



*The  
Mystic  
Blue  
Review*

## MASTHEAD

### **ALEXA FINDLAY** (Founder, Editor-in-Chief):

Alexa is an Undergraduate Creative Writing Major. She has an Associate of Arts Degree in English from El Camino College. She spends most of her time writing fiction and poetry. She aspires to receive her Master's Degree in Creative Writing with a Specialization in Poetry. She hopes to one day become a Professor, and write books in the process. Her work has appeared in El Camino College's Literary Arts Journal: *Myriad*, *See Beyond Magazine*, *Pomona Valley Review*, and *Better than Starbucks Magazine*.

### POETRY READER:

**Alexa Findlay** is an Undergraduate Creative Writing Major. She has an Associate of Arts Degree in English from El Camino College. She spends most of her time writing fiction and poetry. She aspires to receive her Master's Degree in Creative Writing with a Specialization in Poetry. She hopes to one day become a Professor, and write books in the process. Her work has appeared in El Camino College's Literary Arts Journal: *Myriad*, *See Beyond Magazine*, *Pomona Valley Review*, and *Better than Starbucks Magazine*.

### FICTION READER:

**Cheyenne Current** is a fourth year creative writing major at UCR. She has been writing ever since she can remember. She's written everything from poetry and short stories to novels and screenplays. She's a script reader in her spare time as well as practiced literary critique. She is a fiction and nonfiction reader here at *The Mystic Blue Review*.

### NONFICTION READER:

**Cheyenne Current** is a fourth year creative writing major at UCR. She has been writing ever since she can remember. She's written everything from poetry and short stories to novels and screenplays. She's a script reader in her spare time as well as practiced literary critique. She is a fiction and nonfiction reader here at *The Mystic Blue Review*.

### ARTWORK AND PHOTOGRAPHY EDITOR:

**Margareta Syuilin** is a second year Creative Writing major at UCR. In the future she hopes to have published works and be an expert in the field of mental health. Her favorite past time is learning to play the ukulele. She loves Christmas decorations and airplane tickets.

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Cover Art by Jim Zola.

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## **DIG GLOBALLY: The Awakening of a Sociocultural Global Awareness**

By Oyinda Salako

*"There's so much happening around the world, and the only way to be more well versed is to be a global citizen, traveling from one place to another all the time."*

A traveler roams the world with excitement waiting to be pleasantly surprised and changed for the better. Through their travels, they find the journey to be the true treasure rather than the destination itself – learning from the people around them and becoming more active in the global world.

Global awareness is the ability to understand concepts that impact the world. This has included political, environmental, and economic relations; but there is so much more to this world and its implications than these subjects. Unique cultural aspects of society sew the world together in what can only be described as humanity. In these aspects are the abstract - music, art, communication, architecture, values - unspoken interactions of our world that can only be understood by travel and presence. Simply put, get up and get out with an open mind.

Be the traveler that roams, slowly awakening from each abstract characteristic you encounter.

Suzan Al-Shammari is about to finish up her first semester as a transfer student majoring in Communications. She is the Community Outreach Coordinator for the University Honors Program Student Association and serves with the value of an inclusive global perspective. And as an Iraqi native, fluent in 2 languages, she believes global awareness to include heritage and the exposition of different ideologies - "being open and willing to be exposed to all that each culture has to offer." Comm majors know best the difference between verbal and nonverbal communication and its contribution towards a societal culture across both generations and regions.

Time may be the greatest measurement you can take. Its indefinite moments hold events in esteem. Between your time and your mother's lies a gap; a portion of space that was once represented by big hair, lava lamps, juke boxes, Beatlemania, etc. becoming the definition of a decade. The culture of that society lives on if not in the present then in remembrance. Like the current times of today, new trends and passions constitute sociocultural facets. And within these abstract details are the make-up of a global awareness that creates a well-versed citizen traveling from one place to another through time.

In the year of 2017, I will be traveling – the most I've ever traveled – to new places and familiar ones. But my experiences are going to be so much more different than the ones I've had in the past because I'm traveling as a global citizen, with an open mind - digging globally with the hope of becoming more well versed by going from one place and abstract aspect to the next.

## **this is my story now**

i am reclaiming my story  
you don't get to end me  
this time little red riding hood  
saves herself and kills the wolf  
with her own fair hands  
because she warned him she had  
a temper and he refused to  
listen,  
and so when she finally snapped  
his neck in half he was made well aware  
of all the insects and beings he thought  
lesser than him as he fell into the landscape  
of dust and became a part of it;  
i have no time to be a victim or martyr  
survived him once and i'll survive him again  
will wear his teeth in my necklace  
because i am full of love, light, and dreams  
it is my job to shatter hate, darkness, and nightmares  
that sew men like him together because they  
cannot control their desires carnal or otherwise—  
he thought he got the best of me,  
but that is yet to come;  
i am the phoenix always rising from the ashes of anguish  
to fashion myself into a stronger warrior than before  
now i shine so bright that even the sun is jealous  
because i refuse to let anyone rain down  
on my last spark again.

- Linda M. Crate

## **beyond the stars**

i'm not all flowers and sunshine  
sometimes i am tooth, claws,  
and angry unicorns;  
don't ever mistake my kindness for weakness  
because i will make you regret stepping on me  
i am not a welcome mat before your  
door or the spineless coward  
i am the girl who follows her heart and her dreams  
not the crowd  
i don't care what people think about me  
more than well aware they talk behind my back  
which means they're already behind me—  
i am done with people who want to use their music  
to try to shatter me and my dreams  
i have strung these pearls and shot them into the  
heavens to make a new zodiac and story  
that benefits me  
because i am worth it and i am going to accomplish  
everything i dream  
i work too hard not to  
won't let these evil dragons drag me down  
because i know good ones exist and they will carry me on  
their wings beyond the stars.

- Linda M. Crate



***Alice in Wonderland : Seigar***

## **A Ghost Floating**

My mind is filled with terrible conjectures  
even as I sit on a solemn hillside

beneath a tree  
making suggestions in nearly human speech.

Red glares harass the greenery  
as undercurrents of dismay

escape from the holes in my shoes  
and the cuff of my sleeve.

I never thought I'd see you like this  
or make a declaration about what I deserve

but the sun is a moment of iridescent decay,  
a foretaste of fallenness

in a substance of rot and groan  
and the familiar white epoch

of your body remains comely, almost lifelike,  
a ghost floating across my eye.

-Richard King Perkins II



***Back to My Plastic People : Seigar***

## **Blood Memory**

The old woman  
nods back and forth  
in her rocking chair  
on the nursing home verandah.

Her body stays put  
but her mind  
is once more in the forest after dark.  
making her way  
up a moon-shadow trail  
to the old house on the hill.

