

Untamed Ink

Vol. 1

Spring 2008

Untamed Ink

Volume 1

Spring 2008

Untamed Ink

Untamed Ink
Untamed
Untamed Ink

Unt**Ink** Ink

Untamed Ink

Untamed Ink

Untamed Ink

Untamed Ink

Untamed Ink

Untamed Ink

Untamed Ink

Lindenwood University

***209 S. Kingshighway
St Charles, Missouri 63301***

VOLUME 1
SPRING 2008

untamed Ink untamed Ink untamed
untamed Ink untamed Ink untamed Ink
untamed Ink untamed Ink untamed
untamed Ink untamed Ink untamed Ink

Editors

untamed Ink untamed Ink untamed
untamed Ink untamed Ink untamed Ink
untamed Ink untamed Ink untamed Ink

Alexander Balogh

Michael Fetters

untamed Ink untamed Ink untamed

Student Editors

untamed Ink untamed Ink untamed Ink
untamed Ink untamed Ink untamed Ink
untamed Ink untamed Ink untamed

Hannah Mitts

Richard H. Vie

untamed Ink untamed Ink untamed Ink

Intern

untamed Ink untamed Ink untamed
untamed Ink untamed Ink untamed Ink
untamed Ink untamed Ink untamed Ink

Abby Wesling

untamed Ink untamed Ink untamed
untamed Ink untamed Ink untamed Ink
untamed Ink untamed Ink untamed

untamed Ink untamed Ink untamed
untamed Ink untamed Ink untamed Ink
untamed Ink untamed Ink untamed

untamed Ink untamed Ink untamed
untamed Ink untamed Ink untamed Ink
untamed Ink untamed Ink untamed

untamed Ink untamed Ink untamed
untamed Ink untamed Ink untamed Ink
untamed Ink untamed Ink untamed Ink

All rights revert to authors upon publication

untamed Ink untamed Ink untamed Ink
untamed Ink untamed Ink untamed
untamed Ink untamed Ink untamed Ink

untamed Ink untamed Ink untamed Ink
untamed Ink untamed Ink untamed Ink
untamed Ink untamed Ink untamed Ink

Lindenwood University

209 S. Kingshighway

St Charles, Missouri 63301

www.lindenwood.edu/UntamedInk

UntamedInk@lindenwood.edu

Table of Contents

Poems

GEORGE HICKENLOOPER	Poetry 7
MICHAEL CASTRO	Poet in a Tree 8
	Satori in Budapest 9
	Tarlosaurus at P.S. 98 10
MEGAN McMICHAEL	Eclipse 11
ALEXANDER BALOGH	Trinkets 12
	Every Generation Has Them 13
MARÍA BALOGH	At the Arepa Maker's 14
	Dancing Head Start 15
JEFF MAY	Snowlight 16
	Filling the Void 16
LAURA LEHEW	Homegrown 17
GAYE GAMBELL-PETERSON	Vigil 18
	Entropy 19
KAREN GREENBAUM-MAYA	Got Up Early This Morning 20
	Thank You 21
MAURICE L. HIRSCH, JR	Death of the Maple 22
	Images of Our Conversations 23
NATALIE WORRELL	He Told Me Stories 24
	Read Me 25
MICHAEL FETTERS	Ashen Stones 26
	Whisperings 27
CHRISTOPHER SCRIBNER	The Doctor Says 28
	Each Fall 29
DEBORAH MASHIBINI	25 Cents 30
MARTHA VERTREACE-DOODY	Northern Cross Railroad, 1838 31
HOWARD SCHWARTZ	New Skin 32
	My Father Had Many Professions 33
SPENCER HURST	Loyalty 34
	The Ritual 35

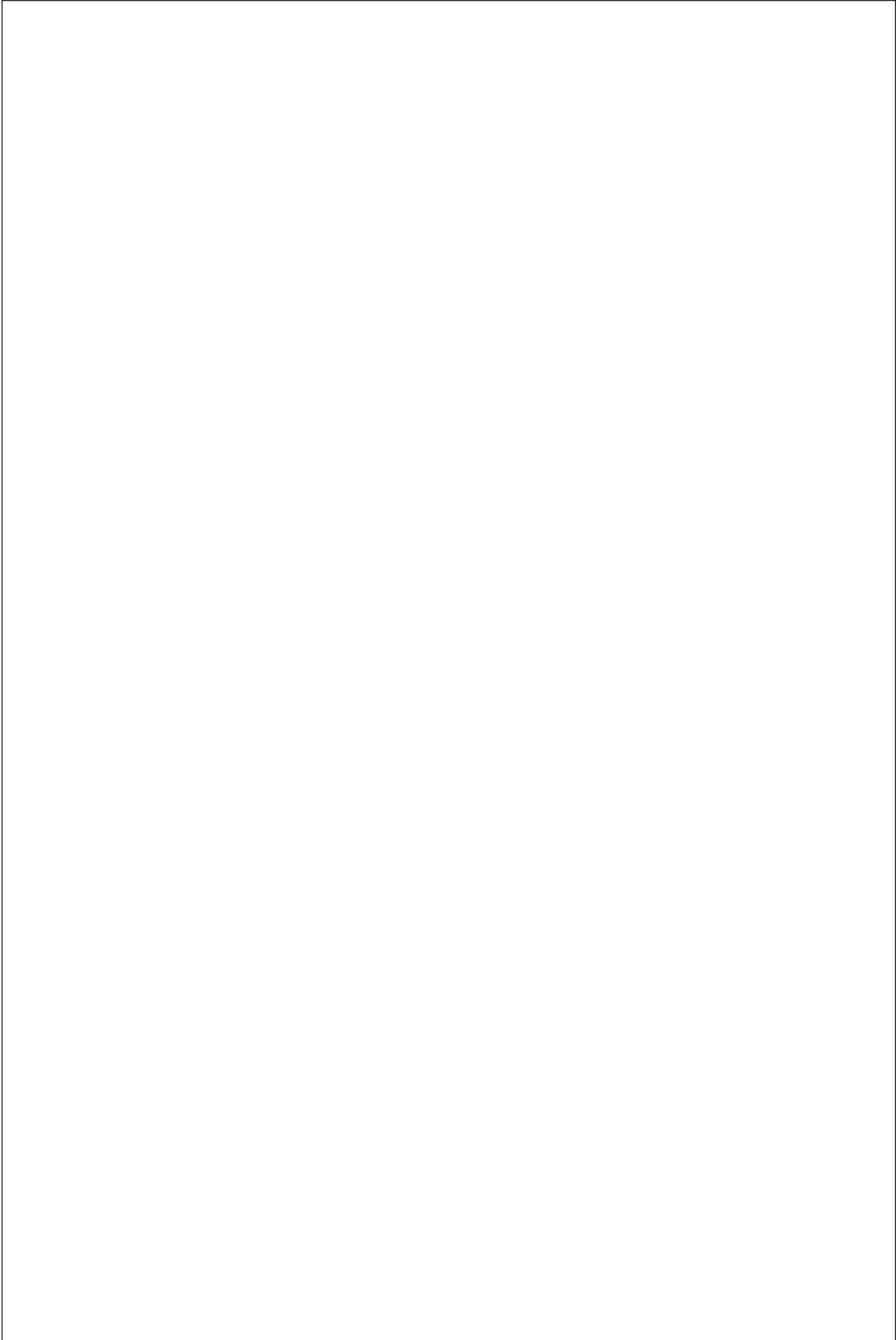
RICHARD H. VIE	Sleep 36
TERRY ST. CLAIR	Old Dude's Got a Mustard Yellow Mustang 37
EVE JONES	The Birth of the World 38 The Sleep of Long-Haul Truck Drivers 39
GABOR G. GYUKICS	Leaving... 40 Chairs 40 Transparent Ink 41
LINDA HARRIS	All The Time 42 Instructions 43
KEITH BYLER	2500 Years 44 Returning 45
<i>Contemporary American Haiku:</i>	
SARAH WIENKE	MITTS, STEIN, BALOGH, McMICHAEL 46 Cicada Song 47 Postmodern War Bride 47
LIZ RICE-SOSNE	Sunday Afternoons 48
SEAN BRENDAN-BROWN	PTSD 49
JOHN FITZPATRICK	At Old Graveyard Outside Ancram 50
DWIGHT BITIKOFER	Butterfly on Main Street 51 Book Store Poet 52

Fiction

NANCY L. BAUMANN	The One Who Loves Least 55
SUSAN K. SALZER	Cornflower Blue 61
BETH MEAD	Worse Than Wanting 69
DARON KAPPAUFF	Objects In Space 75
GERRY MANDEL	Me and Diz, Me and Stan 81
KAILEY WEISS	Goldfish 89

Contributors	94
---------------------------	----

Alexander Balogh Maria Balogh Dwight Bitikofer
 Sean Brendan-Brown Keith Byler Michael Castro
 Michael Fetters John Fitzpatrick Karen Greenbaum-
 Maya Gabor G. Gyukics Linda Harris George
 Hickenlooper Maurice L. Hirsch, Jr. Spencer Hurst Eve
 Jones Laura Lettew Deborah Mashibini Jeff May
 Megan McMichael Hannah Mitts Gaye Gambell
 Peterson Liz Rice-Sosne Howard Schwartz Christopher
 Scribner Terry St. **Poetry** Michael Stein Elaine C.
 Tillinger Martha Vertreace-Doodly Richard H. Vie Na-
 talie Worrell Alexander Balogh Maria Balogh Dwight
 Bitikofer Sean Brendan-Brown Keith Byler Michael
 Castro Michael Fetters John Fitzpatrick Karen
 Greenbaum-Maya Gabor G. Gyukics Linda Harris
 George Hickenlooper Maurice L. Hirsch, Jr. Spencer
 Hurst Eve Jones Laura Lettew Deborah Mashibini Jeff
 May Megan McMichael Hannah Mitts Gaye Gambell
 Peterson Liz Rice-Sosne Howard Schwartz Christopher
 Scribner Terry St. Clair Michael Stein Elaine C.
 Tillinger Martha Vertreace-Doodly Richard H. Vie
 Natalie Worrell Alexander Balogh Maria Balogh
 Dwight Bitikofer Sean Brendan-Brown Keith Byler
 Michael Castro Michael Fetters John Fitzpatrick
 Karen Greenbaum-Maya Gabor G. Gyukics Linda
 Harris George Hickenlooper Maurice L. Hirsch, Jr.
 Spencer Hurst Eve Jones Laura Lettew Deborah
 Mashibini Jeff May Megan McMichael Hannah Mitts
 Gaye Gambell Peterson Liz Rice-Sosne Howard
 Schwartz Christopher Scribner Terry St. Clair
 Michael Stein Elaine C. Tillinger Martha Vertreace-



Page
left
inten
tionally
blank

George Hickenlooper

POETRY

is emotion
made transparent

an unexpected window
that ricochets the sun

blinding silver bullet
when the geometry is right



Michael Castro

POET IN A TREE

for Gabor G. Gyukics

prune it down
to focus the energy

don't be afraid
to go out on a limb

SATORI IN BUDAPEST

On the plain of Pest,
as I entered
the Dohany Street Synagogue,
the second largest in the world,
they cautioned me:
Keep Your Hat On.

& in Buda,
up on Castle Hill,
in Mathias Church,
named after the first nation builder,
I was chided:
Take Your Hat Off.

Confused,
I went to my friend, Gabor,
for advice.
“It’s the same God,
isn’t it?” I moaned.
“Who’s lying?”

“Both,”
he said.

*

~

Then he looked at me
& smiled &
I understood —

poets are pagans.

—budapest, april fools’ day, 2002

TARLOSAURUS AT P.S. 98

Michael Tarlow is talking about dinosaurs again.
He knows more about them than anyone
in the sixth grade.
Mr. Kaufman calls him Tarlosaurus Rex,
Rex for short.
Michael Tarlow & Milton Jupiter
are always getting into trouble.
They like to sit together & giggle & shout out wisecracks.
Mr. Kaufman separated them, putting one in the first seat in the first row
& the other in the last seat in the last row.
Now they shout more than they used to whisper.
They are unstoppable.
Milton Jupiter is the best punchball player in the sixth grade.
He is the only boy with a girlfriend.
He is tall & handsome & tells everyone
Jupiter is the God of Thunder.
Sometimes the Catholic kids argue with him & occasionally the Jews.
Each thinks there is no other god than theirs.
I'm willing to let him steal their thunder,
as Mr. Kaufman says, with his,
'cause I know Milton Jupiter can beat me up.
Michael Tarlow claims dinosaurs were smarter than human beings
& maybe he is right.
I have seen skeletons of dinosaurs at
The Museum of Natural History.
I believe they would beat Milton Jupiter up,
probably eat him up,
if he tried anything with them.
I believe Michael Tarlow would like
to be a dinosaur & sit anywhere he wants.

○

Megan McMichael

ECLIPSE

All
he
heard
was
her
asking
for
the
moon
when
all
she
wanted
was
a
promise
that
it
was
still
there
○

Alexander Balogh

TRINKETS

You express your tropical charms
in plastic beads
with no intrinsic value.

Jewelers who work in gold
— an easy element that crafts itself —
make all its renderings worth their weight.

So much harder
to engage the eye
with just plastic and fiber
to create value in shimmering nuance
unexpressible
hypnotic
oceanic harmony

Blue Green Turquoise Tortoise
Tangerine Orange Mango
Ruby Red Cranberry

Who's to capture the kaleidoscope in faux names?

Trinkets for sale
to anyone, everyone

Tourists snap them up
for a cheap affair with local color
to lie forgotten in drawers back home
Your spirit residing in each
threading and knot nonetheless.

EVERY GENERATION HAS THEM

its dreamers lost
not fitting
any mold,
knowing
there's some place out there
for them
but not knowing
where or even where
to start looking
They start out
understanding only
that they need to be somewhere else
Different: not a cog,
a machinist, engineer or even overseer
in the low-budget air-conditioned strip mall franchise
with its own uniforms, hygiene checklists,
pre-measured serving sizes, home offices
and customer satisfaction polls
Not like the others
who fit in naturally, or learn quickly to conform,
not seeking seeing or wanting other options
But these truly not fitting,
knowing this at an early age:
volunteer self transplants now rootless
impolite expatriates of polite society
Oh Creative Wayfarers —
Which of you will you wake up one day
with suburban spouses, children
Commuters buying the American Dream
on installments unplanned
wondering
why you took the hard road
to end up here with me
○

María Balogh

AT THE AREPA MAKER'S

Before school before father's work
Before mother's *café con leche*
You see the *arepa* maker's magic
For the main bulk of breakfast
Untiring mouth speaking restless
Hands in the air kneading shaping
Corn meal discs dropped in hot oil plain
Sometimes crescent moons filled
Cheese beef egg life

Knowing which goes to whom
Your order filled unequivocally
As the other twenty awaiting

Hands in the air powdery
Never an accident perfect arepas
Perfect empanadas placed on your plate
One hand holds the spatula flipping
Another wiping powder on apron
Receives money gives change

Mouth still laughing still talking
Barely toothed never seen eating
Hands in the air powder bones dryness

DANCING HEAD START

The tunes came to her,
 God knows how.
 Then she whistled,
 or sang, or hummed them
 for grandbabies to dance in our cribs,
 as soon as we could stand,
 just as she had
 for her own children
before us.

She created the tunes
 to train us to have an ear
 for the rhythms she loved.
 We danced when we
 were able to stand,
 just as her children
 before us did.
 We loved, we love,
we danced, we dance.

We have an ear
 for these rhythms.
 We know them wherever
 we go and have no problem
 repeating the whistled
 or clapped tunes
 she created for us.
 Intoxicating,
unforgettable songs,
 we'll always know
 wherever we go.

○

Jeff May

SNOWLIGHT

Looking for those who want
to go into the woods,
the evening's distant hills,
for those who will still climb
well past mid age and those
who will touch the sun and lick
the snow and crunch an apple
below a boulder fall...

Looking for someone who
considers nowhere else
a goal, a peak, nowhere
else home nor love nor light,
but here, this now, in here
the wild the blizzard now
the swirling snow the sun is white.

FILLING THE VOID

Filling the void
brings chatter
disguised as
brain matter
slicing up pi.



Laura LeHew

HOMEGROWN

She told the story a million times
how she would no longer eat
vegetables from the farm
unless they were wrapped in plastic

how she would no longer eat things pulled
from the dirt or plucked from trees
it never went as far as foregoing
the consumption of milk or eggs just

fruits and vegetables and later, the one
time her father said he couldn't
believe she was living in the land
of fruits and nuts she thought he meant

actual fruits like the ones wrapped
in plastic and not some stereotype he
usually liked to invade and she was
disappointed, but not surprised,

when she figured it out nor, she supposed,
was her father surprised when she grudgingly
gave into the tomatoes, cucumbers, carrots,
corn, thorny blackberries wrestled from the earth.



Gaye Gambell-Peterson

VIGIL

“Death is the mother of beauty.”

