of his own. Growing up hadn't been easy. Crystal had been an active alcoholic during all of Hogan's childhood and the focus had been on her problems. Hogan had been left to deal with his attention deficit disorder (ADD) and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) for all of his childhood. It wasn't until he was an adult that he was diagnosed. And he still was dealing with his anger over his mother's past alcoholic behavior.

Suicide was on Crystal's mind. It started as a brief thought but as the wars between her husband and son went on, she was beginning to think it was the only thing that would relieve that constant pain in her heart. She called a suicide hot line, the lady on the other end of the phone suggested Crystal should get a divorce. Clutching

the disconnected phone, she sobbed herself to sleep.

In the morning, things didn't seem so bad for her. When she checked her cell phone, there was a message from her older brother asking her to call him back and another message from her younger brother, Taylor, as well. Crystal called her older brother, James, first.

"Hi Sis—what's up?" was all it took for her to spill out her heart.

He listened quietly before commenting.

"Seems to me that you have forgotten the joy in your life. Be happy Sis. If Mom were alive she would have wanted you to be happy. I want you to be happy. I want you to have all the joy that you can every day. Taylor would want you to be happy. Do something every day for yourself."

James said more but that was what Crystal carried away from the conversation. The pain in her heart eased a bit. She resolved to take his advice and start doing some things that she had once found interesting. She couldn't change the relationship that her husband and son had but maybe with some happiness of her own she wouldn't feel so wretched all the time.

Taylor called at lunch time. This was unusual. Both of her brothers worked during the day and generally reserved personal phone calls for the evening hours. To have them both call on the same day was strange. Siblings usually called each other every couple of months.

"Is everything Okay?" She asked warily, afraid there was some bad news coming.

"Sure. Just thought I might call you and check out a few dates from coming to visit you this spring." He heard her sigh at his reply. "Is everything Okay there? Is this a bad time to call?"

"No—I mean yes. Everything is alright, I am just a little stressed at the moment. I am glad you are coming to visit." Crystal set the sock down. She had been folding clothes.

"You don't sound Okay. Stressed at me coming to visit?" He teased.

"I called the suicide hotline last night. They suggested I get a divorce."

"What! Are you joking? Have you and Charlie been having problems?"

"No—just Charlie and Hogan."

"And you are thinking of killing yourself?"

"It's not just that. It's everything! I feel like I am being torn apart. I hurt all the time. I cry all the time. We could be so happy as a

family yet I feel like it is never going to happen.”

“What if it doesn’t? So you think killing yourself is an option? That’s like spitting in all of our faces. That’s like spitting in Mom’s face. I love you Sis, but you aren’t thinking clearly. James and I love you. Charlie and Hogan love you. We would be devastated. How would you feel if one of us committed suicide?” He said fiercely.

“I’d hate it! You know that it broke my heart when Mom had that heart attack and died. I miss her every day. I know what you are saying Taylor. It’s just that I don’t know what to do.”

“It’s not yours to do anything with. It’s between them. They will work it out. And if they don’t then that’s not your problem either! You don’t have to choose between them. Just love them both and don’t take sides—it’ll drive them crazy! So the suicide hotline suggested divorce? That’s just plain nuts.” His tone softened.

As she listened to Taylor, she could picture him earnestly trying to convince her of the rightness of his way of thinking and then grinning as his humor came to the surface. Crystal thought of the love of her siblings and their strong bonds. She knew he was right.

“Yeah—Can you believe it? Here I was feeling all down and telling this stranger on the line everything and I get this lady that asks me who I love the most. I felt like I was being asked a King Solomon question. Which part of Charlie did I love versus which part of Hogan? Did I want to split them in half long ways or across the middle?” She laughed, cheered despite the seriousness of their conversation. “I told her I couldn’t decide. Then she asked which one needed me more and I thought about Hogan’s problems; so I said my son. That’s when she said I should get a divorce. I said I couldn’t get her point and that this conversation made no sense and that I was going to hang up and go to sleep. So I did.”

“I am here for you Sis. Please don’t do anything rash. If you need to talk just call me.”