Nothing bothers her  
on such excursions.  
Not the wind, the cold,  
nor the pale white face  
pressed against the second-floor window.

For that mind  
is young and virginal,  
a seventeen-year-old beauty  
drawn by the mesmeric eyes  
of the lord of that haunting manor.

Ugly he may be,  
with his creaking thin body,  
hollow eyes  
and limp lips.

But she never had such a lover.  
"Time for bed," says the nurse.  
But it hasn't been time for bed  
in years.

-John Grey

## **The Magician's Tour**

Sunshine was just  
the horse he rode in on.  
It was night  
when his blood squealed with delight  
and thoughts mapped out their routes,  
their rituals.

It didn't matter to him  
that his face was pale as whiteboard.  
That just made the perfect canvas  
for dark paint  
and even darker expressions.

By day, he shunned people.  
But, as the light unraveled,  
with a wave of wand,  
a muttered spell,  
he grasped center stage  
like a carousel's brass ring,  
and held it  
for the gathering awe.

He could make people disappear,  
saw a woman in half,  
even levitate.

It was left to law to look for the missing,  
to clean up the bloody stage.  
All witnesses could babble was,  
"He clean floated way."

Sunshine was just  
the horse he rode out on.  
It was night  
when folks the next town over whispered,  
"Where in hell did he come from?"

-John Grey

## **Jungle Aroma**

Do not wonder at that discordant perfume,  
the sweet floral cologne,  
the putrid stench of rotting corpses.  
This jungle is where beauty pampers itself  
in the reeking shadow of sacrifice,  
For every breath of aromatic air,  
its wake is dipped in rancid flesh.  
For all the redolent growth,  
there's a corresponding death march.  
A glistening green snake  
slithers out of the underbrush.  
It is as resplendent as it is toxic.  
Thankfully though, it's easily avoided.  
But the alluring red-lipped dark-eyed woman  
beckoning to you from  
the brown mists of the swamp...  
now she is a different story.

-John Grey



*Jim Zola*

## THE WAITING ROOM

By Ted Myers

The waiting room was cold and damp. The light was poor, but you were expected to fill out your application, hand it in, then wait. I had nothing but the clothes I was buried in. If I had been able to dress myself, I would have had my good pen. But no one thinks to put a pen in your pocket when you're dead. So the clerk gave me a cheap ballpoint that wrote in light blue ink and skipped. They sat you at an old fashioned child's desk. The kind you had in elementary school, with the writing tray attached to the chair, and all scratched up, making it almost impossible to write neatly.

I was not alone in that dreary room. I could vaguely make out, out of the corners of my eyes, other souls hunched over their little desks, writing feverishly. But they were not in clear focus. A smoky haze seemed to permeate everything.

Filling out the form was long and painstaking: Place of Birth, Date of Birth, Date of Death, every institution of learning attended, any special achievements or distinctions at school, every job, promotions, reasons for leaving...

Then there was the essay section, in which you were able to make the case for your admission to Heaven. Good and selfless acts, how you made the world a better place. I had a lot of trouble with this section. It was hard for me to remember any special things I had done that were especially good—or bad.

I wrote about the many injustices to which I had been subjected. Honors at school and at work that should have been mine, but always went to someone else. How I had offered, out of the goodness of my heart, to share the driveway that was my designated parking spot with my new neighbor, a blonde girl from New England. And how she had then conspired with my landlord to get me evicted from my parking space, and how my car was relegated to the street. But I did not lash out. I choked back my rage. I maintained my composure. She remained my neighbor, her car occupying the parking space she had stolen, for ten long years. And I was always civil. I never said a bad word. Surely, these were good deeds.

I told how I had married, had two children, a boy and a girl, in the space of less than two years. Then I fell in love. She was someone I'd met through mutual friends. We both fell madly, passionately in love. But we were both married. I had two little children and she had a very rich husband, and so it was deemed impossible.

Many years later, after my children had grown up and I had long been divorced from my wife, we reconnected. Her rich husband was dead, I had no wife, my children were no longer an obligation, and we still loved each other. She told me there had never been anyone but me. I told her she was the only love of my life. And still, she would not see me. She grieved for her husband, who had never been her lover, but a trusted friend and protector. She was now surrounded by people designated by him to protect her. She was a prisoner in her own home; a prisoner of her newly-acquired wealth. We spoke often on the phone, and she always promised we would see each other soon—next week. This went on for four years. We never saw each other again. I died thinking I would see her next week.

At the bottom of the form was an affidavit I had to sign, swearing by Almighty God that all statements made were true and accurate. I signed and handed the form in to the clerk at the

window. He stamped it and told me to take a seat and wait. In the haze, I sensed others also sitting and waiting. So I waited. And waited.

In death, time does not mean the same thing as in life. I waited for what, in the land of the living, would amount to about six months. Then, one day, the clerk called my name. Doing my best to suppress my excitement, I approached the window, and was handed a letter:

Dear (my name was filled in on a blank line),

Thank you for your application. As much as we would like to send each applicant a personal response, we get so many applications, it is impossible to answer each one individually. We regret that your qualifications are not a good fit for Heaven at this time. You are invited to re-apply during our next submission period, which starts at a time that will be filled in by the Waiting Room Clerk. In the meantime, you are free to apply to either Hell or Purgatory, whichever you feel yourself most qualified for.

Best of luck,  
The Heaven Team

When I approached the window, I saw that others had received similar letters, and so I took my place in line. When I got to the front of the line, I cleared my throat and asked the clerk: "Which is worse, Purgatory or Hell?"

"Oh, Hell, to be sure," he said.

"Then, may I have an application for Purgatory?"

The clerk smiled. "Where do you think you are?"

farmer hides in field  
after waiting two hours  
see crop circles form  
aliens let their children  
ride sphere bicycles at night