Wallace Stevens, *Sunday Morning*

Between this moment
and the one to be
her skin surrenders
to the silence of bones
Her bones royal
in their delicacy
under a parchment
with infinitesimal lines
revealing in stillness
a seemly memoir
settled now
by her breathlessness
for me to trace

ENTROPY

I
want
to
pare
it
down
to
its
raw essence
but
I
cut
rip
tear
it
to
unrecognizable pieces
until
I am
aghast at the result
and compelled
to find
the
trashed
bits
and
put
them
back
in
place,
which is not very effective.
Leftovers
from poems & love affairs
litter my space
like leaves beneath
a
tree
in
winter —
detritus of small failures, left to rot.



Karen Greenbaum-Maya

GOT UP EARLY THIS MORNING

Got up early this morning
to see the old moon.
Late-year's late sunrise
gives more time
to see that last paring
just barely turn away,
catching the last
of this round's light.
Luminous clear cobalt sky
will tarnish like brass.
Soon the opposite sliver
will show up after the day,
Reversed, obscured
by smog like dried blood.
I crave the moon after its travels,
purified of past days,
still serene, though there be
no more chances to sail ahead.

Thank you for submitting
your work.

Unfortunately
we are unable
to accept it
at this
time.

deliberately exposing
that club-footed child
on a dry hillside.
we can't save it, the family reluctant
now relieved
lifting yet another
worn heavy burden.

○

Maurice L. Hirsch, Jr.

DEATH OF THE MAPLE

Kevin put one hand on bare wood,
the other on discolored bark.
“It’s dying a slow death.
Nothing is moving up or down:
food,
water,
nothing.
Like terminal arterial sclerosis.”

He pointed at a big girdling root
that has driven itself
through the tree’s heart,
sealing its fate.
We looked up at leaves
thinning like a chemo patient’s hair.
Kevin tore off a big piece
of red- and yellow-striped plastic ribbon,
tied it around the trunk —
a notice of extinction,
euthanasia.
A small branch fell by his feet.

Today, two men with ropes and chainsaws
dismember the tree from its crown to the ground.
Their chipper’s diesel whine
drowns out any final moans
as it grinds everything
from twigs to huge hunks,
spews a stream of shredded bones.

The men rake, sweep, leave only
wet sawdust, skeletal roots,
a ringed vestige of the stump
as flat grave marker,
morning sun where there used to be shade,
a small scrap of striped ribbon.

IMAGES OF OUR CONVERSATIONS

You sit by the shore
while I clamber up the pile of boulders.
Above the lodge, the trees,
I look down at scores of logs
that bunch together where the lake drains
into a creek, make a platform
you could almost walk across,
but would roll off, disappear.
Each trunk, bleached by sun, icy water,
has been stripped of its bark.

Later we sit opposite each other
as the train heads for Chicago.
Outside, white horses
graze on brown Montana grass,
forest fire smoke grays the cloudless sky.
Fields shorn of winter wheat
roll by with rows like a worn-out scrub brush.
Old rail ties form intermittent dashes
alongside the tracks.



Natalie Worrell

HE TOLD ME STORIES

Of sleeping and dreaming
in a hot box of a room
held shifting shadows
mosquitoes buzzing his 8-year-old ears
sandy bed robbed of blankets
under which he wished to hide
watchful of opening door, creaking signal
of sneaking mom hiding in his gritty bed
with him, together in fear
of the fist of his dad.
Of days spent at the river
swinging from thick mossy ropes
dropping down into opaque water
he and his brothers sharing an RC Cola
from the smooth glass bottle of summer
swimming against the current
beneath the blackened bridge.
Of night settling in heavier
than nights of other children
tucked into cozy beds
with blankets —
his nights were spent in dread
at opening doors, shadows spinning
cast in moonlight through the droning box fan
that barely budged the heavy air
to where he lay,
praying.

READ ME

Smooth fingers
slipping between the pages of my book

forever underlining my words,
continuously rewriting me.

Turn faster
animate the text.
As ink goes flying by
isn't it a bit dangerous

to slam it shut
with nothing but a page number

stamped in your mind
to help you remember where you left off?



Michael Fetters

ASHEN STONES

I.

I walk alone down bricked
streets, pausing only
as the rain steepens marble
ashen in the fallout of gray skies.

II.

Rain gathers in my chest;
in passing, I glance
into silent windows,
empty mirrors.

III.

Inside dust flows,
wrapping itself around
rocking chairs, wooden toys
and blackened faggots.

IV.

Echoes subside from roofs;
drying slate in moist airs
glimmers onyx; within me
dust melts in murmuring streams.

V.

They pass me on sidewalks
chattering amid sunbeams
scattered on dark stones; the crowd
arrived, I become lucent.

WHISPERINGS

I sit in my skiff,
and stare at the sea.

No sounds reach my ears,
nothing but whispers —
a wind blowing
from the East
across a silent, endless plain.

As I lean back,
and gaze
into the dark azure depths,
a humpback surfaces.

We stare at each other
and its black eye weeps.

It vanishes slowly
and I sit up;
the breeze fills my single sail
billowing out
to carry me
over a lucid,
shimmering sea.



Christopher Scribner

THE DOCTOR SAYS

*It should be noted that some women are apples and some are pears,
because of their genetic disposition. – from a weight-loss ad*

The doctor says my genes are of an apple —
a strange one though, because I lack appeal.
I cede my self-esteem before the mirror;
No one knows the core pain that I feel.

The doctor says my genes are of a pear.
I feel as if I'm packed in heavy syrup,
and even witty quotes from Mr. Bartlett
would sadly not suffice to make me cheer up.

The doctor says the problem's in my genes.
They *do* feel pretty tight. Complaints are bootless,
because the time is ripe now to acknowledge
that all attempts at dieting are fruitless.

EACH FALL

All my life, I've always hated
having to get vaccinated;
fears of pain have not abated
 (the nurse cajoles and wheedles).

Is it worth it? That depends a
lot on whether it defends a
body well from influenza —
 ("Are you *afraid* of needles?")

The nurse gives her impatient nod;
she cannot wait to prick and prod,
this Florence Nightingale-De Sade.
 ("It's for your own protection.")

I get dyspeptic and upset
the moment she turns 'round to get
the antiseptic towelette
 ("This will prevent infection.")

I bare my deltoid, tense and firm,
and let her swab my epiderm;
the stick transmits a porcine germ —
 it's done: I got my flu shot.

Every autumn, now, I deign
to take that porcupiney pain,
insure against the latest strain,
 endure the black and blue spot.

Alas, there's no impunity
for those who want immunity.

○

Deborah Mashibini

25 CENTS

All the man asked me for
Was a quarter,
And here I am tripping,
All caught up in my assumptions
About who he is
Where he's been
And what my little 25 cents
Or lack thereof
Might do
To change his destiny.

The man did not ask for
My opinion.

He didn't ask me to save him
Or damn him.
All he asked for
Was a fraction
Of what it costs me to wash one load of clothes
And I ain't even going to the laundry mat today.
I know I lost at least
That much in gas
The last time I filled up
Trying to squeeze one last drop
In the tank.

It makes me wonder
What exactly it is
About this man
That makes my little 25 cents
Mean so much more to me
Just because he asked.



Martha Vertreace-Doody

NORTHERN CROSS RAILROAD, 1838

Engineer Fields coaxes a crotchety locomotive, “Rogers,”
from Meredosia to Morgan City,
tracks laid with his magic pen filled with State funds
for ink —

so his enemies say
who swear this one-term governor empties our pockets.

His plan: more cities —
between Quincy on the Mississippi through Clayton,
Mount Sterling, Meredosia,
Jacksonville, Springfield, Decatur, Danville,
the Illinois-Indiana border —
the names crack on my tongue like wheels
breaking my dream —

a quilt of prairies and cities stitched by roads
of flat iron, timbers.

His goal — to answer a second call to serve.
Mine? I want to see Illiopolis —
better yet — the Town of Chicago
rising out of Great Lake Michigan’s waves.

○

Howard Schwartz

NEW SKIN

for Nati

My son
tells me
he has shed his American skin,
burned it
and buried it.
So too has he abandoned
his mother tongue
for his mother's tongue —
now he speaks
thinks
and even dreams
in Hebrew
and only speaks English
to me.

A photo arrives
of a young soldier
dressed in olive green
married to his gun.
Only his smile is familiar.
We battle
at a great distance
over his safety.
All of the other fathers
take pride
in the young warriors
they bequeath to their nation.
His father
doesn't like armies
at all.

Take care of yourself
I tell him
and be sure not to hurt
anyone.

MY FATHER HAD MANY PROFESSIONS

My father had many professions
all at the same time —
watchmaker
antique dealer
middleman —
first at every estate sale.
Once in a while I went with him,
saw him bargain
and barter,
try to eke out
a few bucks.

He often wished
for a shop of his own,
but when Max offered to back him
he turned him down.
He was too restless
to stay in one place.

We never knew
what he would bring home —
old watches,
gold wedding rings,
a real working slot machine,
once
puppies hidden in his pockets.

After dinner
he sat down at the dining room table,
put on his jeweler's loop,
and studied every item,
reciting its history,
ferreting out its hidden
secrets.

My mother and sister
sat with him
for hours,
while I lay in bed upstairs,
reading.



Spencer Hurst

LOYALTY

Recalling his death earlier that afternoon
he dismissed the idea of leaving
his body, choosing to remain
secreted in the corpse rather than
drag it around all day. Uninterred
he bent to the task at hand — approving the files
of the condemned, whose names
he could no longer read.

No unplanned death would stand
in the way of theirs
so he signed — and with the last form complete
stumbled across the room,
and dropped
into the out basket.

— Dream of Dec. 25, 2007

THE RITUAL

The guide is not shy
about telling the secret. Yellow grass snakes
across the old estate, failing to conceal
what remains of the barn.
Children's fingers, toes, hands, feet —
in the full moon's light, mothers
did the cutting; in the new moon's blackness
fathers took their turn.

An arched footbridge spans
a clear, flowing stream, leaving nothing
but the sound of rushing water
that never pools, disappearing into the mouth
of a rocky grotto; as the sun glints off the city beyond,
the guide has vanished.



Richard H. Vie

SLEEP

Though you revive me from the day's trials,
when you visit in times of action,
you become an annoyance and I wish to be rid of you.

When I have need to study, you bring sloth.
With visions of a soft bed I become encumbered
by the urge to indulge in your namesake
at most inappropriate times.
When I have need of a schedule, you bring grogginess.
Your invisible weight upon my body
forces me to lie upon comfortable furniture.
When I need to power nap, you bring cursed slumber.
You incapacitate me with a sledge hammer of exhaustion.

Sleep, you need to leave me alone.
Sleep, tell Morpheus to stop hunting the helpless.
Sleep, let Sandman go from his forced servitude.
Oh, Sleep — take a vacation and hibernate!



Terry St. Clair

OLD DUDE'S GOT A MUSTARD YELLOW MUSTANG

a mustard yellow
Ford Mustang
California GT
shiny chrome wheels
new muscle car
that's the old dude's ride

it can't be missed
bright as morning sun
it burns the eyes
a condiment on wheels
the old dude's
mustard yellow mustang

bald and fat
pasty white skin
old dude's looking good
hot babe sittin shotgun
age spots
bright red Clairol hair
they ride cool
in a mustard yellow mustang

kids grown
empty nest
ties no longer bind
road trip baby
time to go
the old dude's ready to ride
got a mustard yellow mustang

○

Eve Jones

THE BIRTH OF THE WORLD

Joan Miró

He isn't ready. He says
the light is bad, that it's the failure
of the afternoon. The next morning a storm
& strewn April everywhere, lilac reek
on his palms & a buzz in his heart. Still
he can't. *Please, please.*
It's too simple to say he wants to be
loved. He is the pristine absence in a room
of soft. But he forgets & loves a woman who falls
beautiful through him. He forgets & dreams
forty rounds emptying. The canvas twilights.
He sees the highway groan with August, lust's kick
& unwinding, oblivion. The black flag of night,
the half-spoked wheel shining. The red &
golden rot of his brain. His hands are birds
in the rain. His hands press in
the world getting colder, getting away.

THE SLEEP OF LONG-HAUL TRUCK DRIVERS

Ask about existence, the fugue of stars.

They know the purest lull,
the wheel's worn constancy, the unbearable
silence of the world.

There are artifacts. A rip-
waisted angel on the dashboard. A boy,
his arms around a ball.
A woman's mouth and her neck a question.

Ask them if the highway winds
or unwinds. Ask if
when they hit fall mid-state
the hills catch, blast of light
on limb, on rock, if winter turns carnage.

The deer an eye you freeze, a dark hush.
It's a kind of love, they'll say,
in a whiskey low. A prayer the moment

renders. Ask about the fleeting. Their last kiss,

the beginning of wandering.
The blue living room light of it...

Ask how the evening stuns the shoulder
weeds, bone grottos, how the line
breaks and breaks and breaks into
God, how a car goes
blind and perpendicular into dust.

Ask the eyelid against sun.

Ask the boy with his arms around the animal
poised in headlight, your own freight
and hum. Ask the road, they'll never say.
Ask the road to be always.



Title from *The New England Journal of Medicine*

Gabor G. Gyukics

LEAVING...

snow-patched roofs remain behind
mud tainted windows
trash laden streets, squares

wine smudged tableclothes
greasy plates, bowls

ash stained undershirts
dirty bedsheets

postcards loaded
bench appears

waiting for the wind
to make it all vanish

CHAIRS

These chairs should be rearranged
 she said
Who would do that
 I said
You
 came her answer
 as she sat
I moved the other chair close to hers

TRANSPARENT INK

stains the dirty rind of a
resin hat of a
man standing by the
train's window in a
land
where the air is
not yet futile
back in the last times
when hand rolled cigarette smoke
blew out of the fissures of
wooden wheeled carriages

the man inhales
deep
keeps the smoke down
exhales
the smoke shivers
mingles with the air
when
an escaped piece of
breeze hits the man's face

he feels fear gathering
in his mouth



Linda Harris

ALL THE TIME

You ask if I am cognizant of my blackness
— All the time

In this segregated city
Am I cognizant of my blackness
— All the time

At the drug store
When my spouse is questioned about the razor blades
He's handed me to buy
— All the time

At the mall
in the elevator when the elderly white woman stiffens
clutching her purse tightly
— All the time

Browsing through racks
Where I am ignored
Or followed
— All the time

At a restaurant treated as a nuisance
Not a person
— All the time

If I question the behavior towards me
I'm the problem
— All the time

You ask if I am cognizant of my blackness
— All the time
Aren't you

INSTRUCTIONS

Represent us now
Opportunities we never dreamed
Represent us well

We were abducted, enslaved, shipped far from homes
Not allowed, encouraged, respected.
Weren't allowed to read or write
Represent us well

Work hard always
Little gain, long-suffering pain,
Toil in fields day and night.
Represent us well

Mothers bore children they disowned
Required to raise ones called their own
Men fought and died for worthy causes
Little gain, mostly losses.
Represent us well

Carry this ancestral burden
Stand individually, each on your own,
Represent us, represent us well.



Keith Byler

2500 YEARS

Buddha finally sat under the Bodhi tree,
adjusted his saffron robes,
flowing hems caked with road dust,
crossed his legs,
put his chin in his hands, fingers
like lotus petals gently framing his face.

What to do after a six-year walk?

He now rests in the shade of my garden,
towering tomato plants and stemmy fennel,
a pasture of sage to his right,
fragrant basil and sweet mint just beyond.

He watched them grow
from tiny sprouts spread out
like lotuses, then eye level like the
fragrant bushes of his youth, and now
like the old lofty Bodhi tree itself, with fruits
the size of his bejeweled head. He reposes
under the watchful eyes of
mourning doves and goldfinches,
grackles and nuthatches,
and hummingbirds like iridescent flying plums.

Nearby a marbled-looking St. Francis
holds a small bowl with a sparrow
perched eternally on its edge.

St. Francis and the Buddha:
Quiet neighbors after all these years.

Buddha looks content,
taking a break from his work
of enlightenment.

RETURNING

When they burned his body in the furnace
specks of him blew up and out the chimney,
hot sparks floating, carried on
a zephyr over cornfields and rivers
even as he cooled. The heavier embers
drifted to ground first, each in turn
according to its size, but
the most miniscule one remains aloft
like the hang-glider he never learned to fly,
drifting out over the Pacific Ocean,
finally landing on the back of a humpback whale,
she having risen for air, the speck stuck
on the hide by the moist salty slick,
until down she went, this speck of him
sliding off somewhere
between twelve and fifteen fathoms,
this speck of him now free-floating
in the briny depths
dissolving into everything.



Contemporary American Haiku

Haiku for a Dead Dandelion

Cotton-topped, swaying
Fuzz drifts upon swift air
Balded weed falls, nude.

Hannah Mitts

Sultry night broken
By merciful rain falling
Upon thirsty streets.

Michael Stein

Passport in breast pocket
holds lovers' hearts apart
on train platform.