“I know Taylor. I guess I had a bad case of the ‘poor me’s.’ I forgot how to come home. I love you too, Taylor and I promise to call if I need to talk...any time.”

“See you in the spring! Got to get back to work. Call you this evening about the dates.”

“Bye” Crystal said but not really. She had come home.

Noisy Lawn Mowers and Fire Alarms

by Mary M. Fuller

The noise so confusing!
All the outside doors: locked!
Asking "What Next?" Help?

I walked down, three flights!
Up three flights. Down three flights again!
Back "Exit" door – Locked!

Door into elevator
Locked! Doors into rooms on floor
Number One – Locked! Scary!

Then, someone rescued
Us all! Not a fun way to start
an early wake-up walk!

Sky Colors are Bright Today

by Marie Ford

Sky colors are bright today, yet
I am gray, why?
The blessings are counted over and over.

Yet, I am gray.
Waiting, gray waiting for
Some yellow.
When? Almost, almost,
I can reach the colors now, yet
They are elusive.
Bravely in my gray I face the world.
Hoping gray is invisible.
Hoping sun yellow will show forth from me.
Maybe I'll even deceive my gray self:

To think of you is such a pleasure
While sunbeams dance upon my cheek
Yes, thoughts of you, a splendid treasure
Compiled with love throughout the week.

The shadows tease of evening
And all around is still
Yet in my heart no grieving
For thoughts return at will.

Thoughts of smiles, of sighs
Endearing words, gentle graces
Remembering your love filled eyes
All these my mind embraces.

As days give way to days
And year given in to year

Knowing you're mind always
Leaves me blessedly free of fear.

Je Kaime mon Homme, Onan
Votre FemmeAbadut.

The Homeless Man

by Susan Adams

I was on my way back to town after spending the day in the city. While I was stopped at a red light, this man got in my car. The first thing he did was show me his beautiful hand gun. Trying to be nice, I commented on how nice it was. He must have been in a bad mood. All he said was “keep driving”. He really didn’t need to say that. I had no intention of stopping to look at his gun.

He really wasn’t a very friendly guy. I tried to get a conversation going. He just sat there like a lump of coal. At first I couldn’t understand why. Then I realized he must be homeless. That’s why he didn’t ask for a ride. He was embarrassed.

Five miles outside the city, there is this crossroad. It surprised me when the man wanted me to turn down that road. No one uses that road since the incident. A man took this poor lady up that road, killed her and stuffed her down the old mine shaft. That spot has been haunted ever since. I stopped so I could educate the man about what happened at the end of the road. I’m glad I was educated.

The man got really irritated. I guess he really wanted to go to that haunted spot. He showed me his gun again and asked me what I thought he planned to do with it. This was my lucky break. We were having town days that very day. I told him about the town cook off. The food’s free to everybody. I figured that way he wouldn’t be embarrassed about being homeless.

Then I told him I thought he could use his gun in the annual shooting contest. First prize was \$50.00. Second prize was Mable Junes prize winning cherry pie. Third prize was Jenny Sue’s banana bread. Jenny Sue got all mad one year about her banana bread being made third place every year. She threatened to put cherries, with pits, in her bread the next year since the judges seem to like cherries better than bananas. Since then the judges make sure they alternate who takes first place and who takes second place, Jenny Sue and her banana bread and Mable June and her cherry pie. But that isn’t important. Telling the man he could win \$50.00 was the important part.

I was afraid what I said next might hurt his feelings. He seemed so fond of his gun. I told him there would be a lot of police in town for the shoot out. They all liked the hand gun contest better than the rifles. I said he could probably get a good price for his gun. Police like to buy that kind.

I was so busy talking, I forgot about the hole. Harvey Jenkins tractor got loose and dug a hole in the middle of the road. He said he would fix it. That was some time ago. It just keeps getting bigger and bigger every year. The town folk just swerve around it. We don't even slow down any more.

I had my seatbelt on. The man did not. Sure enough his head hit the side window when I swerved. Then it went through the windshield when I swerved back. I could see blood going down his face. Nothing to get upset about. I told him Doc Pain would fix him up. Doc Pain was an animal doctor. But he stitched up everybody. Did a real good job on Billy Joe's dog bite.