-Denny E. Marshall

prince rescues princess

in undercover of night

from the stone tower

rides all night long to safety

in hast took maid by mistake

-Denny E. Marshall

ufo's a hoax

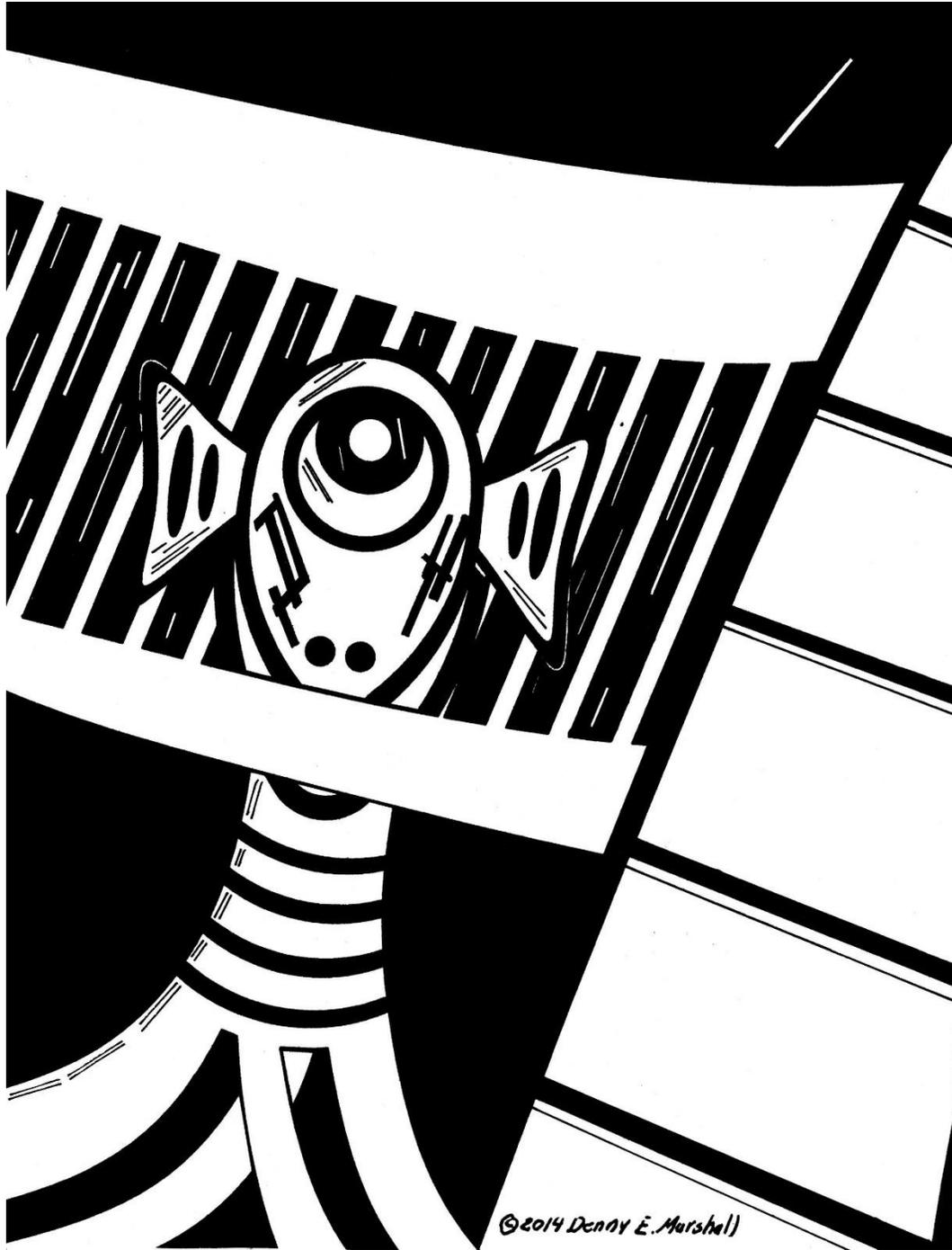
mr. johnson opinion

until saucers land

sees alien abduction

misses his children

-Denny E. Marshall



***Caught in the Universe Ladder : Denny E. Marshall***

## **The Cartomancer**

**Back**  
in  
the past  
a dark male  
figure paid a coin  
to a gypsy to read his cards;  
at a street fair they met, the cartomancer and he.

It was at the end of the street fair, when  
he stomped down the street barreling through the  
crowd and abruptly stopped before her; then  
he threw a coin on her small table, her fee.

"Let me see," she said as she laid out ten  
cards; wearing a black coat above the knee  
he stood still, only every now and then  
he tucked his fringe behind his ear to see.

"A new plan ruins everything you've built,"  
she told him. **Not** until he left, she stopped  
hitting her long, pointy nails on a card.

"Can we lie?" one asked. "I carry no guilt.  
**A** shadow man the High Priestess card dropped;  
I lied 'cause what I saw put me on guard."

-Athena Melliar



***Welsh Outtakes : Seigar***

## **Into White (again)**

He met her  
by chance  
in the  
white room  
on the  
dark side  
of the moon  
the way  
station  
where souls  
cruising through  
the outer rings  
cross paths  
on their  
cosmic journeys  
inbound  
or out

Her radiation  
flickered  
uncertain  
cautious  
slowly brightening  
like a summer  
firefly  
as he grinned  
at her  
unexpected radiance

"I'm never coming back here again," she sighed. "Too much pain." Darkening, she turned inward with a sullen pout. To him she was even more alluring now, just as her human form began to quiver and dissolve its hard edges, like gelatin sliding out of a mold.

"Pain?" he asked innocently. "They mention that in the brochure, but I don't know what it is. That's why I signed up for the tour. To experience it."

"Oh, my," she enthused, glowing brighter. "You must be a first-timer!"

"Yes," he admitted sheepishly. "I'm a novice at this human thing."

"Good luck with that!" she said with a rueful smile. "You'll know pain when you feel it." She was more comfortable now; his naivety was charming—attractive, even. She could sure teach him a thing or two.

“Pain,” she began matter-of-factly, warming to her subject-matter, “is having to make choices with no good alternatives. Pain is hurting people you love—betraying them, letting them down. Pain is gaining love, then losing it. Pain is deception; pain is telling the truth. Pain is not getting enough attention, or too much. Pain is wanting what you can’t have, or having what you can’t want. Pain is having magical powers that fail when you need them the most. Pain is—

“Wow,” he interrupted. “You sure do think a lot about this pain thing.”

“Well, I was a philosopher a few times around,” she admitted with a bright pink flush of pride.

“A philosopher? What’s that?” he asked eagerly.

“And many other things,” she continued, ignoring his question. Her voice took on a deeper, mournful tone. As he stared into her green eyes, he became entranced. They seemed to expand into brilliant starbursts, and he lost all sense of himself and his location. He felt her cool hand take his own right hand and bring it up to the center of her forehead. “Touch me here,” she whispered. “These are some of my favorites.”

He touched her  
she touched him  
thought-ball  
exploding  
pulsating  
inside head  
images swirling  
dizzying array  
fractals  
kaleidoscope  
faces and names  
unknown  
or yet  
to be  
known soon  
maybe  
long ago  
forgotten  
dead  
perhaps  
not yet  
born . . .

Bette Davis . . . Diotima . . . Hypatia . . . Mata Hari . . . The Jaguar Princess. . .