Alexander Balogh

A teardrop runs
Down the face of innocence
Never turning back

Megan McMichael



Sarah Wienke

CICADA SONG

Unnecessary skin my
Red sundress
I shed

Making angels we glide
Flesh yes flesh
Lust fed.

POSTMODERN WAR BRIDE

I said I do, not aware
of the sentence: a
handful of Julys to wait
watch until you return

Spring Sunday promise
I'll wait for you
breakfast plates empty
cool head on your chest
hearts strong and steady

Now it is July
ashtrays where breakfast laid
stuck at the same table
still life can't move

I dream you are shot
body clad in camouflage slumped
brains splattered broken glass
desert hot and brutal

Sobs escape in the shower
loss doesn't capture this ache
too raw for words
too dull for misery



Liz Rice-Sosne

SUNDAY AFTERNOONS

I find myself
Spending Sunday afternoons
Underneath the fuselage
Of the Luscombe 8
Lovingly removing
Oil and bugs with tenderness
And a rag full of
Soft sweet smelling chemicals
Caressing the underside
As if making love
My body only inches away
As I lay on the ground
I lovingly run my hands
Down her shiny sides
Soapy with bubbles
As I clean the little plane
Then spraying a fine
Cool mist in the sunshine
As if we are in
The shower together
While removing soap
Bugs and the accumulated
Grime of numerous flights.

○

Sean Brendan-Brown

PTSD

Somewhere in the afterglow
a Tamil Tigress blows
her gorgeous self to pieces;

death is not sleep & sleep
isn't gentle: always an active battle,
the moon a burning sun —

ground dehydrated blood,
hail-stone bones shrapnel
from gray clouds otherwise

unofficial — nothing you sign
gets you anything
& your VA side-kick muscles in

on every blind date: fail
to understand the same-as-ever
questions,

hero with a broken sword.
For you, not a dollar of those war
billions

you killed for;
the fat four-eyed geeks absconded
with your kingdom,

hero — so shoot, you're good
at shooting; ugly head, ugly clothes,
ugly food.

○

John Fitzpatrick

AT OLD GRAVEYARD OUTSIDE ANCRAM

Cut deep my name
upon the headstone —
Let it be chiseled
to the bone of granite.
Let it be so deep
that blood
gushes forth
no tourniquet
will stop. Let the
pulsation of carved word
grind deep my imprint.

Let me be seen
by some passerby
ages hence who
pulls off edge of road
to rest from travels,
tired and groggy,
yet willing to look,
to explore, to marvel
at name carved
bold into stone
now tilted, now
weathered, now
moss green.

It is a name pulsing
with energy.
Who is this man?,
passerby will wonder.
What did he do
that his name
has survived storms,
this lichen growth
that seeks to fill in grooves
cut deep, running red
with age?

A memory stirs in passerby's
dark rebirths of present self.



Dwight Bitikofer

BUTTERFLY ON MAIN STREET

Golden butterfly sparkling
in the flame light of the tiki torch
— the only one on the bar patio
where we sit alone.

Golden butterfly on your skin
below the delightful flight
and aromatic dalliances
of our conversation.

Golden butterfly poised below
a golden chain twinkling there
just above the curve of breasts
diving into the modesty of fabric.

Golden butterfly, fluttering participles
while I reach to massage shoulders,
back of neck – the places behind
the words, behind the flutter of heart

where it pauses on the stamen of a flower,
relaxes wings, reflects back torch light
before we walk away down Main Street,
before we kiss good night.

BOOK STORE POET

Outside I think it's raining,
the book store is my evening refuge,
books in hand I am lingering among the shelves

Volumes rising, authors A to Z,
volumes falling, poets Z to A,
a cicada song of writers
whose muses mark the shelves
whose fame has kept the legacies of themselves
bound and printed here.

A cicada song of writers
words not yet bargain-binned to anonymity
a season's circle ended.

While I linger, I finger fragile spines
on the shelf that would bear my name
were I to join the successful chorus,
crescendo to a moment of fame, my name:

Bishop, Bissett, Bitar.
Blackman, Blake and Bly
— in between, there am I.

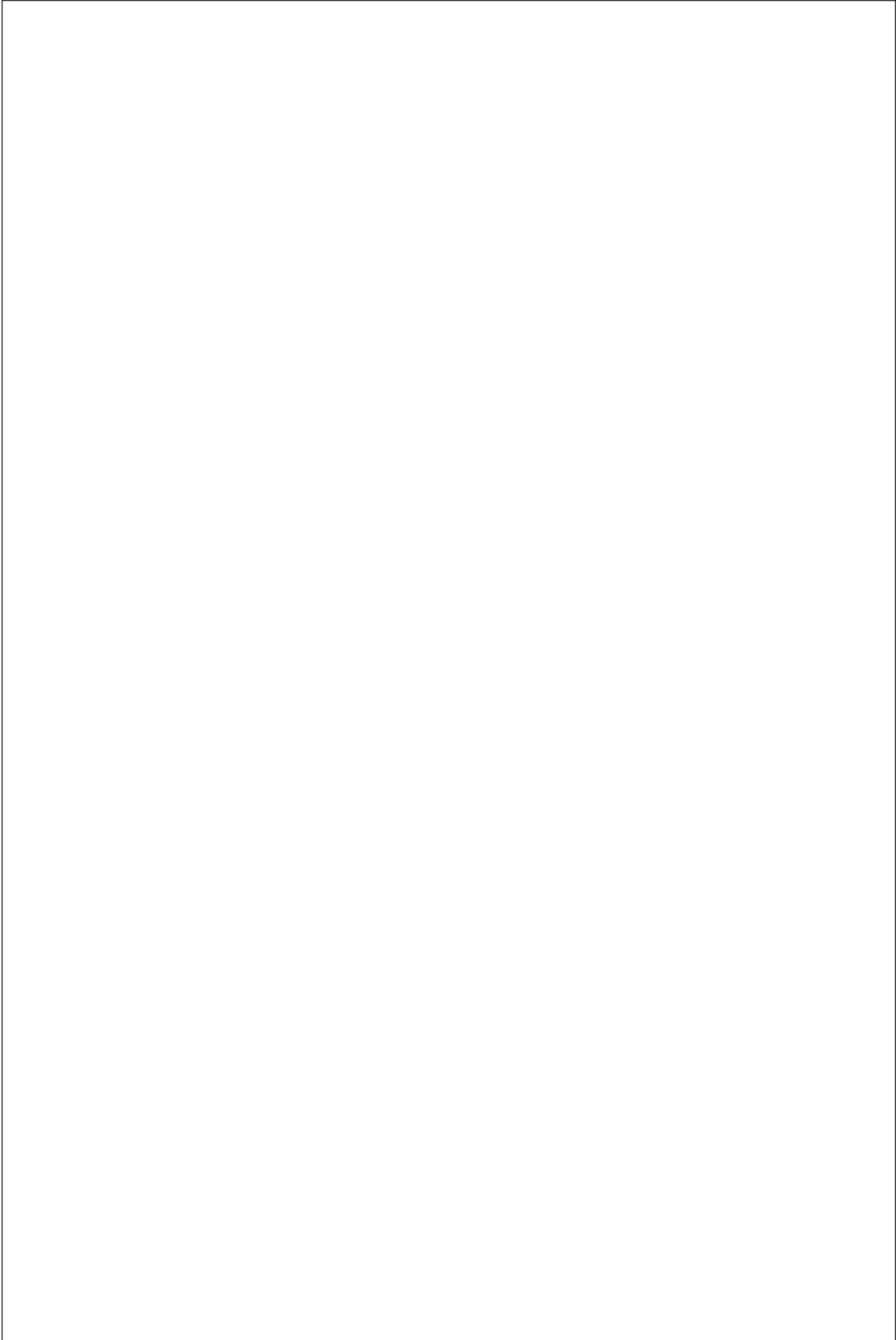
Outside I think it is no longer raining
cicada chorus waning.



Beth Mead Daron Kappauff Nancy L. Baumann
Gerry Mandel Kailey Weiss Susan K. Salzer Beth
Mead Daron Kappauff Nancy L. Baumann Gerry
Mandel Kailey Weiss Susan K. Salzer Beth Mead
Daron Kappauff Nancy L. Baumann Gerry
Mandel Kailey Weiss Susan K. Salzer Beth Mead
Daron Kappauff Nancy L. Baumann Gerry
Mandel Kailey Weiss Susan K. Salzer Beth Mead

Fiction

Daron Kappauff Baumann Gerry
Mandel Kailey Weiss Susan K. Salzer Beth Mead
Daron Kappauff Nancy L. Baumann Gerry
Mandel Kailey Weiss Susan K. Salzer Beth Mead
Daron Kappauff Nancy L. Baumann Gerry
Mandel Kailey Weiss Susan K. Salzer Beth Mead
Daron Kappauff Nancy L. Baumann Gerry
Mandel Kailey Weiss Susan K. Salzer Beth Mead
Daron Kappauff Nancy L. Baumann Gerry
Mandel Kailey Weiss Susan K. Salzer Beth
Mead Daron Kappauff Nancy L. Baumann Gerry
Mandel Kailey Weiss Susan K. Salzer Beth Mead
Daron Kappauff Nancy L. Baumann Gerry
Mandel Kailey Weiss Susan K. Salzer Beth Mead
Daron Kappauff Nancy L. Baumann Gerry
Mandel Kailey Weiss Susan K. Salzer Beth Mead
Daron Kappauff Nancy L. Baumann Gerry
Mandel Kailey Weiss Susan K. Salzer Beth Mead
Daron Kappauff Nancy L. Baumann Gerry Mandel



inten-
tionally
blank

Nancy L. Baumann

The One Who Loves Least

Oh, God, what did I do?

With all his medications neatly lined up, split on their appropriate scores and organized in time-of-delivery fashion, how could she have picked up her own bottle of pills and administered what could be a deadly dose to her husband of 37 years? Not that Lucy didn't have a lot on her mind. Being a full-time caregiver was exhausting, physically and emotionally, transforming this once-capable woman into a nervous, weary wife.

She grabbed the chart she'd made to keep track of all his dosages. Across the top she'd written the days of the week, and down the left side were the hours of the day. She drew lines between rows and columns, creating a grid. All she had to do was write the name of the med in the respective box at the time it was given. Very neat and tidy. Very functional, but also complicated. Some pills she gave twice a day. Some she gave every day at regular intervals, and he got the big horse pill every fourth evening before bed. He hated the one he had to take with milk. And Norm — he had to make it more complicated, harder on her. Sometimes he refused to take what she was giving and she had to offer it again an hour later, then remember to record it on the chart. She had to get it right — every day, every time.

It's his fault, she told herself — if he'd taken it right after lunch, this wouldn't have happened. From now on, he has to take it the first time! Yet, it really wasn't his fault. His care was her responsibility, her job, and here you have it — his seizure medication was still sitting on the counter while her own cancer pill was digesting in his ever-shrinking belly. Hot saliva flooded her mouth, tasting like tin. Her heart pounded faster and she could hear a rush in her head. Oh, God! Please help me!

Their relationship was not complicated, not at first. They began dating when she was a senior in high school, a “blush of a thing” he'd called her, much to her liking. She was small-boned and petite, with raven hair and a feisty personality. Norm was older. He was tall, strong and decidedly handsome with his dark hair and square jaw.

When Lucy invited him to Prom, she pictured herself entering the room with her handsome military escort draped across her arm like an expensive accessory. All eyes would rivet on her as they swept across the dance floor, Norm in his Marine dress uniform, completely under her spell. The girls would be openly jealous of Lucy and visibly disappointed in their own dates — skinny, pimply faced boys they'd suffered since kindergarten. She couldn't wait.

She lured Norm at a measured pace, alternating between open affection and bashful retreat, drawing him with magnet force. He was an easy conquest and a worthy prize. Stable and disciplined, he had some money and was ready to settle down after his discharge. Later she would think him predictable, boring, and dispassionate, but it didn't start that way. She liked his precise personality and quiet, steady ways. Norm adored Lucy, and she adored his adoration.

When he proposed marriage, Lucy smiled shyly and told him she had to think about it for a few days. Her mother had taught her well. Do not be too quick to agree with a man and he'll keep coming back — he'd keep seeking, keep chasing, keep wanting, start needing.

"Lucy, remember this one thing," Mother said, "The one who loves least controls the relationship."

"What does that mean?" Lucy asked.

"It means what it means," was all she would say. "Think about it." Mother was full of riddles intended to be guideposts for Lucy's life, but what Lucy really wanted was straight talk. She didn't want to think. It would be many years before she collided with this truth, lived out the riddle.

Calm down! Think! she ordered herself. *Call Walgreens.* They'd been customers for years, initially due to her breast cancer and now because of Norm's insidious diagnosis: glioblastoma, the deadliest of all aggressive brain tumors. The doctors said it would be quick, maybe six to nine months. Four months into it and they were taking all measures for his comfort. He often endured excruciating headaches. That was when he took the pill with milk, the one he hated most, although he complained about them all.

Lucy reached for the phone and dialed the number on the bottle.

"Hello," the automated voice answered. "You've reached Walgreens Pharmacy. If you are a physician, press 1. To refill your prescription, press 2. To reach the pharmacy, press 3. All other calls, please wait on the line."

She punched 3 and was immediately connected to a medley of Barry Manilow music. *Why don't they have an "If you think you've just killed your husband, press 4" option? ANSWER!!!* she commanded.

Norm waited for her in the den. He liked watching TV, but yesterday he couldn't even remember how to turn it on. He'd grabbed a candlestick from the coffee table, pointed it at the TV, and turned it around and around, looking for the "on" switch.

"Blush, are you coming in?" he called, hopefully.

"Just a minute. I'm on the phone." Did he hear the panic in her voice? Maybe he couldn't detect emotion anymore. He couldn't do a lot of things anymore, poor thing, like tie his shoes, shave his face or wipe his butt. That was her job too, and at times she wanted to withdraw her application, quit without notice and go back to her old life before ... before what?

... before when?

Still on hold, Lucy looked out the window to their backyard. Once beautiful, it had been Norm's passion. He'd nurtured it into an explosion of color and fragrance with flowering crab trees, English ivy, pots and beds filled with mixed and varied flowers. Now overgrown, ugly and dying, it had atrophied from neglect.

Norm had always loved gardening, loved improving things. His annual ritual included purchasing and planting each carefully selected flower. This spring, before they knew he was sick, he'd planted more than 60 pots of petunias, impatiens, begonias and marigolds. "Touching God's glory," he called it; it was practically his religion. He spent early mornings and all his evenings out back, catering to this mistress who demanded constant cutting, pruning, fertilizing, watering. Sometimes Lucy would try to help, but she mostly felt like an intruder. Norm preferred to work alone.

It was now sliding into autumn, and the days were still warm, but only a fool could ignore the shaving of daylight, both morning and evening. Summer was waning, finally ending. It made Lucy sad to see their backyard in complete disarray. Unkempt woman of a yard — it was like a young wife, who was once fresh-faced and sparkling, but with the arrival of her first child had abandoned the practice of showering, shaving, of combing her hair and applying makeup. It's not that she didn't care — she just didn't have the energy. She was no longer her own first priority.

Norm was dying.

One other time he ignored his garden — that summer when he abandoned his yard — and well, everything else, too. Lucy's neighbor had driven her to the hospital for her final radiation treatment. They'd organized friends to drive each day for six long weeks, giving Norm some much needed time apart — caregiving was so exhausting. The nurses had carefully tattooed tiny blue dots on what remained of Lucy's left breast, then zapped those dots day after day, in hopes of eradicating the invading cancer cells. *Imagine me*, she chuckled, *tattered and tattooed at my age!*

At last the ordeal was over. She was going home and wouldn't go back, not if she could avoid it. Norm would be waiting for her with one of his big bear hugs and hearty congratulations, maybe even some freshly cut flowers. She liked how she knew what to expect.

But Norm wasn't there. Of course Lucy didn't realize that when she waved her friend away because she'd seen his car, that ugly Chrysler LeBaron, parked in its usual spot, smack under the maple tree. She couldn't understand why Norm parked there, neat and tidy as he was. Birds roosted in that tree, then deposited their berry-filled droppings all over the windshield and hood, making him mutter and curse as he pulled out the hose to rinse the car. Afterwards, he'd point the nozzle straight up the tree, shooing them in revenge. Still, he parked there every day, right in the line of fire. She didn't get it.

Lucy called to him as she dropped her purse on the kitchen counter, disappointed that he hadn't been waiting for her.

"I'm home!" she announced.

He knew today was the capstone in her arduous treatment that included surgery, chemo, and now this final lap of radiation. Just a daily dose of Tamoxifen for the next five years and she was home free. She fingered her downy hair, wishing it would grow faster, that she could perm or color it, then she chided herself for the vanity that ran unchecked, even at her age. No answer from Norm. Where was he? She hated her hair.

She went outside. "Norm? Are you out here?" she called, shielding her eyes from the hot summer sun. "It's a little hot out here for me, so I think I'd better go lie down," she called. Reminding him that she was fragile yet would certainly get his attention. He'd feel guilty for getting lost in his own world on her important day.