I don't know why the man did what he did next. He jumped out of the car and headed for the hills. I chased him for a little bit. He left his valuable gun in my car. I gave up chasing him and gave the gun to the Sherriff.

Author Bios

Susan Adams is a middle-aged-plus frustrated housewife with a vision for the future.

Edde Aguirre, thrown away and gliding to a better success.

Ranae Allen is 20 years old and comes from New Mexico. She has been writing poems for ten years.

Denise Bell enjoys writing and is involved with the Veteran's Creative Writing Group.

John Boles, after retiring from a life in the tech world, is having fun exploring the creative world of writing short fiction.

Melissa Burrell's contribution to this anthology is 'Healing Hurting Parts'. This is her first time ever being published in sine cera.

Kyle Cardwell in the future would like to be a famous musician, go to Egypt, and open a pharaoh's tomb.

Homer Conder is a retired Chicken Chocker and motorcycle enthusiast.

Fran Crookston has been mentoring the Thursday evening Literacy Action Center writing group since November 2009. She will finish her autobiography by Easter 2012.

Dr. Paulette Cross is an educator at the University of Utah and Transitional Housing Economic Empowerment Specialist at the Y.W.C.A.

Steven A. Dame has completed two novels, 'Bipolar Girl' and 'I Never Wanted to be Psychic.' He loves to be in the minds of different characters.

Mona Delevan has been writing poetry since childhood. She is inspired by the beauty and diversity of the Utah landscape.

Alonzo Douglass has written two pieces that are featured in this publication: 'Beginners Too' and 'Daniel Timothy Silently Comes Out'.

Elizabeth Ernstsen is a mother and grandmother who never thought she could ever write anything. Now she enjoys her writers' group, its mentor, and company they share together. She never thought she could write, especially anything worth reading. She is loving it! She lives happily and comfortably with her faithful friend and dog, Gigi!

Barbara Farris has always wanted to write. This is her beginning. She is 63 years old and the mother of five marvelous children and 17 terrific grandchildren.

Shirley Fifer was born and grew up in Montana. She rode to school on horseback or pulled on a sled by a Shetland pony drive by her brother. After graduating from high school, she went to work for two sessions of Montana's legislature as stenographer and committee clerk. She retired after working over 50 years as a secretary and bookkeeper.

Alex Emiliano Flores Jr. is 19, 6'3, has long black hair and enjoys writing, playing video games, working out, and having fun. Alex is from Tierra Amarilla, New Mexico.

Marie Ford is a world traveler, published a booklet titled 'Adoption Equals Love', and has two children and five grandchildren.

Debbie Freeman has retired from the Air Force, is a mother of three daughters and seven grandchildren. She also raises miniature dachshunds and has eight of them.

Mary Fuller is a founding member of the Avenues Courtyard Writing Group whose pieces "Modern Talk" and "American Haiku" appear in this publication.

Mary P. Garrity has had 80 years of feeling stuff that has finally lands on paper, so here it is. Please read with compassion.

Chelle George has been hard of hearing most of my life, wearing hearing aids for 20 years now! She's 44 years old and has three kids and one grandson. She is active in the local hearing loss community.

Margie Gilmore has been published in this sine cera and 'A City Devoid of Sharp Edges'. She is honored to be in this book. She hopes you enjoy reading this as much as she loved writing it.

Richard H. Goms Jr. is an accomplished genealogist, amateur historian, and published author.

Dave Goodale enjoys writing, photography, art, guitar, hiking-nature!! Progressivism & Sanity! Cranky old dude!

Rosemary Hanna is a disabled American Veteran who shares her life with two parrots—a fun Conure and a yellow-colored Macaw. Alas, Jack was killed by an unknown source.

Katherine January writes and farms in Bountiful, Utah. ‘The Blue Giraffe’ is her first collection of poems, and she also writes children’s stories. She works as a psychologist in a healthcare setting.

JoAnna Johannesen takes care of her 89 year old father, two adult children, five cats and will have a Bachelors degree on May 5, 2012. Her passion is family and poetry.