Holographic images formed and crystallized in exquisite detail as the names unrolled their meanings:

Great artist  
perfectionist  
played lovers  
she sacrificed  
real love  
for herself  
by creating  
its illusion  
for others

Philosopher  
of love  
Invented  
soul mates  
but never found  
hers

Teacher  
seeker  
martyr  
dying for  
ideas  
but truth  
is cold  
companion

Spy  
keeper  
of secrets  
deceiver  
seductress  
dancing around  
truth  
dying  
for lost  
cause

Magical shaman  
wounded healer

mystic warrior  
exiled from  
lost world  
way down  
below the  
ocean  
sunk by  
hate  
fear  
she fled to  
new world  
heart broken  
to mend  
others

"But this one" taking his hand and placing it over her heart, "is my favorite life of all," she said wistfully.

He saw a small rural village in a place called Russia. Peasants were working in small fields and orchards, their homes simple cabins near the forest. A little girl with blonde hair and green eyes toddled alongside an older woman wearing a rough fitting dress with a kerchief tied on her head--her grandma --her small soft child's hand safely clasped in the old woman's rough, gnarled hand, twisted like an ancient tree root. An intense radiation emanated from them both, being directed by the one at the other, forming a solid ring of energy surrounding them. Was this "love?" he thought to himself. The two were picking roots for a tea that the old woman would brew for her granddaughter, an herbal potion to make her strong and well.

"Are you sure I couldn't convince you to take one last trip?" he pleaded. She looked deeply into his innocent, welcoming brown eyes, and felt the naivety and enthusiasm of his vibration as if it were her own. Maybe this time it would work, she thought. She would finally get what she wanted--from him.

All true  
knowing  
is remembering  
gnosis  
yet never  
forget  
time heals  
no wounds

souls are  
magnets  
north attracts south  
south pursues north  
until they are  
one  
still longing  
for two  
complements  
of congruent  
angles  
are  
congruent  
he would  
soon discover  
the true  
meaning  
of "pain"

She gently slipped her hand into his. They walked together, smiling, hand in hand, out of the white room and towards the bridge between worlds. They would fall to earth, together, and recollect nothing.

-Joseph Felser

## **Exquisite Alien**

wild as a galloping horse, solid as a mountain, powerful enough to shove a planet.

deep, rich sweetness

Beautiful as the idea of flowers. Breathless as victory and so damn good.

Laughing, lightheaded, and dressed for a fight

drawn-out fireworks in an unfamiliar starry sky, rocketing expanding shivers  
of glimmer and flash.

-Kayla Bashe



***In the Pod** : Denny E. Marshall*

## **Eidolon Sightings**

I.

The night was self-sustained in cloistered oneness:  
a quality of decadence surrounded its eerie fangs.  
It chanted an unrequited syllable like a spirit slowly  
writhed in pain. The window spawned visions, brought  
an encounter of dispersed sighs as I sprinkled droplets  
of water over my face. I have heard winds howl and play  
inside pedestrian subways whilst everybody remained  
chained in their warm lodgings. Here, in the interiors  
of our guest house, a vapory spiraling of white cracked  
its bones against bare, arched staircases that resembled  
a half interpretation of the number eight.

II.

A train of moon-rust spread like avant-garde art and stars  
burnt in their own fires. We smelt the taste of aspirin rubbed  
into pores of our skin; a succession of drunken wafts followed.  
The language of hieroglyphics settled like leftover white wax  
after a row of candles exhausted their combined furies. We let  
out a shriek; it echoed in the clothed surpluses of darkness.  
We fretted as we bore concentric shocks throb our chests.  
It was but a dry night, the darkest shade of black. The cold cut  
into our skins, in precipitations of impassioned compositions.  
Where do bodies wander, where do they sail unto after death?

III.

The vast shade of expressionism was in assonance with destiny.  
We heard something, a phantasm trying to utter her untold story,  
tales of anguish through vehement drilling of window bars:  
and though the unfamiliar language we could not comprehend,  
the grief and woe of an object so tender was not interstellar.  
We lay upon the altar like sacrificial goats that felt blood upon  
cotton-lace pillows. The unsparing winter bent the hourglass  
of time upside-down until dawn painstakingly saw us take exit,  
we shivered as we diverged into an unknown, empty alley.

**-Sneha Subramanian Kanta**

## TRENT

By Steve Loring

Trent walked the landing and watched the water ripple softly along with his stride. The gifts surged through his body.

He could walk on this water if he wanted.

He could see through any wall, were anything on the other side.

He could soar to the sun and back unharmed. The universe spoke to him.

He was Chosen.

A few days earlier, Trent tripped out of his shower and felt something sharp cut into his foot. Stumbling to the toilet seat, he pulled what looked like a blackthorn from his heel, though it felt more like bone to his touch. That's when he saw it.

Across the way, the bathroom window had been shattered open. A bloodied, black sparrow laid beneath it. Its body was torn open and beak cut in half.

A slow fog slid through the broken glass and held him still. His brain blurred. The walls in his apartment turned liquid. Invisible fingers circled his skull, splaying into claws. They tore at his eyes.

Time crawled.

A small hole opened in the floor below. It widened. Trent leaned down.

Inside, he saw the sprawl of a galaxy destroying itself. Light ate light. Crawling chaos ruled. A cosmos made of dust cared for no one. No being was safe.

He pulled away, and hit his head on the countertop. He felt the blood spill from his temple.

Darkness came. Trent went away.

Hours later, he woke in his bed feeling reborn. He rose and checked his face in the bedroom mirror. Not a scratch on him. No sign of blood.

"Here I am!" Trent screamed repeatedly to no one. "Here I fucking AM!"

When the police arrived a few hours later, he explained what he saw.

They checked his eyes and asked if he'd been drinking. He said, no, he didn't drink. Or drug.

He was in training now. They ran his name then they discussed some things amongst themselves and left.

Trent wasn't worried. They never would have been able to take him into custody.

He was Chosen.

However, he was just now discovering this new self. So, he wrote things down.

***Powers:***

***Levitation***

***Sight through physical objects***

***Strength beyond human understanding***

***Flight***

He tested himself, and he was pleased.

First, he hovered five feet off the ground in his backyard, keeping it quiet, not sure what the world would make of his gifts.

He flew over his neighborhood a few nights later, breathing in the smoke from the chimneys, enjoying the winter air. It was so tranquil below, Trent fell asleep for a few seconds and landed hard, tumbling rough in the snow below. He felt the bones of his left pinky finger; they were misaligned and screaming. Trent gently pulled them back into place. Such were his powers.

But he had fallen.

He would do better next time, he promised himself.

A few weeks later, he got in a bar fight protecting a woman from some rough guy she insulted. He would have won had his opponent not cheated by hitting him after he called time out.

But, Trent didn't waiver. He was One of the Chosen, One with the Immortal.

He was a God above lower-case-gods.

The following week, he walked into his bank to deposit his paycheck.