She slammed the door smartly, for emphasis of course, then lay on the couch waiting for Norm to burst in, apologetic and guilty. After all these years, they had a dance and they both knew their steps. Occasionally, she relinquished the lead.

Norm never came in.

She lay there a few minutes before a sharp panic rose. *Wait! What if something happened, if he'd hurt himself or had a heart attack while I was gone?* She got up quickly and went looking.

"Norm, are you back here?" she called, rounding the shed, fearing she would see his boot-clad feet, toes down, emerging from the ivy.

Norm wasn't behind the shed. He wasn't in the house, he wasn't in the neighborhood, he wasn't even in the county. The police were puzzled. He was missing, but he couldn't have gone far — he left without the car or anything else. Not a clue. It seemed ridiculous to think someone would kidnap an old man, "*What for?*" they puzzled, but "*What else?*" they had to ask. "*What else could have happened?*"

They searched for clues but found none until the mail arrived, ten days later. Delivered in a plain white envelope addressed to Lucy, postmarked Los Angeles, came a check for \$130 with a note, written in Norm's precise cursive that said:

The insurance is due.

Lucy disintegrated. Everything changed. Everything was different. Norm didn't disappear — he left! He left their home, he left his garden, he left *her*, and left on her celebration day. How could he? She was old! How long had he been planning this? How did he get to Los Angeles? Was he coming back? Who was he, after all? He seemed to have made The Great Escape, but ... from what?

Three weeks passed and Lucy only made motions of living. She was hiding, sequestered with shame. Sitting at the kitchen table, she tried mak-

ing a grocery list, but couldn't concentrate. Gazing absently out the front window, she looked out toward the road. She looked again. And watched. It was him and he was coming.

Norm walked deliberately, casually up their long drive. She recognized his Marine posture, shoulders thrown back, head erect, confident and proud. He was wearing a new set of clothes that looked stylish, fitted, handsome. He was tanned and looked healthy — cocky, even. He walked past his car, then stopped and turned. He used the back of his hand to brush some bird droppings off the hood, then went straight to the house and opened the kitchen door.

He looked her in the eye.

"I'm back," he said flatly. Oh yes, he looked good.

"Back?" Lucy choked out. "What do you mean you're back? Back from where? Where have you been?" she screamed, her voice rising an octave. "What do you mean coming in here and just saying *I'm back?* Where ... have ... you ... been?" she demanded.

"Your hair's grown." Flat tone. "It looks better." Turning his back, he washed his hands at the kitchen sink. "I think I'll hose the car off now. It's looking pretty bad." He went outside, blasted the bird shit, then turned the hose up the tree.

That evening she lit into him again. "Tell me where you've been! Did you get a girlfriend? Some hot young thing?" ...*with two perfect breasts?* Honestly, it was the first time she'd ever considered that Norm could be involved with someone else. Was he? "Answer me, Norman!" He just looked at her, then went out back to his garden.

It was icy in their house, the climate tense, conversation abrupt. Lucy changed tactics, playing the distraught wife. "I was worried about you, Norm. I thought you'd had a stroke and wandered off and couldn't find your way home. Why didn't you call?" He stared back, a slight smile on his lips. "I wasn't lost."

By the end of the week Lucy panicked, begging him to tell her why he left. "Norm, what did I do? Was it me? Did I drive you away? Please tell me what I did and I won't do it again."

"I came back, didn't I?" was all he offered.

Norm never did tell Lucy or anyone else where he'd been those weeks, why he'd left, what he'd done. Never breathed a word, never gave a hint, never made an excuse, no apologies either. Never.

He returned to his garden and his routine, but Norm wasn't stupid. He knew he'd cut the taproot of their marriage, and that it wouldn't grow back, no matter how fertile the soil or how often he watered. He'd pruned too much in the wrong season — a fatal gardening flaw.

Lucy resigned herself to the new Norm, but she didn't like it, not one bit. He was different, stronger. She felt lost, too old to make changes, too tired to think. She missed the old dance.

And now, five years later, Norm was sick and Lucy was losing him. Despite the betrayal, despite the pain, she wished it weren't so! After all, they'd shared much, lived much, and after 37 years together, you don't take your little flower and haphazardly pluck the petals, saying "he loves me," *pluck* "he loves me not," *pluck*. That time had passed. Now you simply moved forward.

Finally, the pharmacist. "May I help you?"

"Yes," she began, suddenly unsure of what to say. Her mouth was dry and her tongue thick. It was an accident after all, she hadn't done anything wrong, she certainly didn't mean to, but still, she must be careful.

"Umm ... I have a new doctor that prescribed some medications for me," she rattled off the litany of Norm's meds, "but I forgot to tell him I'm still taking Tamoxifen. I only have a few weeks left, it's been almost five years, but I didn't know if it would cause any problems with these new prescriptions? Is it okay?"

"I can check that for you. Please hold." Barry Manilow invaded.

"Ma'am?" he returned. "Have you taken these meds yet?" he asked.

"No, not yet." She was truthful on the technicality.

"Good. Don't take anything and call your doctor immediately. The active ingredient in that drug adversely reacts with the control agent in the seizure medication and causes capillary leaks or seepage bleeding, not just in the skin but in the vital organs as well. If taken on a regular basis — over the course of a couple weeks — it could be fatal. Call your doctor."

Lucy crumpled over the kitchen counter, holding the phone tightly, fighting the squeeze in her chest. "Oh my, well, thank you," she said softly. "I think you saved my life." She hung up the phone and sat down heavily on the kitchen chair.

What now? She could barely breathe. Reaching for her bottle, she poured the tablets out on the table, counting them slowly. Twenty-two left.

And over there was Norm's medicine, sitting on the counter. She paused, then picked it up and filled a glass of water. Collecting herself, she joined him in the den and was pleased to see the TV was on. "Wheel of Fortune" — could he still figure that out? "Here's one more," she said, handing him the tablet and water.

He made a face, but took the pill and the water, swallowing loudly. "I'm sick of pills," he pouted. He gave her the glass and she put it on the coffee table. They sat close, fingers entwined, watching Vanna point to letters that illuminated to her touch.

"Vanna's pretty," he remarked. *She's still thin, but she's getting old.* Lucy retorted mentally. "Yes, she's still pretty," she answered.

Norm's eyes drooped heavily, his lids closed and his chin dropped to his chest. The medicine made him tired, the tumor made him tired, he was always tired. He began snoring softly.

Lucy took back her hand, reached for the remote and changed the channel. ○

Susan K. Salzer

Cornflower Blue

Fever was on the country that long summer and I do not mean Mr. Lincoln's war, but the medical kind. I was myself afflicted with a head that pounded like a foundry hammer, and muscles of knotted rope. This was my condition the night they brought him to the house — a night I remember clear as yesterday. It was August of my sixteenth year and hot as Egypt. I lay sleepless in my bed while a moon the color of bleached bone filled my room with a silvery light.

It was so quiet I could hear them coming from a long way off — all the way from where our road left the river turnpike. At first I thought it was just the fever ringing in my ears, but then I knew the unmistakable rattle and bang of a wagon's iron tires and clop clop of horses' feet on the hard dirt road. Southern men, they had to be. Federal militia were brave enough when the sun was shining, but nights in our part of Missouri belonged to the bushwhackers, to wild and shadowy men with names like Quantrill, Anderson, Todd and Thrailkill, and woe to any man or woman who denied it.

I pulled myself to the window and saw Pa below holding a pierced tin lantern that threw crazy patterns on the ground.

"Who is it, Pa?"

He answered without taking his eyes off the gray ribbon of road.

"Anderson's boys," he said. "I got word earlier we might expect company."

My heart thudded against my ribs as our visitors formed up from the gloom like mounted apparitions — two horsemen followed by a mule-drawn wagon. Pa walked forward to meet them.

"All right," he said. "Bring him in. He can stay here till he dies or gets better."

The horsemen dismounted and lifted a limp body from the back of the open wagon. As they passed beneath my window, the light of Pa's lamp fell on the wounded man's face. A boy, he was, of about my age, and bad hurt by the look of him. A trail of black blood marked their passage.

"Hang on, Dingus," the taller man said as they entered the house. I was surprised by the tender notes in his voice. "You die and Ma will skin me alive."

I returned to my bed and stared at the moon. If the Federals found that rebel boy here, they'd hang Pa from the nearest tree and fire our place. They tried to burn us out once before, after that Lawrence business, and would have succeeded if not for a provident rainfall.

“There’s a loft above my daughter’s room.” Pa’s voice drifted up from the hallway below. “Take him there.”

One of the men laughed, but there was no humor in it.

“He’ll cook up there, hot as it is! Why not just put him in the oven and save time?”

“Shut up, Arch.” This was the other man, the gentle one. “Thank you, Captain Rood. The loft will suit my brother just fine.” His voice carried the twang common to Clay and the westernmost counties. “My uncle’s gone to fetch a doctor, a friend of the family, from Kansas City. Meanwhile we’ll send a couple boys over to help with the nursin’.”

Entry to the loft was gained through a trap door in my bedroom closet. I could not let these men see me in my summer chemise, so I took refuge in my brother’s room, empty now that Doak was gone for a soldier. I lay listening to the sounds of their struggle as they carried the wounded boy up the short ladder. The sky was lightening when at last they took their leave. Only then did I slide into a heavy sleep wherein I dreamt of Pharaoh’s army chasing the Israelites through a parted sea. In my dream, the sea did not close over the pursuing soldiers as it was meant to.

The sun was fully up when Pa woke me. Dark purple smudges below his eyes attested to his weariness.

“How are you this morning, Hattie?” he said. His complexion was gray as the oatmeal he set on the bedside table.

“Better, Pa.” This was untrue. If anything, I felt worse than the day before. “What about him?” I pointed upward. “Is he going to live?”

Pa shrugged his bony shoulders.

“Coin’s still in the air. The bullet went clean through him and that’s to the good, but he lost a lot of blood. Can you tend him today if me and Cy work in the field? Can you manage?”

“Surely, Pa.”

Poor Pa, he had aged 20 years in the last five. Ma died in ’59, withering to bone from an ailment no doctor could name, my brother Ben was killed by a Yankee sharpshooter at Wilson’s Creek and now Doak was off fighting for the South with General Sterling Price. I was only a girl but I was all Pa had left and I wanted to help him all I could. We were barely scraping by. Before the war Pa farmed hemp and made good money selling it to buyers from the St. Louis ropewalks where it was turned into baling twine for the cotton growers down South. But the Northern aggression put an end to the cotton business and the hemp business too, so Pa switched our fields over to tobacco. This was backbreaking work — blood, sweat and tears work, Pa said — but at least we weren’t starving like some. Old Cyrus, Pa’s lone remaining field hand, wasn’t much by way of help, but we were lucky to have even him.

I forced down two clumps of oatmeal — Pa wasn’t much of a cook —

pulled on my blue gingham saque and steeled myself for the climb to the loft to check on our visitor. I had no use for bushwhackers, even if they were on our side. They were scoundrelly fellows for the most part, freebooters in fancy border shirts, but even so, I did not relish finding a handsome young boy drained to a bled-out corpse.

He lay on a low army cot — a relic of Pa's Mexican War service — and he was alive; I could see his bare, bandaged chest rise and fall with each breath. His light brown hair was long in the Southern way and his cheekbones high as a red Indian's. A pistol belt with two holstered .36 caliber Colt Navies — I knew my guns — lay on the floor beside a bloody, embroidered border shirt. The rebel boys all wore such shirts, with deep breast pockets for powder charges, lead balls and sometimes preloaded spare cylinders. I could not help but notice the handwork on this shirt was especially fine with green garlands and red and blue flowers carefully stitched across the front and around the cuffs. A mother's work? A sweet-heart's?

As I moved in closer, he turned his head and opened his eyes to look straight at me. His eyes were piercing blue, blue as the cornflowers Ma once grew in her garden. I jumped back, banging my head on a rafter beam hard enough to start tears in my eyes.

"Where am I?" His voice was hoarse and croaky.

"Ray County," said I. "In the home of Captain John Rood."

He closed his eyes. "I'm dry as a chip."

Pa had left a blue tin pitcher of water on the floor. I filled a cup and held it to his lips. He drained it in two gulps.

"What happened to you?" I asked. "The Yankees shoot you?"

"It was a Dutchman. A lousy kraut-eater."

I figured the shooter to be Fritz Heizinger, a young German immigrant who farmed the river bottoms five miles up the road. Like all Germans, he was a Unionist but a good man who gave us butter and eggs when he had them to spare, and I wished him no harm.

"You kill him?" I said.

He shook his head. "He ran off — hid in his cornfield."

"You must've been stealin' from him," I said. Fritz wouldn't shoot nobody otherwise. This filled my sails with righteous steam. "You bushwhackers oughtn't go stealin' from folks who got it hard enough as it is. You should be fightin' with the regulars like my brother. You should be down in Arkansas with General Price."

He turned his blue eyes on me. Despite his pain they were clear as crystal.

"Regulars have too many rules," he said.

"You boys could use some rules." I got to my feet like an old woman, worn out by my exertions. "I'm right below you. Pound on the floor if you

need anything.”

A feeble thumping woke me at sundown. Anticipating his need, I pumped a fresh pitcher of water before returning to the loft. He drained the cup and asked for more. As he took it from my hand, I noticed the top of his left middle finger was missing, a well-healed wound.

“No matter how much I drink I cannot wet the spot,” he said, wiping his mouth with the back of his maimed left hand.

I was sympathetic, having been similarly affected at the onset of my illness.

“You can have all the water you want,” I said. “That’s the one thing we got plenty of.”

The blood-soaked muslin bandage encircling his chest needed changing. I had some experience with this, having tended Pa after a Federal patrol came through looking for my brother. Doak was already off with General Price but the devils shot Pa in the arm and torched our barn for their trouble. It was Fritz Heizinger who showed me how to clean a wound properly, how to dry wet, suppurating flesh with sugar, how to pack a bullet hole with lint to keep it open and draining.

“You’ve a gentle touch, Miss Hattie,” the boy said when I finished. To my disgust I felt my face go warm when he spoke my name.

At cock crow the next morning two men rode up to the house on fine, strong horses. Only bushwhackers had horses like that nowadays. They introduced themselves as Nat Tigue and Ol Shepherd and said they were sent by Bill Anderson to nurse the boy they called Dingus. They were not much by way of nursemaids. Ol passed the hours sleeping with his mouth open on Ma’s horsehair settee in the parlor while Nat sat on the porch watching the road. I did not like Nat one bit. He had glittery black eyes, narrow, like slits in a mask.

My strength returned as I tended Dee — I could not call him Dingus — but he declined. He burned with fever, and no matter how careful my ministrations, I could not cool him. He was half out of his mind by the time Doc Ridge finally showed up. A pudgy man with fluffy white hair, he sidled up to the back of the house on foot in the dead of night.

“What took so long?” Nat said. “You walk all the way from Kansas City?”

Ridge removed his coat and hat and handed them to me.

“I hid my horse in the brush by the river about half a mile back and you should be grateful that I did so. Federal patrols are out tonight and you wouldn’t want them following me here. Fact is, I wouldn’t have come at all if I didn’t fear this boy’s mother and brother more than the Yankees themselves. Where is he? Take me to him.”

I waited in the kitchen while Pa took him up. Thirty minutes later they were back. Doc Ridge took a blue glass vial from his saddlebags and gave

it to me.

“This is quinine,” he said. “Give him one-half teaspoon every hour. If it’s the catching fever that’s going around, the break-bone, this will help him; if his fever is caused by infection, well...” he raised his soft, puffy hands palms up, “it won’t hurt.”

With this, he took up his hat and coat and was out the door.

I stayed by Dee’s side for two days, giving the quinine as the doctor instructed. He ranted, calling out for his Ma and Frank, sometimes a girl named Sue. As the hours passed, I found myself hoping Sue was a sister and not a sweetheart.

Whether because of the medicine or a naturally strong constitution, Dee recovered quickly. His eyes brightened and he acquired an appetite. I took pleasure in cooking, something I never enjoyed before, and whenever possible prepared his favorite foods. These were rice with bacon, buttermilk biscuits, raisin pie. On his seventeenth birthday — the fifth of September — I even managed a Jenny Lind cake, heavy with eggs, butter, cream and the juice of a few precious lemons. He proclaimed it the best thing he’d ever tasted, bar none, and there was some feeling in his blue eyes when he said it. I liked this very much.

One sunny afternoon, not long after I was hanging clothes on a line, two riders appeared on the river pike. They rode right up instead of stopping at a distance and helloing the house as was custom. One of the men was small as a child, the other handsome and tall, dressed in the blue coat and hat of a Federal officer. Still, I knew him for a bushwhacker and an important one too, judging by how Nat jumped to attention at the sight of him. Ol ran out to meet them and it was the fastest I’d seen Ol move since he got here.

I felt a stab of panic and dropped the shirt I was pinning on the ground. I was alone here; Pa was in town buying a piece for the wagon and Cy was called away to help a neighbor fight a brush fire. My stomach twisted as the handsome stranger dismounted and came toward me.