Judith Ann Johnson is a first time writer. She wants to write her personal history and family history for her children and grandchildren.

Peggy Kadir has always enjoyed sunsets on the Great Salt Lake, Tigris, and Euphrates rivers.

Ked Kirkham wanted to write always. Now he is.

Karen Larsen is 59 years old, a widow, and has a 23 year old son. She also has a two year old grandson. She’s a native Utahn. She’s a volunteer at the Literacy Action Center and she loves it. She has been there for five years.

Christine R. Lee has lived in Utah for over 20 years. She enjoys playing table tennis, air hockey, sharing photos on Facebook and collaborative cooking, to name a few things.

Julie Liljenquist has a twin sister, a husband, and three birds. She loves to write stories.

Joseph Lindberg has lived in Salt Lake City for seven years. He enjoys reading, writing, cycling, philosophy and languages.

Rachel Lowry is a recent English graduate from BYU, working as a Legal Assistant in Salt Lake City. In the words of David Wallace, “I

do things like get in a taxi and say, “The library, and step on it.”

Kyle Luke is a member of the Veteran Affairs Writing Group. His poem ‘God Has Given Me Strength’ is featured in this publication.

Ramona Maassen is a ‘Jill of all Trades’, voracious reader, loves the outdoors, people and animals.

Jenny McCoy was born and raised in So. Calif, is a mother to five girls, and started drawing at five years old. She loves to write children’s stories.

Peter Muller has written and collaborated on screenplays, productions, and film shorts. Poems are his favorite, and mountains are his home.

Helen Munson participates in the Avenues Courtyard Writing Group. Her piece, ‘The Calm Part of My Life’, is featured in this publication.

Timothy Nahalewski, homeless bum.

Sherrie Nielsen collects unicorns. She also likes to ride horses. She likes stuffed animals. Her favorite color is purple.

Mojo Onivert likes to write from the heart. He puts a lot of emotions into his poems. He feels like he has to express what he feels, and he does so best in written word.

David Ottenheimer is simply a newspaper-educated entrepreneur who tries out certain metaphors.

William J. Pappas is a Master Sergeant.

Annalee Parkinson is a Utah native and serves as a Domestic Violence Advocate and a Rape Crisis Counselor. Annalee has developed a keen awareness for the plight of these victims and a broader appreciation for those suffering behind closed doors. This poem is a tribute to all crisis survivors.

Anne Peck is an artist, writer, editor of ‘Across the Line’, mother of six, grandmother of ten, veteran of wars (both domestic and foreign), and eclectic.

Deann Porter stories and poems help her to acknowledge and accept her emotions.

Steve Proskauer is having fun writing visionary novels. He's a life-long story-teller who won the 2011 Ultra Iron Pen Competition and has published two non-fiction books about his forty years as an integrative psychiatrist.

Melissa Rasmussen hails from the Columbus Writing Group. She has been volunteering at the SLCC CWC since 2007.

Paul Rosser works at Wade's Automotive in shipping. He likes football, basketball, and NASCAR. He is a West High and University of Utah Ute fan.

Michael Sanchez has lived in Utah for 11 years and is now trying his hand at writing fiction. He enjoys sushi.

Mary Jane Shipley is a retired nurse. She enjoys illness no more than any human. Her mind is a best friend in such times. She finds amusement in quirky brain play.

Emily Struzik is a freelance writer, designer and educator... not necessarily in that order. She has an insatiable curiosity about people and enjoys writing about what she learns.

Maggie Ryan Vogt began writing a ton and hasn't stopped. She wrote professionally for several years, and now it's all about having fun with words and ideas.

Winifred M. Walker started writing poetry when she was 15 years old, and is very fussy about meter and rhyme. Too much so, according to some people...

John Wilkes is a longtime CWC participant and on-and-off volunteer. He is currently pursuing an English Associates Degree at SLCC.

Doug Woodall is a devoted CWC volunteer and is pleased to be one of the many mentors that make up the DiverseCity Writing Series. 'Unions! Hell, yes!' is his contribution to the anthology.