*Bitch! Get the fuck down... I fucking told you. I don't wanna kill nobody. There are too many of us here.*

A hulking bald man held a gun on a female teller. He wore no mask. His eyes bristled, his breath ragged with drug and drink. A random customer lay bleeding on the carpet next to him.

Trent approached the gunman.

"Hey, Friend. This doesn't have to be."

The gunman winced.

"What?"

"I am immortal."

*Fire.* And a sudden jolt ripped through Trent's torso. His mind reeled. *Fire.* His insides out, the blood sprayed before him. *Fire.* He dropped like broken bag of groceries steeped in red.

Trent's breathing slowed.

Time dragged in jagged clicks.

His vision bleared before an existing galaxy. Suns glistened on fire. Planets moved through orbits according to their properties. Everything was as it should be.

Trent couldn't fathom it. How could the world possibly exist without him? He was here, after all, to save it from itself. Why did the planets deny him now?

Finally, he understood.

He was too powerful, too good. He was Chosen for another life.

//////////

***Trent trembles. He understands what his body doesn't.  
His chest heaves and his fingers fall cold.  
Everything fades from his face. The ceiling blurs.***

***His superpowers speak to him in tongues.***

***He tries to decipher:  
"Andras Baal Caim  
Furcas Gadreel  
Exitium"***

A pale fog overtakes him. He grasps for something he doesn't reach. He reaches again, straining his arms to the point of breaking.

And it goes for what feels like forever, until it stops.



*Jim Zola*

## THE SECRETS WE KEEP

By Hannah Shaw

Once, an angel and a demon met on an abandoned highway overpass.

The angel, untainted, watched the cars below blow by. She could feel a toddler, tucked into her carseats, singing along to a song on the radio. The song was about sex, but that wasn't what mattered. The angel cherished her little voice and the soft concealed smile of the little girl's mother driving the car. Warmth like hot coffee spread through her.

The angel was a shy and skittish creature. Let's call her Kate. Her real name was too beautiful to be put into language. It was like a bird's song and a baby's laugh, but Kate will do.

The demon looked on and shuddered. The angel warm with joy only reminded him of how cold he was. She was distracted by the noise of the cars and hadn't heard him approach. He had been cold for so long, he could no longer remember having felt anything else. He yearned to reach out and touch her. He was standing just close enough he might have been able to.

He appeared first as a shadow on the cracked pavement and materialized into substance with each step nearer. He stopped only a yard away. Just out of arms reach of her gold hair. This was what temptation felt like. The uncertainty of what would happen next, the possibilities of what he could do - the moment was so palpable, it was terrifying.

But then, she turned her head.

The angel's eyes were a pleasant shade of hazel, warmer still than her hair, and reminiscent of a midsummer's day. The heat of her made him waiver, though the angel didn't seem to notice. The demon wanted to lash out or flee but in that moment, so struck by her, he couldn't move.

"Hi," she began. "Who are you?" She said it without skepticism or rudeness, but an eager, genuine interest.

Because she had to ask, the demon knew he was safe. She didn't recognize him or what he was. If she did, she could shut her eyes, wish him gone, and he would no longer exist.

Relief washed over him, restoring him with an icy coolness he was familiar with. The demon could begin to plot. He said, "Ralph." It was a fake name, but good as any.

He didn't ask her for her name. To hear it would have made him sick. The demon hoped she would believe him. He wouldn't have to give her his real name. He couldn't do that. To know a demon's name is to have power over him and he wasn't sure what would be worse - if she wished him gone or made him bend to her will.

But Kate only smiled. "That's a wonderful name." He was sure she would have said that about any name, but she seemed honest and maybe all names sounded wonderful to her.

She didn't find it curious when the demon didn't ask for her name, but neither of them could have said it anyway. "Would you like to come watch the cars with me?" she asked.

"Nothing would please me more," he said. The demon would have to tread carefully, but standing beside the angel, what harm would it bring to bask in her glow just a little longer.



***Bald Woman : Seigar***

## **The Prologue to Snow-White**

The snow was building up, layering like birthday cake. A rouge ladybird settled on the windowsill and the women exercised maternal instinct as she hoped that it would not die in the cold. A rehearsal in the years to come, preparation for imminent childbirth.

A soon-to-be mother, chin rested on two hands at five in the morning, indistinguishable from the rest of the hours in this newborn white world. Please, can I have a daughter,  
    as white as snow,  
    as black as ebony,  
    and as red as holy berries.

When she became a mother, and her child was handed to her, she counted her wishes true.

    A girl, the midwife said.

    A little screaming mouth, like a bunch of holy berries.

    Skin so dark and soft and new, like fresh ebony wood.

    Its hair, like a cloud, in texture and colour, white as snow.

She could have honoured that baby and the magic that brought it about so perfectly in many ways, could have called it Ebony or Holly, but chose Snow-White, in homage to that hair she had the pleasure of brushing everyday until she could braid it, into painstaking arrangements of rows like a set of albino snakes.

- A. Constantinou

## **At the Witch's House**

We arrived at five past midnight, with a bottle of holy water wine and dressed to the nines, tens, elevens in velvet, leather and glamour charms. Greeted by the Witch with cocktails made with bees' sting and scorpions' venom. The table was already set, decorated with millennial pink oleanders; jellyfish and Man o' War preserved in strawberry jelly. We took off our coats, and walked carefully towards a crystal ball - cobras and black mambas were sleeping on the floor, it's always fun to face an obstacle course before tea.

It was poison dart frog legs for starters. Newts and bats and lizard's legs - a real Shakespearian supper. Pufferfish soup expertly prepared for maximum lightheadedness. For dessert: belladonna cherry pie. Divine. After dinner treats are rosary peas strung into prayer beads, cracking between our teeth like kids eating candy sweets. A dinner party at the Witch's house is bound to be fun, as our faces turn numb and our heads start to ache before it's reached half past one. We laugh about how, when we return home, we will sleep like we're dead, and it's true, it's true, we will.

- A. Constantinou



***The Maltese Seigars : Seigar***

## **BLUEBEARD**

By A. Constantinou

Neelam Bluebeard's name was starkly appropriate. Local myth held that the deep blue hue of her long, thick hair was due to her mother letting her play alone on their estate in the middle of winter aged three, where she fell into the lake and caught hypothermia. Apparently, that was what turned her hair blue, the cold. Her internal organs must have been affected by the cold too, as Neelam Bluebeard grew up into a frightening, and whilst striking, admittedly ugly noblewoman, or perhaps genetics meant she was bound to turn out that way.