He smiled and removed his cap with a fancy flourish, like a man on a stage. He had dark curling hair to his shoulders and flat gray eyes with no life in them.

“You must be pretty Hattie,” he said in a honey voice. “I’ve heard about you.”

His smile reminded me of butter sliding off a biscuit.

I nodded.

“It looks like you’ve had some trouble here, Hattie.” His eyes slipped from me to the house, the barn, the sagging fence.

“We have,” I said. “That don’t hardly make us special in this neighborhood.”

He nodded sadly.

“True enough,” he said, “though I am sorry for your inconvenience. Anyhow, I have come to see your father. Where is Captain Rood?”

My heart beat so hard I was sure he could hear it.

“In the field,” I said.

“Oh?” His smile deepened. “Ol said he and the old man are gone.”

I played tough. Despite my hammering heart, my voice was calm as I answered.

“Well, if you knew that, then why’d you ask?”

His buttery smile evaporated.

“You are very insolent, Miss Rood. That’s no way for a Southern girl to talk to a soldier fighting on her behalf.”

I held my tongue, though I wanted to say you bushwhackers are fighting on your own hook and for yourselves only.

His flat gray eyes ran the length of my body. My skin crawled; his gaze was the caress of a hand from the grave. He offered me his arm.

“Shall we go inside?” he said. “I am hungry.”

By now his little friend had joined us. He giggled and echoed his master’s words: “He’s very hungry.”

Refusing his arm I started walking toward the house, resisting the impulse to run. Pa kept a shotgun under the stairs. If I could get to it I could save myself, but the two men followed me closely. When we reached the porch we were met by Nat and Ol.

“You two stay here,” the dark man said. “Keep an eye on the road.” He turned to his little companion. “Arch, you see to the horses. Miss Rood and I wish to be alone.”

He held the door for me to enter. When I hesitated, he grabbed my arm and pulled me roughly into the parlor. I broke free and faced him, quaking with fear and fury. Suddenly I knew who he was.

“You are Bill Anderson!”

“At your service,” he said, inclining his head.

“This is a sorry way to repay my Pa’s kindness,” I said. “A very sorry way!”

He dropped his hat on the floor and began to unbutton his blue jacket.

“I had not intended this, Hattie,” he said, “but your insolence riled me.”

Panicked, I looked wildly around the room for something, anything, to use as a weapon but before I knew it he was on me, holding me tight and bending his face to mine. His breath was rotten, like meat left in the sun. I tried to bite his searching lips but could not gain purchase. The black bile of despair was boiling inside me when all at once his head flew up and his arms loosened. Turning I saw Dee on the stairs holding the rail with one hand and a pistol in the other.

“Let her be, Bill,” he said.

Anderson released me and stepped back with a grin.

“Why, Dingus, you’ve recovered better than I anticipated.”

“I don’t want to shoot you, Bill,” Dee said, “but I can’t let you hurt her.”

Anderson’s eyes narrowed.

“You disappoint me, laddie my lad. Why, just the other day I was boasting on you, proclaiming you the keenest and cleanest fighter in my command. And now this!”

He shook his curly head with exaggerated sadness.

“Do you know what those boys outside will do to you if you fire that pistol?”

Dee nodded.

Anderson reflected a moment, then shrugged his shoulders.

“All right,” he said, bending to pick up his hat. “As a favor to your brother, and because this is a special day, I’ll let it pass. Today the liberation of Missouri has begun! Sterling Price is moving up from Arkansas with three divisions under Fagan, Marmaduke and Shelby. The boys and me, we’re heading east through the counties of Carroll, Howard and Boone to draw the Federals north of the Missouri. I want you to join us, Dingus, despite what happened here today. Hurry on if you aim to share in the glory!”

With a wink at me he left the room letting the door slam behind him. Only then did I succumb to my terror. My knees buckled and I sank to the floor, covering my face with my hands. Dee knelt beside me.

“I’ve got to go with him, Hattie,” he said.

Astonished I raised my face.

“You can’t mean it!” I said. “After what he almost did to me? You can’t ride with a devil like that.”

“I have to,” he said softly. “My brother’s with him and we stick together. That’s just how it is.”

I followed him to the loft as the others rode away. They left a black horse tied to the porch rail for Dee.

Me and my pride parted company as I watched him pack his bags.

“Don’t go,” I said, not even trying to hide my misery. “Stay with me and Pa. Stay with me.”

He said nothing but pulled a photograph out of his bag and placed it in my hands. It was a likeness of him, unsmiling and wearing a plumed cavalier’s hat pinned up on the side, holding one pistol, with two others tucked into his belt.

“I had it made in Platte City this summer,” he said shyly. “Keep it. I’ll be back for you when this is over. I promise.”

I had been kissed before and more than once. But when Dee kissed me the press of his lips on mine was the wildest, most intimate feeling I have ever known, then or since.

Despite his promise, I never saw him again after that day. Events conspired against us. Bill Anderson was killed that fall after ordering the massacre of 25 unarmed Union soldiers at a train station in Centralia. It was a cowardly, shameful act, one that sickened all Missourians and turned the tide of public sentiment against the bushwhackers for the remainder of the war. Did Dee have a role in that bloody business? I choose to believe he did not, but I will never know for sure.

That Christmas I married Fritz Heizinger, with Pa's blessing, and we left Missouri for Kansas where Fritz found the population more welcoming. No woman could have asked for a better, kinder husband, but even so, I looked for Dee to come back longer than I should have. I kept his photograph, tucked away in my memory drawer where my oldest son, Ray, found it years later. It happened as we were cleaning out the house after Fritz died. Ray was taking me to Michigan to live with him and his family.

"Mother, what is this?"

He held the picture before me and how my blood throbbed at the sight of it!

"A friend," I said. "Someone I knew long ago."

Ray's jaw dropped in disbelief.

"A friend? Jesse James was your friend? My God, Mother, the man was a criminal! An outlaw of the roughest sort! What sort of company did you keep back then?"

My poor boy; he knew only the half of it. Looking into his astonished blue eyes, eyes blue as cornflowers, I offered the only explanation I had.

"Those were fevered times," I said, "that made outlaws of us all." ○

Beth Mead

Worse Than Wanting

Natalie had decided she wasn't going to her mother's wake. She'd go to the funeral tomorrow, but she would not stand around for hours today, greet people, smile sadly, thank distant relatives for coming. She would not look inside the casket. Morbid, she thought. Wakes were just morbid. No point in them. So she wasn't going. Besides, she'd looked at her mother's face plenty over the last year, doing her grocery shopping for her every weekend, writing out her bills, cleaning her bathroom, listening to her complain about each ache in each section of her body, starting with her swollen feet and working up to her headaches. Natalie did all the things a grown daughter should do while basically waiting for her mother to die. She'd done enough. She was done.

Montgomery, Natalie's husband, didn't understand. "You have to be at the wake," he said. "You're her only child. Her husband's dead. It's your job."

No, thought Natalie. My job was arranging the wake and the funeral, making the phone calls to every relative, every person her mother had known in her 72 years who might still be around. My job was finding Mom in her musty apartment, in her recliner, feet up, TV on, too still to be asleep. "I'm not going," Natalie said again, grabbing her purse, heading toward the garage.

"Well, I am," he said.

"Fine. Have fun."

"Christ, Nat, it's not about fun. You do it because you have to do it."

But I don't want to, Natalie thought. I'm tired of doing things I don't want to do. "See you tonight." She got in her car, backed out, not knowing where she was going, only where she would not go.

Natalie and Montgomery never said the word *divorce* out loud, at least not to each other, but the possibility hung in the air around them like humidity, thick, suffocating. It clouded the words they actually did say, weighed down the simplest phrase. When the phone would ring, his "Can you get that?" dragged through the space between them and reached her as *Get off your lazy butt and do something besides read your magazines*. Her "What time will you be home tonight?" became *If we loved each other like we're supposed to, you'd want to leave work as soon as you could*. When Natalie quit law school and accepted a part-time job at the art museum, she knew he thought she was giving up. But it wasn't that. She wanted to steer things in a different direction. She had to know if life could feel better than this. She wanted to spend her days surrounded by art, not lawyers. She wanted anything besides what she already had. She tried to explain that to her mother once, the only time in the past year she'd

attempted to really talk to her. She was hard to talk to, starting to forget things, never making much sense. “Oh, no,” she’d said, patting Natalie’s knee with a papery hand, “there’s nothing worse than wanting, dear. Don’t you see?” Natalie didn’t answer, just helped her mother get into bed, turned out the light, locked the front door on her way out.

After two hours of aimless driving, then an hour of walking around a shopping mall, Natalie sat down at a table in the food court. This was childish, she knew. She was acting like a teenager skipping school. Natalie sighed. She should go to the wake. She could picture Montgomery there in his black pants and black tie, shaking hands, nodding, making excuses for her. Probably telling people she was too distraught, couldn’t get out of bed, something embarrassing. Fine, she thought. I’ll go to the damn wake. But first she ordered a salad with strawberries and sunflower seeds. Then she went into Dillard’s and charged a dark blue dress and navy pudgy-heeled pumps, not exactly stylish, but at least not black.

When she got to the funeral home, Montgomery was still there.

“Hey,” she said. “Sorry.”

“Nat, you made it.” He kissed her cheek the way he usually did, his lips pushed forward into an exaggerated pucker, as if to keep the kiss as far away from him as possible.

“How’s it been?” Natalie looked around the almost-empty room. The air was damp, cool, and smelled vaguely of mold. Probably the carpet, Natalie thought, staring at it beneath her new shoes, the worn pattern a blur of deep red, black, and gold.

“Okay. A pretty steady stream of people. Things are winding down now.”

“Sorry,” she said again.

“It’s fine, Nat. People seemed to understand. Nobody’s upset with you.”

“Right.”

“Really. Everybody knows how much you did for her.” He yawned. “Long day. Oh, and your Uncle Jerry kept calling me Monty again. What a jerk.”

When Natalie had first met Montgomery at a college party, he’d introduced himself for about five minutes straight. “I’m Montgomery Stevens,” he’d said. “Montgomery. Not Monty. Never call me Monty. Monty’s a game show host. I’m no game show host.”

“So what are you, exactly?” Natalie had asked.

“The man with the beer,” he’d said, handing her a cold bottle.

She laughed and took a drink. “Okay, Montgomery. Maybe I can think up a nickname for you, one you like.”

But during the two years they dated and their nine years of marriage, she’d never called him anything but Montgomery. It suited him. Or maybe she hadn’t tried hard enough to figure him out, not really. He’d proposed

when she found out she was pregnant, and by the time she miscarried, they had reserved the hall and ordered the invitations. She'd bought the dress. There didn't seem to be any reason to call things off. So they didn't. They just did what it seemed like they were supposed to do.

"You can head home, you know," Natalie said. "You've been here all day."

"It's almost over now." Montgomery looked at his watch. "I'll wait till you're ready to go."

"So who's left to talk to?" Natalie surveyed the room, recognized the priest who had visited her mom weekly, brought her a host, blessed her.

"Don't know who that is," Montgomery said, nudging his head toward a 20-something girl entering the room.

"Me either." The girl was tall and blonde, lovely, wearing a simple black dress. She walked straight to the casket and kneeled down on the pad in front of it. Then she started sobbing. "Good grief," said Natalie. "Who the hell *is* she?"

"Go ask her. Or I will, if you want." Montgomery smoothed his tie.

"Thanks, but I can handle it."

"Really," he said. "I don't mind."

Natalie sighed and walked over to the casket, keeping her eyes on the girl. "Hi," she whispered, resting a hand on the girl's shaking back. "I'm Natalie, Augustine's daughter."

"Oh," she said, "Natalie." She stood up, brushed her fingers across her cheeks, then offered a hand. "I've heard so much about you."

Natalie shook her damp hand. "You have?"

"Augustine talked about you a lot. You and Montgomery. I hope things are going okay for you two."

"What? I'm sorry — what was your name?" Natalie glanced over at Montgomery. He was talking to the priest. "Can we, maybe, let's go sit down and talk."

The girl glanced down at the casket one last time, crossed herself, then followed Natalie to the bench near the wall. "I'm Jessica," she said. "David's girlfriend."

"David?"

"David Hollings. You know, his dad is, was, Augustine's landlord." The girl looked confused, as if this should all be obvious to Natalie.

"Oh. His dad was the landlord. Okay." She wanted to yell, *But why are you crying?*

"I visited your mom with David and Mark whenever I could. She was fascinating."

"Mark?" she said. *Fascinating?* "You visited her? Well. That was nice of you. Thoughtful."

"She told us all her stories, and she would talk about you and Montgomery. And she'd listen to us go on about our troubles — you know, us

wanting to get married, my parents saying I'm too young." She pulled a tissue from her purse and blew her nose. "She really listened, you know? Well," she laughed, "of course you know. She's your mom."

"Of course." Natalie felt like her head was being filled with helium, like it might take off at any moment. "So you visited her often?"

"Once or twice a week, I guess. Mark, he's David's best friend. He would stop by to see if she needed anything, you know, he helped out the tenants, did plumbing, stuff like that. So David and I would go too. Just to talk, have coffee with her." Jessica started crying again, hard, shoulders shaking. "I'm sorry," she said.

"No, it's okay. I just — I'm surprised Mom never mentioned you." Natalie dug a tissue out of her purse and handed it to Jessica. "You obviously meant a lot to her."

"Oh, I know the boys did. She loved when David and Mark stopped by. She just glowed. They'd flirt with her, and she'd flirt right back."

She'd flirt?

"That's why... oh." More hard crying. "That's why this is so terrible. She always said she wanted us to be at her funeral. She said she liked knowing that when her time came, we'd be there. But David and Mark are in London this week. Mark's sister's spending the semester there, and she's in a play tonight, and they went to see her. I wanted to go too, but now I'm so glad I didn't." Jessica blew her nose again. "I called David today. They're just sick about missing this. They really wanted to be here for her."

Natalie was at a loss. This woman Jessica was talking about sounded nothing like the mother she'd been taking care of. She had no idea what to say to this girl. She looked around for Montgomery, waved him over. "That's my husband," she said. "Here he comes."

"Nice to meet you, Montgomery." She stood up and shook his hand. "I'm Jessica."

Montgomery smiled. "Jessica."

"Jessica and her fiancé used to visit Mom," said Natalie.

"Oh, he wasn't my fiancé. Not officially. Your mom was helping us through all that." Jessica turned to Montgomery. "And she told us about the trouble you've had, you know, trying to conceive. I'm sorry, I know that's personal, but it's just, I feel like I know you, and I'm sorry you've been having a rough time."

Montgomery looked at Natalie, who shrugged back at him with wide eyes. He cleared his throat. "Well, thanks, Jessica, but we actually decided a while back we weren't going to have children."

"Oh. I'm sorry. I thought, well, Augustine said there had been miscarriages, and she always talked about wanting grandchildren. She said we were the next best thing, though. She really treated us like family."

Natalie rubbed her hand across her forehead, closed her eyes. "Well. Jessica. I have had two miscarriages, but that was a long time ago." She

looked at her husband. “We stopped trying, decided we’d be fine on our own. That’s what you said, right, Montgomery?”

He looked at her, unblinking. Natalie heard the words in his silence: *We’re not fine.*

Jessica’s face was pink, her eyes wet. “I feel terrible. I didn’t mean to interfere, really. I just, well, I love your mom. I wanted to be here since the boys can’t. I don’t want to intrude. I’m going to go.”

“No,” Montgomery said. “Don’t be silly. I’m sure Augustine would want you to be here.”

“I almost forgot,” Jessica said, pulling some folded papers out of her purse. “I wanted to give you this. It’s her writing, her life story she was working on.”

“She was writing her life story?” asked Montgomery.

“Yes, you know, David always told her she should write down all the stories she told us, about all the contests she won, her artwork and her childhood — all that. She gave me a page or two each time we’d visit, and I typed them up.” She handed them to Natalie. “So, here. This copy’s for you.”

“Excuse me,” said Natalie. She walked out of the room, went into the hallway, leaned against the wall. She tucked the pages into her purse without looking at them. This was insane, she thought. Why didn’t Mom tell her about these people, about her writing? It was like her mother had an entire life separate from Natalie, a life that was much more interesting than the one they had together. And the worst part was that Natalie felt jealous, not just of Jessica for being so close to her mother, but jealous of Mom, too, for being something more than Natalie could see. So Mom had given Jessica advice on her relationship. And all she could do for Natalie was tell her not to want anything. Well, Mom obviously wanted more than she had. She wanted grandchildren, she wanted to flirt with young men, she wanted a girl to type up her life story. But all she ever told Natalie she wanted was her weekly shopping list, bananas, milk, bagels, cream cheese, the same things every week.

Natalie hated how angry she felt, how cold. This feeling, this lack of feeling, was nothing like mourning. She felt disconnected from the fact that her mother had died. The woman who died was far from the mother Natalie wanted to remember. When Natalie was young, her mother was round and soft and safe. She was Mama, with wispy curls and pale peach lipstick, always drawing and coloring with Natalie. Later she was Mom, wearing red-tag-sale dresses, making tuna on crackers for Natalie after school. Mom didn’t hug, didn’t gush, but Natalie never felt unloved. By high school, Natalie was too worried about herself, her boyfriends, her hair, to notice her mother much — she was just there, a given. As soon as she could, Natalie moved out, found a life of her own. She rarely visited until years later, when her mother started getting sick, when her mind started to go. Mom had faded away, at least Natalie’s idea of who Mom

used to be. All that was left for Natalie was guilt — guilt for leaving too soon, guilt for coming back too late. And another kind of guilt, something she could never say out loud: As much as Natalie wanted to have children, she knew she would be a terrible mother.

“Hey, Nat.” Montgomery came out into the hall, touched Natalie’s shoulder. “You okay?”

“Sure.” She looked at him, tried to smile. “What the hell was that, huh?”

“No kidding.”

“Is she still in there?”

“Yep. Kneeling and praying and crying again. Cute, but kind of a basket case, that one.” He slid a bit of Natalie’s hair behind her ear.

“Guess so.” His touch felt familiar and foreign at the same time. She folded her hand over his, squeezed. Maybe Natalie didn’t know what she wanted, not at all. “Sorry Mom was talking to strangers about us.”

“Natalie. She’s gone now. It doesn’t matter.”

“Right.” She tried to hear what his words really meant. She couldn’t tell.

“Let’s go home,” he said. “We’ve still got the funeral tomorrow to get through.”

“Oh boy.” Natalie kept her hand in his as they walked out to the parking lot. “My car’s right here,” she said.

“I’ll see you at home.” Montgomery started to walk away, then turned back to her. “Hey, Nat,” he said.

“What?”

“Are we happy?” He smiled when he said it, but it was the kind of smile that hurt, that bent a face right in half.

“No,” she said, smiling too.

“No, I guess not.”

“So what now?” Natalie took out her keys, fiddled with them, waited for him to answer.

“I don’t know.”

She leaned back against her car. “What do you want, Montgomery?”

He moved closer to her, rested his hands on her hips. “Well,” he said, “how about a beer?”

She laughed. “If you’re buying.”

He pressed his lips against her forehead. “Follow my car. We’ll find a dive around here somewhere.”

“Okay,” she said.

Montgomery opened the door for her. Natalie climbed inside and rested her head against the steering wheel. She watched her husband as he walked to his car. Tonight, she thought — at least for tonight — I don’t want anything but this. ○

Daron Kappauff

Objects in Space

“Three.”

This is my favorite part, the waiting, the moments just before. I close my eyes and exhale, as the pangs of tension and anxiety surge over me generating nausea and dizziness in their wake.

“Two.”

I know the others experience the same sensations, but they don't appreciate them. For them, this tour holds no meaning — it's just another day on the job. For me, this is it. My last chance to savor what we few take for granted and the world at large will never know.

“One.”

I open my eyes and breathe in deep. The waiting is nearly over. My body goes limp and numb from experience, but my mind... my mind betrays my mission. In these fractions between the seconds, when I had hoped to soak in every detail, she intrudes. A trace of her jasmine scent compels a nanosecond of beautiful negligence.

“Ignition.”

I'm thrust deep into my chair. My head snaps back colliding with metal, then cushion. Breath escapes me as the straps tighten around me, threatening to rend me in two. Julia disintegrates and I teeter on the edge of consciousness.

Ahead of us, the sky rushes past, howling benevolently. Clouds part, and the sun lights a path most people will never travel. The Earth, however, isn't so amiable. Continuing our march through the stratosphere, her ravenous arms grip and throttle us, attempting to rip us apart and send us crashing back to the ground. She's not fond of escapees. But her struggle is futile; it almost always is. And with the passing seconds, her grip loosens, and we blast headlong into freedom.

“I bet you're gonna miss this, Tony,” John says in between two squawks of static.

“Yeah,” I respond, finally able to breathe again.

After a few trips up, most people stop noticing little things like the half-second of static preceding and following the use of our helmet microphones, but not me, not this time. I want to catalog every experience. John thinks I'm crazy, like I've become some sort of New Age hippie talking about feelings and experiences, but he's got at least four or five more trips ahead of him. He'll understand. When the starlit sky is his only perception of space, he'll understand.

Julia hasn't been all that understanding either. But girlfriends and wives usually aren't. Not when their loved ones are talking about hurtling themselves into the void "one last time." That, however, doesn't stop her from appearing before me again as the last vestiges of atmosphere peel away, revealing the great black stage of the universe. Her eyes shine and blink like the distant stars that have become more a home for me than the world I have left for this last time.

"What do you mean you're going up again?" Julia said through gritted teeth.

We were standing in her kitchen. She was facing me from the center of the room, wearing only her baking apron, and fiercely wringing a damp dish towel, while I leaned against her refrigerator. Normally she'd position herself in front of me, but facing away, forcing me to stare at her while she did her daily household chores, reminding me that her appetite was more insatiable than my own. On this day, however, the show was short lived. She stood there — a small puddle of tears forming beneath the twisted towel — staring at me, staring directly into my eyes. Not once did she give me her vixenish glance — her unabashed look, hinting her hunger for my well muscled, and half-naked 45-year-old body. Nor her playfully whispered, "Do you see anything you like?" No comment on my graying hair, or whether my eyes were blue or green. There was only the stifling echo of her words and the warm stare of her hazel eyes.

I reached down, grabbing the right leg of my boxers, and wrapped it around the top of the beer bottle I had pulled from her fridge. The muted hiss of carbonation filled the room, diffusing the silence between us. I remember thinking I should say something to ease her mind, and that the longer I waited, the harder it would be. Instead, I kept thinking of what a moron I looked like at that moment — leaning against her fridge, beer in hand, wearing only my underwear, and flashing my patented half smile.

"You're seriously just going to stand there with that stupid grin on your face? Seriously?" Julia's blonde eyebrows arched up and over her eyes, as far as they could toward her hairline. I was tempted to make a joke about being suddenly hungry, but decided against it.

"What do you want me to say?" I gurgled, a half gulp of beer still in my mouth.

"I want you to tell me why the hell you're going up again!"

"Julia... Look..."

"Don't! Don't you dare!" A fine steam of water sprayed across my face as Julia leveled the contorted towel at me. "I swear I think you love the whole goddamn universe more than me."

"Now that's just silly."

Her eyes told me it wasn't.

“Listen,” I said, securing the towel with my free hand. “This is it for me. No more. When I get back, we can do everything we’ve talked about for the last year. We’ll buy some land up north, get a horse or two, and *shag like bunnies.*”

She smiled begrudgingly. The Sean Connery impression always got her.

“Stop it.”

“*Stop what?*”

“Your British accent sucks.”

“*That’s because it’s Scottish.*”

“It still sucks.”

“Conceded.”

“You’re not in the clear by the way,” she said, snatching the towel away from me. She turned and walked toward the sink. Halfway there, one hand dropped behind her attempting to cover herself. She did so without breaking stride.

“I know,” I said, suppressing a smile I knew she’d hear.

“You’ve earned your pension, and they’re practically begging you to retire early.”

“And that... that is precisely why I have to go,” I replied, moving to her side and looking out her kitchen window at the children returning from school.

She shook her head.

“Would you tell me I shouldn’t go see my mother one last time if I knew she was about to die?” I asked.

“What? They aren’t even remotely the same.”

“To someone who’s never been up there, you’re probably right.”

“Fine. If your mother was dying and the only way you could see her again was to risk your life to do so, do you think she would want you to?”

“No. But that doesn’t mean I shouldn’t.”

Being wrong didn’t suit Julia. And not having a response was the same as being wrong, at least to her. She allowed me my hollow victory. I’m sure she knew it was a losing battle from word one.

“How’d you get cleared for this anyway?” she asked suddenly, like some revelation had been gleaned from drying the final dinner plate. “I thought you signed some release forms already.”

“I did. Some strings were pulled, paperwork misplaced.”

Silence followed.

“Truth be told, John’s the one pushing this through. He wants to give me some big send off.”

Julia huffed. I preferred her silent dissatisfaction.

“What do you want me to say?” I said, placing my beer on the counter and turning to face her. “He is my friend after all.”

“Yeah, the two of you are practically brothers,” she muttered, looking out the window, avoiding eye contact.

Dialogue was getting me nowhere. I reached up and gently grasped the back of her head, turned and pulled her toward me. Surprisingly, her reaction was to kiss me before I could kiss her. And while the eagerness was welcome, her embrace was different than usual, harder. She ran her nails down my face, leaving marks, and nearly drew blood a few times when she bit my lower lip. I got the impression she was reacting more from fear than anything else. She wasn’t usually so dramatic.

Once her clawing gave way, I picked her up by the waist and sat her on the breakfast counter. The breakfast bar was new for us. There weren’t many surfaces in the house we hadn’t christened: the bar was one of them; the bed was another. The breakfast bar was merely shortsightedness on our part. The bed... the bed was just never going to happen.

It’s hard to put into words the sensation of waking up with your face pressed against the ceiling. Few human experiences can compare. Giving birth maybe? But not being a father — or better yet — a mother, I really can’t say. When it happens to me, there are a few seconds where I think I’ve awakened to the brave new world of the last son of Krypton.

Waking today, however, I have no such misconceptions. Today is the last day of our three-day mission. The last time I’ll ever step foot out an airlock and look with wonder into the maw of space.

The repairs to a satellite John and I put up here nearly ten years ago are almost complete. The two of us have done most of the repair work ourselves, which has me wondering if this is why John went to so much trouble to get me on this trip. Like it’s some sort of commemoration of our first mission together and our friendship. I, of course, haven’t said anything about this. That would be *way* too touchy-feely for a couple of guys like us. I appreciate the sentiment though, and am much happier to be celebrating my retirement out here where my career thrived, than in a bar planetside with people who’ve never even left the country.

Reintegrating into normal society is definitely going to be awkward — especially if I make good on my promise to relocate with Julia. At least now, home is a place nestled amongst a network of people who get me, and the withdrawals I’m already experiencing. I mean, what does a 45-year-old retired astronaut have in common with John Q?

Once I finish my morning prep, suit up, and make my way to the airlock, I find that John’s already gone out ahead of me. Odd. Maybe we had more work ahead of us than I thought. Or maybe he was planning some sort of surprise for me — nothing like an outer space surprise party. Whatever the reason, I’d wasted enough time.

There wasn't much fanfare the day we left the airport heading for Kennedy. Sure, there were a couple of news crews covering *the astronauts as they're about to leave*, but that wasn't out of the ordinary. They had to report something on an otherwise slow news day. And I'm sure whatever did make it into their stories had more to do with *a broken satellite*, rather than the final flight of a retiring astronaut. Human interest stories are rather passé, unless they end in heartbreak.

The wives and families were there as well, sprinkled across the tarmac like Hollywood extras, a couple hundred feet from our chopper. Julia was there too.

A couple more quickies earlier that week hadn't alleviated any of her reservations — and let's face it — I hadn't done a very good job of easing her mind. But she was there, doing her duty, supporting her man. Who was I kidding? I knew she wasn't there for me, but I was happy to see her nonetheless.

I'd like to say the scene was marked with tears, hugs and promises. But we'd all been through this many, many times, and there weren't any rookies onboard for this trip. Still, there was a second amidst the flash bulbs and hurried movements when I caught a glimpse of her. She was visible and obscured from second to second as my fellow voyagers, pilots and ground crew passed in front of me, boarding and preparing the chopper for flight. Time seemed to slow, and Julia looked at me, emotionless. Or maybe it was an emotion I hadn't seen before. Either way, I was compelled. Compelled for a microsecond to expel the coils of my selfishness and run to her like we were living a horrid Hugh Grant movie — to live our happily ever after. But I did not. There would have been no happiness living with that kind of regret. I truly believe she knew that.

Turns out there wasn't a surprise party waiting for me once I found John, working on the satellite. There also wasn't a lot of extra work to be done. I had apparently overslept, and John had gone ahead to keep us on schedule. It really wasn't a two-man job anyway. I knew why I was really there. This was a pity mission, a grand farewell.

"Get enough sleep, Goldilocks?" John asks, as I move into his peripheral vision.

"Yeah, thanks for waking me." I carefully move across the port side hull of the ship, cleaving to the open cargo bay door, and pulling my tether line behind me to keep it from snagging. "Remind me why we're using this archaic equipment?"

"Archaic? Weren't you up here when tether lines were all the rage?"

"Funny."

"Budget cuts, I'm sure. As long as we go up and come back why should the government spend any extra money on us?"

“At least I’m getting the proper send off,” I say, coming up beside him.

“There’s no doubt about that,” he replies, rummaging through a small tool kit magnetically attached to the hull. “I’m just about done here — why don’t you take a look at the forward array.”

I nod, forgetting John can’t see my face, and move ahead toward the bow of the satellite, which had been in synchronous orbit with our shuttle since we started repairs. “I really am going to miss this, you know.”

“What — working on space junk or my sarcasm?”

“Both, actually. But I meant *this* in general. Just all of this.”

“Well, do you see anything you like?”

And with those words my blood runs cold, as if my EVA suit had sprung a leak — venting atmosphere and allowing the abyss to grab at me with her frozen touch. The image of John setting up surveillance cameras all over his house bursts into my mind. The thought of him witnessing my betrayal and planning his revenge follows quickly. And as I silently turn to look back across the ship to his now vacant location, the frayed end of my tether line and a small hunting knife float by my helmet. I continue turning, trying to find John’s position, and as I do, I realize it’s too late and I’m off balance. John’s vengeful hands explode into my back and launch me up and away from the hull of our ship.

No words are exchanged as I tumble end over end into the eternal embrace of my new mistress. It occurs to me to try contacting the ship, but I’m sure John rigged our microphones to be a closed circuit anyway. He’s had this planned. And what can I say to him, really? Sorry?

No. As I spin uncontrollably away from my old life, the first man to trek this far through space unfettered, I can think only of Julia. I think of her and fear the retribution John has planned for his wife. ○

Gerry Mandel

Me and Diz, Me and Stan

Ben Schucart ran his thick fingers over his cheek, felt the light onset of stubble, and decided today was not a shaving day. At this age and in this situation, who did he need to impress? His shaving days were becoming less frequent, and frankly, he didn't give a damn. A fresh shirt and clean underwear were sufficient to maintain a modicum of self-respect. Why push it?

From his living room drifted the sounds of one of his favorite tracks, Stan Getz with the Oscar Peterson trio, "I Want To Be Happy." Whenever Stan had played his club, the tune was a standing request from Ben. Now the sole music in the entire four-story building originated from Ben Schucart's stereo.

Ben dumped a pile of Wheaties into a bright blue cereal bowl, one that carried the chipped logo of the Mound City Hotel. Ben's entire cupboard was stacked with plates and bowls from his hotel, although to look at the building, you saw very little to suggest it had once been a lively, successful establishment. Its claim to fame actually resided below, in the basement, the original home of the Cosmopolitan Club, variously billed as "The Mecca of Jazz," "Mid-America's Jazz Crossroads," and "Where Jazz is King."

The CDs rotated in the player and Horace Silver's "Doodlin'" took over. Ben whistled the familiar melody, laid out when the solos started: Horace, Hank Mobley's tenor, and Kenny Dorham on trumpet. *There* was a nice guy who should've been better appreciated. Kenny had this sad smile, a soft gentle voice, and a deep appreciation for willing waitresses. The clientele also provided its share of eager female jazz aficionados. Ben was not beyond using his clout as club owner to slip into the liquor storage room with Inez, a short, perky blonde with crystal blue eyes. Ben always liked blondes. Inez once boasted she had taken on the entire Cannonball Adderly sextet between sets, and Ben didn't doubt her.

Oh, the heady days of good, swinging jazz. They were over so quickly. Too bad his wife Doris had been so narrow-minded. The three-way combination of Ben, Doris and jazz produced a devastating reaction. Only two of the three could survive together, which is why Doris was history, and had been for years, along with most of Ben's equity.

Too bad time was running out for The Mound City Hotel.

Ben Schucart ran a soft, white cotton cloth over the old alto sax on the

long table. Even though it had lost its shine, and the pads were cracked, Ben still kept it free of dust. He went through the same ritual with a dull gold trumpet next to it, the mouthpiece still in place. His short, stubby hands applied delicate dabs and swipes on the aged instruments, removing only the dust and none of the patina. In an adjoining bedroom, on shelves and table tops, sat a variety of other items, all of them as vital to Ben's existence as food and air. They included altos, tenors, and even a manzello played by Roland Kirk. The eclectic assortment also featured a hat worn by Prez and a strange looking pair of shoes from the feet of Monk. Ben attended to them all regularly, lovingly. He had frequently found himself bailing the musicians out of trouble and never asked for collateral. They offered it.