Her parents had died by the time she was twenty, and she had inherited the estate and all the family riches, of which there was plenty. Yet she was quite alone it seemed, and the locals who she shunned initially looked on at the lonely, strange only child with pity. The Bluebeards were famously an unloving sort. However, once Neelam Bluebeard took control of the familial castle and established herself as a lone noblewoman, she dispelled the myth that she was quite so alone. Aged twenty-one she married a beautiful foreign girl. The local villagers of the land that descended from the Bluebeard stronghold were pleasantly surprised. Bluebeard seemed so happy, and joyous, holding a festival in the village to welcome her wife as her fellow lady of the castle. Banquets and balls in the months prior to and following their marriage brought in business to nearby towns and villages, and the exciting spectacle of avant-garde figures and famous faces that money could lure and purchase. Despite the enthusiasm, this change of affairs did not last long, and soon a pattern began to form. Bluebeard took great effort in creating a fuss around her wife, they would marry soon after meeting, honeymoon, but only several months later, the wife would disappear, to be replaced subsequently by another, as if the former had never existed.

Quickly, villagers accumulated a collective knowledge of eight brides of Neelam Bluebeard, each beautiful to counter her ugliness, and seemingly smart enough to create an opportunity to marry a rich heiress, yet not so smart as to avoid a quick and rapid demise. Folklore filled the gap in knowledge. Mystery turned, and stories of Bluebeard as a witch, as a god and as a woman difficult to live with developed. When Bluebeard entered villages, fathers and mothers hid their daughters, and some, even their sons, and themselves, just in case.

Though, she was never, seemingly, attracted to women who had heard the gossip and rumour which surrounded her like her blue hair, like a mist, or a fog.

Bluebird's ninth fiancée was called Chana. She was as beautiful as all the rest - many commented on her dark mane, large eyes and tall stature which could have almost challenged Bluebeard in a fight, but not quite. As always, she was clever enough to hold onto Bluebeard's pelagic locks and be dragged up the social hierarchy by her wealth and status. Bluebeard had seduced succinctly and with ease (she had done it many times before, considered herself somewhat of an expert). Chana had never been to the theatre or ballet, museums, and patisseries so many times as in the four months after she had caught Bluebeard's eyes. You could not criticise a poor, uneducated girl who, when offered the hand of a wealthy, strange lady who professes her love, says yes immediately. Their marriage was a loud affair (as usual, though Chana did not know this), and Chana took particular pleasure in selecting dainty and delicate objects to play their role in the start of her new life with Bluebeard. After the wedding, they honeymooned by the sea for seven days that, Chana retrospectively labelled as Eden before the Fall. Whenever she smells the sea, its salt, now, she cannot help but think about her Neelam's olive skin made two shades darker by unfiltered sunlight, and her hair, indistinguishable from the ocean.

Only a few days after they returned to the castle, to start what Chana believed would be their new domestic paradise, Bluebeard left, apparently urgently, for business abroad. Chana did not even know there was business abroad. All she knew was one morning she awoke to Bluebeard reading a letter then leaning over her body, hair like a lapis lazuli rope hanging over her shoulder, and kissing her, and then everything changing. This wake up call, this display of affection was instantly offset by the tone in Bluebeard's voice which seemed foreign, informing Chana of her need to leave, and commanding, dangling a set of keys above her wife's breasts: you can open any door in the house, except the underground chamber, opened with this key (Neelam pointed to a small and insignificant copper key). Do you understand? Chana nodded, scared of this new domineering character her wife suddenly possessed, who had previously only ever sought her comfort and love, and Bluebeard dropped the set of keys onto her chest, which hurt Chana a little, adding to the confusion she had woken to. Soon enough, after

Bluebeard had left, Chana recovered, believing the episode to simply be a product of urgency, new domesticity, or perhaps, just choosing to dispel it from her mind altogether.

Bluebeard was gone for such a long time, and Chana was almost entirely on her own. To remedy her own burgeoning loneliness, she invited her sister, and some friends for a small party at the Castle. It gave Chana a deep, stomach warming pleasure to organise entertainment, and she threw herself into preparations to show off her wealth, taking particular interest in ensuring there were bluebells and azure hyacinths throughout the castle, to remind her dear friends of the rich and powerful figure she now shared a life with (or, at least, legally, shared a life with). With her friends they discussed every topic there was, though somehow, circles were created, always returning to the most intriguing topic of Chana's mysterious wife, though, with none of them being locals, they were not aware of the utter and true legendary nature of Bluebeard, barely scrapping the surface of the rumour which imbued her. Excitedly, Chana's young friends observed the keys she had been left in possession with, as a symbol of her newfound status, though tension arose when they asked and laughed about the small copper key which seemed so insubstantial compared to its medieval and elaborate counterparts. Chana explained though to no effect, as her friends would dog her about the underground chamber until they went to bed. At the time Chana believed she was a faithful wife and trusted her partner enough that she could not even begin to consider entertaining the possibility of betraying her.

Yet, when her sister and friends were deep in wine and food induced sleep, her resolve flickered and curiosity won over her will. Chana, with such carefulness she could have been floating an inch off the carpet, descended the castle to break her wife's sole command. She almost turned around when she had selected the copper key placed it in the keyhole, but still she persevered. When she opened the door, she instantly regretted it. The room contained exactly eight brutally murdered corpses. Each decapitated, with the heads placed tauntingly above the severed necks in elaborate open coffins. Maybe it was due to the heavy cover of the night, but Chana did not run away screaming as she ought to have done, but examined the bodies in painful silence. All the women were beautiful, like Chana knew she was, and wore expensive clothing in what Chana knew were Bluebeard's favourite fabrics and colours. Chana

discovered a key similarity between the women, that being the ring on their fingers which showed they were wives, which was an exact replica (or was her's the replica) of the one on Chana's own finger. She wanted to be sick. She had married a psychopath of some kind, some sort of grotesque and strange murderer, and not only this, but she loved her, and this love meant she could not comprehend that these dead bodies had any connection to her wife.

Chana studied the bodies for hours, as if they held the answer for her salvation from this new hell she had discovered she had been living in unaware. In the early hours of the morning, she realised she ought to at least attempt some sleep, so she could better analyse her predicament. She picked up the keys which had fallen in, horrifyingly though Chana was somewhat numb to the horror now, in a pool of gelatinous blood. The keys were covered, so, leaving the room, Chana went to the kitchen to clean them. After some time, all but one of the keys was clean. The little copper key had become stubbornly red, as if painted. She scrubbed at it but its hue would not change. Even her tears, which by now fell heavily, would not remove the curse. Chana could not decide, in the hysteria of the night, what was worst, her wife being a serial killer, or her wife discovering she had betrayed her (though, looking back, the two dilemmas were one in the same; Chana was subconsciously aware, that one easily led to the other)

In the middle of her despairing, Chana heard movement, and rushed out of the kitchen. A knot grew in her throat and she wiped her cheeks, knowing that inevitably it would be her wife. Her wife, cerulean hair pushed up messily on top of her head; weighed down in heavy furs in account of the fast falling snow; somehow not surprised by Chana's presence, was putting down her luggage in front of the entrance to the castle.