He stopped to look at the framed black-and-white photograph of him and Dizzy Gillespie. "To my man Ben, Stay cool, Diz." Ben smiled, touched the picture. "Me and Diz," he said softly. What a wonderful three words. Next to it hung pictures of Ben with Getz, Milt Jackson, Sonny Rollins, Gerry Mulligan, Clifford Brown. Around the room ran dozens of pictures, all of them dust free. All of them signed.

Good God, how the world had changed. Outside his windows, inside his hotel, within his own life.

On the sidewalk below stood a stern-faced, middle-aged man in a wrinkled brown suit. He reviewed a letter in his hand, slipped it back into a folder, then looked up at the fourth floor window, squinted against the glare of overcast sky, straightened his tie and entered.

He passed a bald man in dirty clothing and long gray beard, slumped in the corner of the entrance way, smoking a twisted cigarette. They didn't exchange looks.

The elevator shuddered as it carried him to the fourth floor, where he found Ben's door and knocked.

Ben was in no hurry to meet with him, so he took another three puffs on his thick cigar, clipped the burning end off, washed it down the sink, and wrapped the stub in tin foil. He took a deep breath and opened the door.

"Mr. Schucart."

Ben acknowledged his name with a nod and a shallow smile.

"I'm Craig Byrnes. With the city redevelopment council. We spoke on the phone."

"Sure, Craig. Come on in."

So this is what running a jazz club for 30 years had come down to, thought Ben. A visit by a second-rate civil servant carrying an eviction notice, underscored by the threat of physical ejection, all spelled out in detail in several letters Ben had received over the past three months. He had pitched the first two letters, talked to a retired lawyer after the third,

then decided to ignore the whole thing with a “let ’em come and get me” defiance. Now they were coming to get him.

Truth be told, Ben had no place to go. No kids to take him in, his one son a dentist with a comfortable practice in Tucson who had never taken to jazz. Most of Ben’s friends were either rotting away in nursing homes or stagnating in Florida condos. He had no desire to live anywhere else, though the older he got, the colder the winters seemed to become. But habit and memories had him anchored here.

“You like jazz, Craig?” Ben asked hopefully, though he knew the answer. From the looks of him, Craig liked old rock.

“No, sir.”

That was it. “No, sir.” Not “I like rock” or “country” or whatever — some indication he listened to music. Some form of real connection between two humans besides a doomed building.

They sat facing each other across a coffee table covered with old issues of *Down Beat* and *Metronome*, magazines that collectors would cherish if they had been properly protected, but Ben figured magazines are for reading, not storing.

“You ever hear of Lester Young? The Prez?”

“No, sir. Can’t say I have,” said Craig indifferently.

“That’s his horn over there.” Ben indicated a tenor sax propped up on top of a bruised black case in the corner of the room. “And I’m sure you never heard of Chet Baker, so it wouldn’t mean a thing if you knew that’s his trumpet there, on the table.”

Craig looked impatient. He opened the file folder, pulled out the letter, and handed it to Ben. “You know why I’m here, Mr. Schucart.” His voice carried a hard edge that seemed practiced, unnatural. “You’ve ignored our previous attempts at communication. This letter spells out the situation in detail, and what is expected of you.” He paused. “I apologize for being so direct, but we know of no other way to get your attention.”

“Craig, can I get you a soda, a cup of coffee — something?”

“Nothing, thanks. We’ve got to talk about this.”

Ben got up, walked to the kitchen, poured himself some coffee and returned. “Good coffee. I grind it fresh.”

“I don’t drink coffee,” said Craig sharply.

“How about a scotch and water? Doesn’t anybody drink scotch for breakfast anymore?” Ben didn’t expect an answer and got none. He took a sip of coffee, sat back in his chair, and exhaled a long breath. “Okay, Craig — you have my full attention.”

“Please don’t make this any more difficult than necessary, Mr. Schucart. There’s no room for negotiation. This building is coming down. Within thirty days. That’s as clear as I can make it. *Every* remaining building in this twelve-block area is coming down. You’re one of the few hold-

outs, and you have absolutely no legal leg to stand on. You've been given due warning."

"So, why are you here?"

"Because you have not responded to any of our letters. This is for your safety. So you're not in here when the wrecking ball flies through these walls. So we don't have to dig through bricks and debris to find you."

Ben laughed softly. "You're trying to make it as dramatic as you can."

"I'm trying to make you realize the danger you face if you're here. If you need help in relocation, here's a number you can call." Craig handed him a card.

"Your boss is all over your ass, right? 'Get that old fart out of there or you won't get a raise.' Something like that, right?"

"It's my job, Mr. Schucart. You don't have any friends down at City Hall these days."

"I used to," Ben said with a tight smile. "Lots of friends. I used to comp everyone from the mayor on down, especially the building inspectors."

"That's very interesting." Craig got out of his chair. "You need to sign this, which shows I've met with you and informed you of the situation." He handed the paper to Ben, then added, "By the way, you're the only one who lives in this building, correct?"

Ben assured him he was. "Why?"

"Downstairs, by the front door, there was a man sitting there. A vagrant, I suppose. I just wanted to make sure he didn't live in here."

"That was Tee. He's just visiting. Don't worry about him."

Ben put his arm around Craig's shoulders. "Come here, I want to show you something."

Craig resisted.

"This'll take just a minute. I'm very proud of these."

Craig walked with him over to one of the walls covered with the framed photographs. One by one Ben ticked them off.

"That's me and Stan. My favorite tenor sax player. Maybe you heard of the bossa nova or jazz samba?" No response. "Maybe not. And this is me and Ella. A voice straight from God. Here's me and Monk. I never knew for sure if he would even show up each night."

"Look, Mr. Schucart, this is all very interesting for you, but it doesn't change..."

"I know, I just want you to see some of these. Because maybe years from now, when this building is gone and I'm gone, you'll run across one of these names... in a book or a documentary or maybe one of your kids will have discovered jazz... you never know... and you can say, 'Yeah, I remember this old guy, I forget his name, he had a roomful of stuff from these musicians.' Maybe the only one you'll remember is Monk, because his name is unusual. But try to remember some of these others, okay? Not

for you or me, but for your kids, for lots of kids.”

Ben stopped and faced Craig.

“These are giants here, Craig. We shall not see their likes again. Ever. History was forged five floors down, in the basement. It permeates the very walls of this building.”

Craig stood still, his impatience replaced by curiosity.

“It’s strange, but sometimes when I see someone like you, with still many years, God willing, ahead of them, I feel envious. But just for a second. Then I realize what I might have missed if I had been born later. I would have missed Dexter and Blakey and Miles and Clifford, I would never have seen Getz and Bob Brookmeyer together, heard Oscar with Ray and Herb ... oh, how they could swing, like the three of ’em had one mind ... and never have seen the women upon whom God had bestowed incredible voices and feelings, like Billie and Sarah and Dinah.”

Ben stopped. His eyes swept around the room, quickly, as though reaching for a single impression. The magic of those names, the power they held over him.

Craig broke the silence.

“I really must leave,” he said gently, “and you must sign this. I’m sorry, Mr. Schucart.”

“I understand, kid. No problem.”

Ben signed the statement, showed Craig to the door, said “Remember. His name was Monk,” and then he was alone.

Now what?

He heard the elevator doors rattle shut. Craig on his way to his next eviction. Sad job.

Ben stepped into the deserted hall and slowly made his way along the stained, ripped carpeting, past closed doors that guarded empty rooms.

“Hello,” he shouted, his strong, jagged voice filling the long corridor and fading away. “Come back. This is a fine hotel. So it’s old now. Is that a crime? What’s wrong with old?”

He stopped. Silence closed in again.

Quickly, he walked back to his apartment, filled a blue coffee mug to the brim with Cutty Sark, unwrapped the half-smoked cigar from the foil, lit up, then stepped back into the hall and shouted, “The next set is about to begin in Club Cosmopolitan. No cover charge tonight.”

The elevator carried Ben down to the bottom floor. The door slid open onto a large, dark room with a low ceiling.

“Show time,” he announced, flipped a switch and a half-dozen wall sconces came alive with a yellow glow. That was all the light he needed. A sip of scotch and a drag on the cigar preceded a slow look around the room. He hadn’t been down here in months. Now he remembered why. The impact was the same as looking at a photograph of a woman who once

was the other half of you, on whom time had shown no mercy. The chairs were stacked upside down on the tables, shards of broken glass and rotting carpet covered the floor, accented with rat droppings and fallen ceiling tiles. Mildewed posters adorned the walls, announcing upcoming acts. Hampton Hawes, Eddie Harris, Buddy De Franco, Chris Connor. Even one for Ornette Coleman, not one of Ben's favorites. When Ornette played, Ben usually went to a movie.

"Hey, man, you down there?"

The dry, reedy voice brought Ben back. "Come on down, Tee."

"I don't trust these steps, man."

Tee still spoke in an easy, laid-back way, what had once been called "cool" or "hip." Now he just sounded quaint. Everyone was "man." Men, women, even dogs. "Better than 'dude,'" thought Ben.

"Take the elevator, Tee."

Ben poured half his scotch into a dusty tumbler and handed it to Tee. They clinked and sipped, smacked their lips, stood in the ancient ruin. Tee's beard covered the top of his grimy tee-shirt, a faded souvenir of a forgotten concert. It seemed to Ben his head might scrape the low ceiling, but Tee stood hunched, as though facing a chill wind.

"So what's going on, man? Not thinkin' of reopening, are ya?"

Ben explained the situation, which amounted to "they're tearing her down." He was surprised at how difficult the words came. Tee missed the significance. "You got Chris Connor coming in next week?" he asked, noticing the poster.

"That's 30 years old. You missed her."

Tee laughed, a breathy exhale that bordered on coughing.

"Time for some music," said Ben and went behind the bar. He hit a switch on the old amp, slipped an LP out of its sleeve onto the turntable, and carefully lowered the needle.

The music sprang from the one speaker that hadn't died yet. Tee's face broke into an all-consuming smile of yellowed teeth. Ben closed his eyes, as though in deep meditation.

"Hey, man, it's Bird." He listened some more, then added, "And Diz and Bud and Mingus, and that's Max on drums." He looked at Ben. "That's Massey Hall, man."

Ben felt good inside, warm and comfortable, as though he had come home again after being gone for so long. He pulled two chairs off a table, set them side by side, facing the lone speaker. Behind them, the stage that had once been the shrine of the gods sat still and empty.

"You got some weed?" Tee's eyebrows arched as he said "weed."

"I haven't had weed in years. Wish I did though."

Ben and Tee went way back, to days when they shared their weed and

women and long nights, all played out to a jazz soundtrack. Ben had followed in his dad's tracks in the real estate business, ended up with the hotel, while Tee pictured himself somewhere between William Burroughs and Jack Kerouac, though he never wrote much that mattered.

Tee's voice dropped to a hush, as though he were speaking to a holy man. "You still got Bird's ax?"

"Yeah."

"Louie's cornet?"

"Trumpet. Yeah."

"You got some fine items up there, man."

They listened to "Perdido" without speaking further. As the tune ended, Tee asked, "What was that movie, man?"

"What movie, Tee?"

"The one about Bird."

"Oh. *Bird.*"

"Yeah, the one about Bird."

"That was the name of it, Tee. *Bird.*"

"Oh, yeah," said Tee, finally understanding. "Some famous cat did that movie, you know who I mean?"

"Clint Eastwood."

"Yeah, that's him. You see it?"

"More than once." Ben looked around the room. "Clint would love this place."

"Yeah." Tee took another sip of scotch. "Especially Bird's ax."

Ben enjoyed movies. Unfortunately, Hollywood had never treated jazz kindly. He could count on one hand the films he held in high esteem. *Round Midnight* with Dexter, *Sweet Smell of Success* with Chico, *The Man with the Golden Arm* with Frank and that great track by Elmer. And, of course, *Bird*.

They listened while they finished their drinks.

Halfway through "Salt Peanuts," during Parker's solo, it all came together for Ben. Bird and the sax and his future.

Craig Byrnes surprised Ben with a short visit. He seemed eager, enthused, a different man than the one who had delivered the civic message two days earlier. He told Ben about his conversation with the head of the Historical Society and their interest in the jazz collection.

"This is a way for you to keep it all together, Mr. Schucart. You can allow the public to enjoy it and realize a significant tax break. You really should consider this."

Ben thanked him warmly for his interest. No, he had considered a similar option months ago and decided against it. Living without his past appeared too cold and empty. He had a better idea.

Craig, before he left, pulled out a piece of paper and, with Ben's okay, made a list of the musicians in the photographs. "So I can tell my grand-kids someday."

Maybe all civil servants aren't assholes, thought Ben.

"Welcome to Club Cosmopolitan." Ben showed two couples to an empty table. The small club had been open for less than a month and business was steady, if not booming. The location was perfect — a few blocks away from the cacophony of the French Quarter and within walking distance of The River, the same river that had carried the music north, into the heart of America.

Ben returned to his stool at the end of the bar, an unlit cigar wedged into the corner of his mouth, a black beret angled on his head. On the wall above the back-bar hung a large framed photograph of The Mound City Hotel in its prime.

He glanced at his watch, walked over to the cramped platform in the corner, introduced the trio of young men, then resumed his position at the bar. Ben turned to the bearded bartender. "Tee, how about a short scotch and water?"

"All right, man. You want one too?"

They laughed.

A thin, young black man stepped inside. He seemed unsure of where to sit. Ben went over.

"Hi. Table? Or you can sit at the bar."

The man fidgeted. "I don't know. I'm at Tulane... a music major. The professor said I oughta check this place out."

"Sure." Ben loved this kind of customer. He led him over to one of the walls lined with pictures. "You might want to take a look at these first." He began the voyage. "That's me and Diz. That's me and Stan..." He went down the line, allowing enough time for each name to register. This was history that mattered. The student lingered at each photo.

Ben stopped at the final picture. He looked at it a few seconds, then turned and tried to sound matter-of-fact. "And here's the latest addition. That's me and Clint." He wiped a speck of dust off the frame.

The trio finished their first number and slipped into "I Want To Be Happy." ○

Kailey Weiss

Goldfish

She had never quite understood it herself, so when she tried to explain it to her mother, she wasn't in the least bit surprised when her mother sent her here. The pale blue of the walls around her made her feel like a cancer patient, and the scent of cleaning supplies and flowery plug-ins nauseated her. The girl sat alone on a cold leather chair staring at the covers of random *National Geographic* magazines that rested on the dark wooden table at her knees. The images of goldfish on one of them twitched under her dark gaze and started to swim casually about the glossy surface. She wondered if she was born with this or if it just happened at some point early in her life.

Her earliest memory was of something similar, something like a fleeting glance of a picture in motion that seemed to wiggle uncomfortably within its two-dimensional prison. Of course, when she was that young, her parents thought nothing of their child's fantastic stories about such things, like her picture books coming to life and dancing about her room, but by the time she had turned eight, her mother told her to stop saying such horrible lies and that she was too old to be speaking such nonsense. She recalled not quite understanding the idea that no one but her could see the strange things that she did. The children in her class wouldn't play with her or talk to her, and, because of her "horrible lies," the parents of the other kids had her shunned. Fortunately, and rather conveniently, her father was transferred at work, and they moved away. After the move, she realized the reality of her particular situation — that she was "weird" and "creepy," — as someone had called her, and grew eerily silent, speaking only when she had to.

"Such a strange child," her family and family friends would say. "A polar opposite from that cheery little girl a few years ago. Whatever *happened?*" Her mother could never give an answer, but only a look that would cause an immediate change of subject.

The girl leaned over and gently touched the page with the tip of her middle finger. The surface rippled under her light touch and the fish sprang to life, dashed off the cover, and scurried away in panic. Most hid themselves under the protection of the heavily furnished table, while others fled to the potted plants in various corners of the room that were perhaps intended to brighten the mood of the place, but failed miserably. Slowly, after many moments, the tiny golden figures glided nearer with curiosity, then, after a time, acted as if the girl were familiar and swam about her head, around her neck, and between her legs. She lifted her hand and spread her fingers toward the glittering bodies. The things answered the

greeting by twisting in and around her pale fingers, as if they were long strands of seaweed. The girl had never quite understood this. They seemed as alive and responsive as real fish, as did everything else she had seen.

Her dark hair coiled tightly about her shoulders as the door beside her opened in silence. “Elizabeth Albus? Dr. Yamazaki will see you now, dear.” The woman spoke slowly and cautiously, and before the girl could wonder why, the girl realized that her own hand was still stretched before her white face. The woman’s thick black-rimmed glasses magnified eyes that seemed to see everything very clearly, but to understand nothing of what she saw.

The girl elevated herself and followed the wary woman through the door, the floating goldfish close behind her.