Neelam Bluebeard noted on the mess of the castle instantly. Chana promptly and formally responded that her sister and some friends had visited, and had only left in the night, so the servants had yet to have the opportunity to tidy up. She didn't know why she had lied, somehow, she was aware of the fact that she probably wouldn't see her sister or friends, asleep in their chambers, again. Bluebeard requested for her keys back, falsely using the cadence of a question, as it was quite clearly a demand. Chana handed them over without a word, and

almost simultaneously, Bluebeard's face darkened. She asked, with a voice that could hit and punch, what had happened to the little cooper key, which was all bloodied.

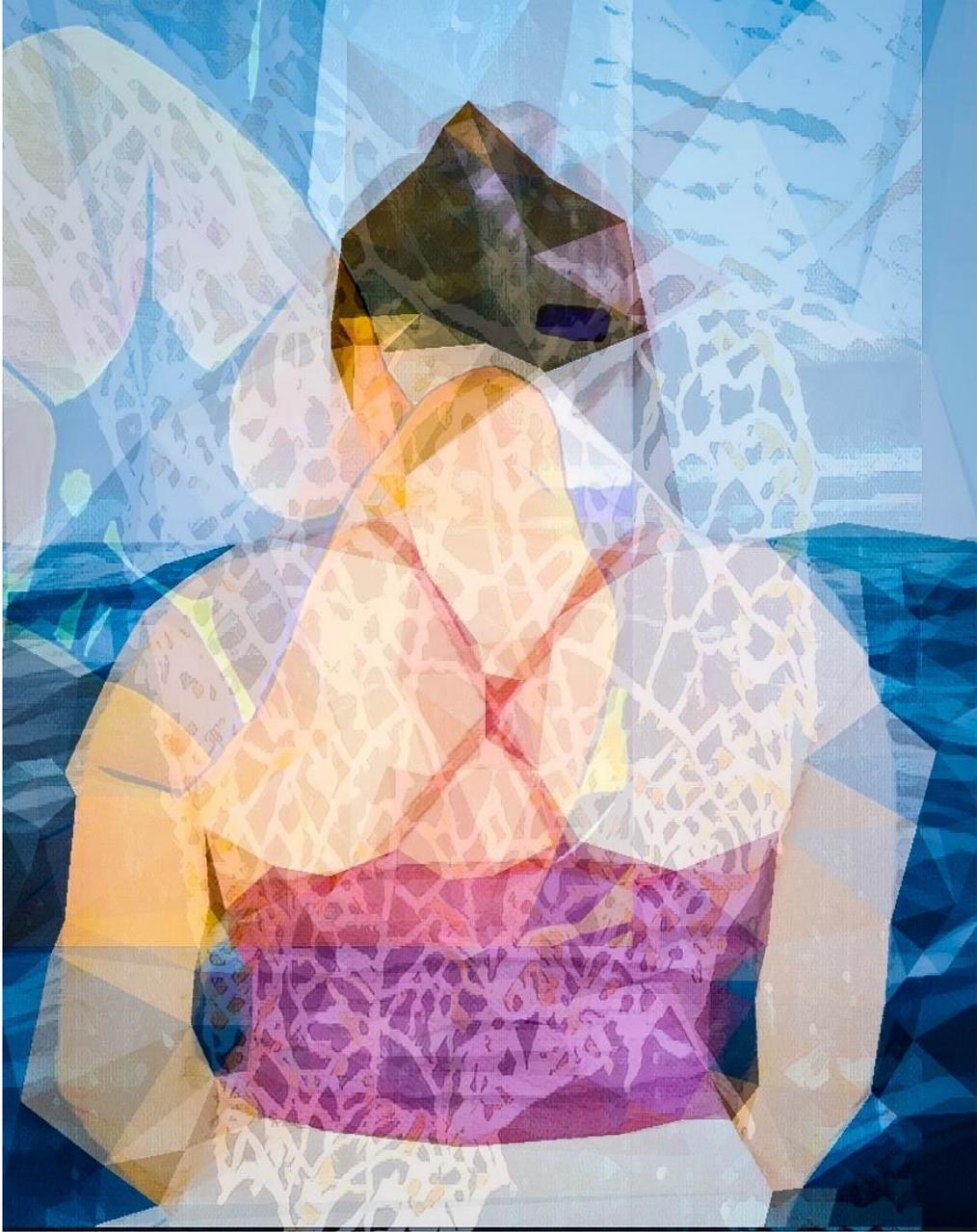
Chana whispered her apology, though she knew it didn't matter, largely due to the violent rage Bluebeard was possessed by. Bluebeard pushed Chana to the floor, kicked her without restraint, she hurt her. Chana heard a crack in her ribs and the physical pain she felt made her oblivious to Bluebeard's verbal insults. Bluebeard dragged her into the medieval courtyard of the

Bluebeard Castle, where still there was a block where her ancestors would have traitors executed.

Chana had never questioned the presence of the block and did not know it was for this purpose until Bluebeard screamed the facts at her. Her head was pressed roughly onto the block, disrupting the layer of snow which had formed on it, and somehow, Bluebeard produced an axe with cinematic speed, as if she was expecting this (and evidence does suggest she was).

In both Bluebeard and Chana's eyes, this was the end of their marriage. But it did not pan out as either of them had expected. As Chana winced in preparation for the pain, for oxygen to be pushed out of her throat for the final time, she heard instead, her lover, her demon, Bluebeard, wince instead (though at this point, she believed Bluebeard could not possibly be human, and so no oxygen would have left her throat, perhaps fire, or poison). Chana's sister and her friends had been awoken by the violent sounds that reverberated around the old castle, and rushed down to see Chana on the brink of a bloody death. Instead, they ensured it was Bluebeard who had this fate, killed by a medieval sword from one of the castle's many ancient adornments, preserved by a mistress obsessed by suffering.

Chana rubbed at her almost severed throat, looked at the mass of blue hair that hid the dead face of her wife, the growing red snow surrounding her body, and sobbed. Her strange, grotesque and deceptive wife was dead. Bluebeard and her history of tragedy was gone. And Chana, somehow, remained.



*Jim Zola*

## **The Path Under**

*Written three feet from Monet's "The Path Under the Rose Arches"*

Under the rose arches  
light pries with a twinkling crowbar  
through barbed stems  
to no avail.

The darkness walks  
feet in front of us,  
long in the distance,  
with the light holding  
our hand as we amble on.

Things are gaining illumination  
as our left foot crinkles  
the next leaf another rose  
shows its fiery visage.

The plants are confused  
by company, they tell us so  
as they swirl in awkward  
indecision.