When Elizabeth entered the office, she suddenly felt off balance and dizzy. She had never handled museums or art galleries well (some artistic perceptions were difficult to understand and only gave her headaches), and she preferred pictures of animals and people in small doses. The crimson walls were covered in paintings and photographs of beasts, butterflies, creatures from the deep sea, and things she’d never seen before. The things shuddered as she entered. She pinched her eyes shut and rubbed her face with the back of her hand. When she opened them again in faint optimism, she found that nothing had changed as she had hoped, though she expected what she saw. The beasts in the paintings stared at her with their wild eyes. The butterflies flapped colorful wings, and the whales and fish swam within their elegant, silver frames. Plants swayed in the wind. Any images of people were nonexistent save for one. In a corner, a snowy statue of a lovely young Japanese woman dressed in a long kimono inspected the girl with inquiring eyes. The bells in the woman’s hair jingled like wind chimes in a gentle breeze.

Dr. Yamazaki was a short man, who seemed even shorter because he was seated, with wrinkled, copper skin and smooth, slender eyes. His accent was strong, but his English was fluent and precise. It almost seemed as if he wished to place his speech in a certain way to satisfy a need in himself. “It is to my understanding that you see some very strange and frightening things, or so I’ve heard from your mother. Please,” he waved to her, “have a seat.”

“Yes, I guess you could say that. Though,” she spoke quietly and averted her eyes from him, “I wouldn’t say that any of it is *frightening*...” She expected to have to lie down, a position that would have made her feel very vulnerable, but found that there was no bed, but rather a soft velvet chair. As she sat beside the tiny man and wiggled to gain a bit of comfort, she thought that perhaps the idea of the reclining chair was meant to make the patient more vulnerable and willing to cooperate.

He smiled. “Now, comfortable are you, Miss... Elizabeth Albus was it? Your mother called you Eli...That’s a very nice name.”

The girl stared at her hands, which were folded on her lap. They felt like lead weights. One of the fish swam past her line of vision, its scales glimmering like tiny stars. “Elizabeth is fine.”

“Very well then, Elizabeth. Why don’t you tell me exactly what you told your mother, and we’ll go from there.” He reclined heavily on the back of the large chair in which he sat, and rested his narrow elbows on the long armrests. He brought his bony hands together in a loose clasp. “Take your time, and speak slowly if you don’t mind. I’m old and some people talk so fast that I have trouble understanding at times.” He chuckled softly.

Elizabeth thought for several moments, trying to recall exactly what she *did* say to her worried mother. She remembered her own rambling and her mother’s dejected expression — wide eyed, brows drooped, mouth gaping, and tears as big as marbles pooling in her watery eyes. “I...” she paused. She examined her ivory hands, with the soft nails abusively bitten down to the tender skin. “The things I see are alive, but aren’t supposed to be.” She stopped herself, thought a moment, and started over. “Well, I guess they *are* supposed to be, but not in the state that they appear to normal people.” She paused again, regretting her choice of words. The phrase “normal people” made her feel as if she was admitting the fragile nature of her sanity. “Maybe it was the way I went about explaining it to my mom that made her worry.”

“It may have been,” Yamazaki said, silently urging the girl to continue.

She examined him briefly before returning her gaze to her moist palms. He sat very still and seemed very relaxed. His slanted eyes were closed. She continued. “My father has this stone dragon that he got while he was in China back in his college days. Up until he married my mom he didn’t know what to do with it. But then Dad got transferred when I was eight, so we moved.” She thought distastefully of the day they packed up and left practically overnight. “The house we moved into, our current house, has this really big fireplace with an old stone mantle, so he stuck it right there next to it. My mom hates it, but my dad refuses to get rid of it, so there it sits.” The girl recalled the many humorous quarrels the two had had over the thing. “Well, when she asked for the millionth time why I was always so distant and distracted all the time, I thought I should try to tell her, so I just described the first thing I saw, which happened to be that dragon statue. I told her how he stared at me and followed me with his head, and how his claws ground into the pedestal he sat on. He even whips his tail sometimes. I also said that if I touched him he would fly around the house until I told him it was time to sleep again. She thought I finally lost it.” She paused. “I never really understood how that worked. The things I see remain where they are until I touch them. Then they stay alive until I... I don’t know ... *will* them back, I guess. It doesn’t really make sense.” *He’s thinking I’m crazy*, she thought bitterly to herself.

“Hmm...” The old man smiled, his eyes now opened. “Tell me, Elizabeth, how old are you?”

A stone fell into the pit of her stomach. "I'm not making any of this up," she snapped. Her mother asked her the same thing. Elizabeth thought saying anything now was a waste. She didn't quite know why she felt she needed to prove her sense of awareness and reason. Her own mother didn't believe her. *Why should anyone else?* she thought, feeling lonelier than usual.

His smile widened. "Oh, I know. I'm sorry, that must have sounded a bit offensive."

The girl glared at him. That smile of his annoyed her. "Fourteen."

The old man's forehead folded into thick, deep ridges in surprise. It made her think of Mount Fuji. "Well, I suppose I'd be frightened, too, if a child of mine saw stone dragons flying about." He laughed good-heartedly. "It is rare that a girl of your age walks into this office with something so interesting to say, and I've heard *many* things. Being one who usually gets the really crazy ones, I never expected to have a patient like you. Strange though. The older ones never keep seeing. You may see for the rest of your life, I'd guess..." His words trailed off into random patterns of mumbling and incomplete sentences.

"Huh?" Elizabeth sat with her brows arched, and gawked at him stupidly.

The man looked at her apologetically. "Do excuse me. I tend to ramble off whenever I'm deep in thought. What I mean to say is that you are not crazy, and that the things you see are *very* real."

Her mouth hung open. As someone who was very strange, she had always told herself that because she was strange, she was expected to expect the unexpected. But she never predicted this. "Are you... *sure?* I mean, that's why I'm here isn't it? Because I'm crazy? Aren't you supposed to do some tests or brain scans or *something?*"

Yamazaki threw his head back in a loud laugh. For several minutes, he boomed with laughter, and needed time to catch his breath. The girl, perplexed, could only gape at him and think silently to herself, *This guy's weird.* When the man finally calmed himself, he continued. "No, no. I knew from the very moment you walked in that you weren't crazy. Years of experience allowed me to do that." He boasted proudly, his large smile reduced to a gentle crescent moon. "You're very different, that's to be certain, but *crazy?* No. The things you see are the result of restarting and continuing broken time. I suppose that's a bit confusing. It is very hard to explain clearly." He thought intently, rubbing his chin with his thumb and forefinger, piecing together the right words, then proceeded. "With the pictures you see in this room, those images were captured, and then separated from time. That piece of time is, in a way, torn from what *was* reality, and in today's mainstream of time, that piece is its own separate string of time. What you are seeing is the continuation of that time in relation to time as it is now. What you're doing when you see things, such as a picture or a painting, is simply seeing the prolongation of those things

as if it was a picture show at the movie theater. But when you, for example, touch the screen, it's no longer a movie, but the real thing, as if the animal or person or plant was really there, right in front of you, and the amazing thing is, it *really is there*." The stone woman's bells jingled again. "I know, it's very strange. I'm sorry I can't put it into words that are easier to understand."

She listened attentively, trying to grasp what the man was saying, but managed to understand little. "It makes... a *little* sense," she responded slowly, "but... why can't anyone but *me* see it? If I'm the only one, doesn't that make me crazy?"

"Perhaps an analogy will help. Have you ever read Plato's *The Allegory of the Cave*?"

She nodded. She loved to read, and found that more often than not, books were more real and reliable than people.

"I'm impressed. That's difficult reading for such a young girl. It's a very intriguing story, isn't it? Anyways, imagine that you are this man, standing with all of these people in the cave, staring at the cave wall, and all you see are the shadows. The shadows on this wall are all that these people know, and to them, that is all that exists in the world. You, however, know that world, and the world beyond the cave. You have, what I like to call, the power to really *see*. You could try to explain it to these people who have never seen this other world, but unless they've experienced it, they will never understand it, or even believe that it exists, and will say that you're crazy. That is the way it is, I'm afraid." He gave her a sympathetic smile.

"Can I ask you something, Dr. Yamazaki?" She cast her dark eyes into his.

"Of course. That is what a psychiatrist is for, Elizabeth."

"Eli is fine."

"Of course, Eli."

"How did you figure I wasn't crazy?"

He grinned. "Creatures thrown into the newer time stream rarely show interest to those that take no notice of them, but those goldfish seem to have taken a keen liking to you."

The girl left soon after, a rare glow upon her lips, and scheduled many more appointments with Dr. Suishiro Yamazaki.

After she had thanked him and ran off in a lighter mood, Suishiro walked slowly to the woman in the corner and tapped her narrow shoulder. She stepped gracefully off her pedestal, her bells ringing sweetly in her hair, and her kimono flooding around her sandled feet. "That girl is strange, is she not, Kimiko-dono?" She gazed at him as a left-behind goldfish swam between them. "But not as strange as some, eh?" He brought his withered hand up to greet the diminutive golden figure. ○

Contributors

Alexander Balogh has planted trees in Oregon, delivered pizza in New Jersey, sold timeshare in California, and pawned a guitar in Oklahoma. He now teaches at Lindenwood University in St. Charles, Missouri. •

María Balogh, a native of Barranquilla, holds dual citizenship in Colombia and the United States, and publishes in both English and Spanish on intercultural issues. She teaches at University of Missouri, St. Louis. • **Nancy L. Baumann** is married with two adult children and has enjoyed writing since her youth. Her career has been in high technology, and when her children were young she wrote a series of children's Bible studies published by Winepress Publishers. She is currently pursuing an MFA in writing at Lindenwood University. • **Dwight**

Bitikofer most enjoys reading his poems aloud to live audiences. He has been writing poetry off and on since his youth. He is a native of central Kansas, but has published community newspapers in suburban St. Louis for more than 30 years. • **Sean Brendan-Brown** currently resides in Olympia, Washington. • **Keith Byler** is a native St. Louisan now living in the boondocks of Southern Illinois somewhere north of Edwardsville. He spent 10 years as an ER physician and is now in private practice. Byler has been widely published and currently serves as the St. Louis Poetry Center board president. • **Michael Castro** is author of the books *Interpreting the Indian: Twentieth Century Poets and the Native American* and *Human Rites*. His recent work includes two CDs of poetry with musical accompaniment, entitled *Endless Root* (with Joe Catalano) and *Kokopilau* (with JD Parran). A letterpress book, *The Guide*, a long poem about Maimonides, is scheduled to be published by Shulamis Press this year. He teaches at Lindenwood University. •

Michael Fetters has been writing most of his life, and has been influenced by an eclectic collection of writers, from J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis to the poetry of James Wright and Robert Frost. He is currently writing an epic fantasy novel in the tradition of Tolkien. He teaches at Lindenwood University. • **John Fitzpatrick** says that he tries to talk to trees and plants and listen carefully to what they have to tell him, and that that approach served him well as he was meandering an Ancram graveyard conversing with tombstones — the result, his “At Old Graveyard Outside Ancram.” He has published widely in nationally distributed journals. • **Gaye Gambell-Peterson** has published extensively and reads frequently at regional St. Louis venues. She has designed covers for literary publications, including Cherry Pie Press, and often companions poems with collages — savoring the play between word & image. •

Karen Greenbaum-Maya is a clinical psychologist in private practice

in Claremont, California. • **Gabor G. Gyukics** holds dual citizenship in the United States and Hungary. He and Michael Castro recently collaborated on *A Transparent Lion*, a collection of translations of the Hungarian poet Atilla József. Gyukics recently finished a nationwide tour featuring these translations. He has published extensively in both English and Hungarian. • **Linda Harris** is a career civil servant who worked as a reporter for the now defunct *El Paso Herald Post*. She holds an MA in management from Webster University and is pursuing an MFA in writing at Lindenwood University. • **George Hickenlooper** is a published writer (most frequently of plays, his favorite form). He teaches English and creative writing at Lindenwood University and occasionally Russian on an independent study basis. • **Maurice L. Hirsch, Jr.** currently resides in Chesterfield, Missouri. • **Spencer Hurst** has poetry and stories appearing in *Natural Bridge*, *River King Poetry Supplement*, *Blue Moon*, *Gigantic*, *Salamander Magazine*, and *Words and Dreams-Part 12*. His awards include several poetry prizes sponsored by the St. Louis Poetry Center, an organization he has been a member of since 1997. He teaches at Lindenwood University. • **Eve Jones** is director of the MFA writing program at Lindenwood University. • **Daron Kappauff** is a manager for Walgreens and an MFA in writing candidate at Lindenwood University. He is a thinker, a dreamer, a writer, a realist and a poet. He spends his time living in the supernatural, and fantasizing about the mundane, while believing in a world gone too soon, but has yet come to pass. • **Laura LeHew** grew up in St. Louis and currently lives in Eugene, Oregon. She has published in *Alehouse Press*, *Arabesques Review*, *Ellipsis*, *Pank* and *PMS*, among others, and publication here edges her “further down that insidious unswept path of poetry.” • **Gerry Mandel** is a freelance writer of short stories, plays, humorous commentary, and an unpublished novel. He was a writer/producer/creative director for many years with national ad agencies, and has published extensively. Mandel lives in Kirkwood, Missouri with his wife and two golden retrievers. • **Deborah Mashibini** has worked in the non-profit field for more than 20 years. She has published extensively and is currently with That Uppity Theatre Company’s DisAbility Project. • **Jeff May** has won several short fiction awards, including one from *Writer’s Digest*, and has published many short stories, poems, and articles. His work has appeared in the US, UK, and Canada. One of his novels, *Where the River Splits*, is scheduled for publication Summer 2008. May has rafted the Mississippi, searched for artifacts in Mexico, and climbed mountains from Alaska to Colombia. He currently teaches writing and fly-fishing in and around St. Louis. • **Megan McMichael**, a St. Louis native, loves to play sports, cheer on “her” Cardinals, keep up on politics, read, and stay in shape. She is an MFA candidate in writing at

Lindenwood University. • **Beth Mead** recently received honorable mention in the *River Styx* micro-fiction contest. She teaches at Lindenwood University. • **Hannah Mitts** is an undergraduate at Lindenwood University. • **Liz Rice-Sosne** resides in St. Louis and has done healthcare work in the AIDS community for some 25 years. She also assists veterans with post-traumatic stress and other disorders, using writing as a rehabilitative tool. • **Susan K. Salzer** is a graduate of the University of Missouri School of Journalism, and erstwhile newspaper reporter. “Cornflower Blue” won the Ozark Creative Writers’ Showcase Award in 2006. It also won first place in Art Affair, a short story contest sponsored by an Oklahoma writers group. It is based on a true story. • **Howard Schwartz** is the author of numerous books across the genres. One of his recent works, *Tree of Souls: The Mythology of Judaism*, won the National Jewish Book Award, among other honors. He teaches at University of Missouri, St. Louis. • **Christopher Scribner**, after 12 years as a psychotherapist, left clinical practice to devote his time and energy to writing, teaching, and parenting. He is widely published and is co-author (with Chris Frey) of the book *Father Time: Stories on the Heart and Soul of Fathering*. He teaches psychology at Lindenwood University. • **Terry St. Clair** is a retired Missouri State Trooper, who teaches criminal justice at Lindenwood University. • **Michael Stein**’s broad teaching and research interests include deviance and popular culture, with a particular focus on perceptions of space and place, especially the domains of public and private. He teaches sociology at Lindenwood University. • **Elaine C. Tillinger** has exhibited her photography in professional exhibitions and galleries in the St. Louis and St. Charles area. She teaches American studies and art history at Lindenwood University. • **Martha Vertreace-Doody**, a National Endowment for the Arts Fellow, is distinguished professor of English and poet-in-residence at Kennedy-King College, Chicago. Her latest book, *Glacier Fire*, is winner of the Word Press Poetry Prize, 2004. A recent Pushcart nominee, she has published extensively. • **Richard H. Vie** is an undergraduate at Lindenwood University. • **Kailey Weiss** hopes you enjoy reading her story as much as she enjoyed writing it. • **Sarah Wienke** covers Franklin County government for *The Washington Missourian* newspaper by day, and writes poetry by night. She is a candidate for an MFA in writing from Lindenwood University. • **Natalie Worrell**’s work has appeared in national publications, such as *Home Companion Magazine*. She is the recipient of numerous awards, including the *Dr. Martin Luther King Poetry Award* two consecutive years. Her poetry deals with contemporary and often sensitive issues. ○



Alexander Balogh
María Balogh
Nancy L. Baumann
Dwight Bitikofer
Sean Brendan-Brown
Keith Byler
Michael Castro
Michael Fetters
John Fitzpatrick
Gaye Gambell-Peterson
Karen Greenbaum-Maya
Gabor G. Gyukics
Linda Harris
George Hickenlooper
Maurice L. Hirsch, Jr.
Spencer Hurst
Eve Jones
Daron Kappauff

Laura LeHew
Gerry Mandel
Deborah Mashibini
Jeff May
Megan McMichael
Beth Mead
Hannah Mitts
Liz Rice-Sosne
Susan K. Salzer
Howard Schwartz
Christopher Scribner
Terry St. Clair
Michael Stein
Martha Vertreace-Dood
Richard H. Vie
Sarah Wienke
Kailey Weiss
Natalie Worrell

Cover Photographs taken by Elaine C. Tillingier