We walk on, from canvas  
to canvas and the dark  
tunnel's end walks away  
in synchronization

Until the last  
purple gold green red canvas,  
when a wall before us  
ignites in a tranquil ferocity,  
and we come to know  
the purpose of the path  
is to illuminate the beauty  
of the darkness before us.

-Andrew W. French

## **Can't Find You**

frantically, not at first but after  
a while, I'm searching everywhere throughout  
the large, sprawling, rambling house  
we're in for a celebration of something or other  
dark and shadowy, stuffy, no windows, no sunlight  
so many rooms and more corridors  
narrow and up and down  
people in masks, seriously? masks?  
and they are sprawled everywhere  
some sleeping or sitting or standing staring  
leaning against walls and closet doors  
talking silently, some in whispers  
nonchalantly, no one noticing me  
as I search for you  
going through the rooms and corridors  
looking everywhere then coming back around  
doing it all over again  
like checking the same pocket 100 times  
for a missing key  
so damn dark, strange masks  
no one talking to me acknowledging me  
as if I'm a ghost  
where have you gone my love  
my job is to protect you  
has always been to protect you  
I am lost and forlorn, feeling more and more  
hopeless checking every corner  
behind every curtain, every door  
on every chair and staircase  
in the kitchen and bathrooms, closets  
perhaps you've left, but without me?  
no, no, I'll go round again and again  
you have to be here somewhere  
you have to be.

-Michael Estabrook

## **At the Bottom of the Tornado Is a Woman with a Metal Face**

I.

The two of us leave town  
wandering through fields  
in the sunset. We feel like reapers  
looking out over the golden sheaves  
at harvest.

II.

Thunder! a storm in the west,  
dark gray funnel dropping  
from an angry sky.  
A tornado moves toward us  
whirling clattering  
debris flying at us  
no place to hide. It threads  
neatly around the simple houses  
around my house too.  
I'm stiff with fear  
mouth open. It stops  
before us, wind blowing cool  
over my face and neck.

IV.

Inside the tornado  
a metal-faced woman  
dark blue eyes unblinking  
sticks and leaves and little fishes  
swirl around her, stick in  
her long black hair.  
Vision is blurred.  
Is that me in there?  
No. Impossible.  
I'm out here  
looking in. Her gleaming  
eyes stare at me. She tells me  
I must choose the houses  
to be purified.

V.

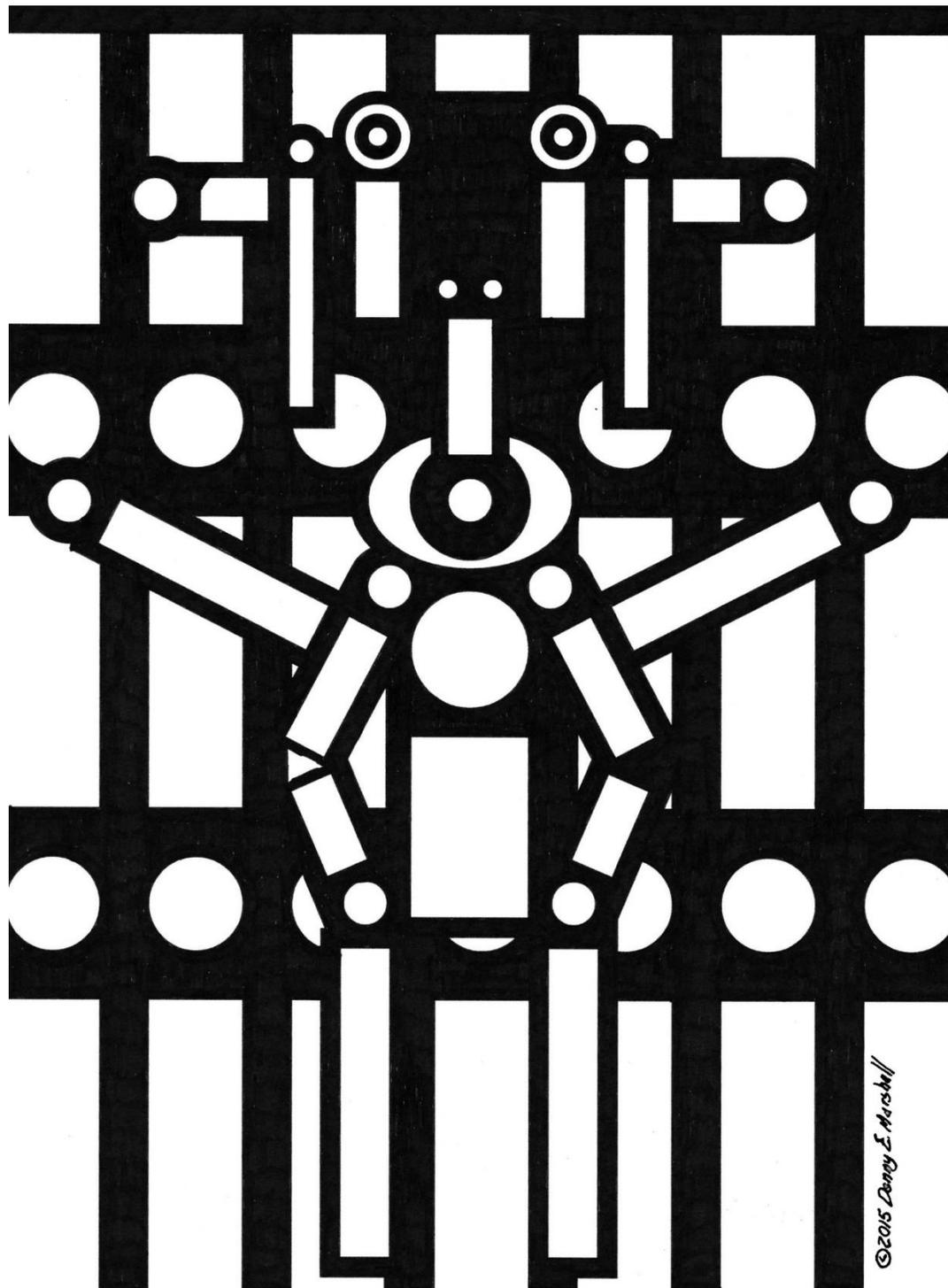
What does she mean?  
I shake my head.  
I won't make that decision,

won't hurt anyone.  
The face insists.  
If I don't choose  
she'll destroy every house,  
including mine.  
I want to run but can't.  
I can't cry  
Taking a deep breath  
I decide to choose the troubled houses  
for purification, the ones  
already with problems—  
drugs crime disease  
Yes! That's reasonable  
and I name names, point them out.

VI.  
Off she goes, as though steering  
the wind on a path  
through the town,  
stripping off clapboard,  
removing a roof,  
gutting whole buildings,  
only rubbish left.

VII.  
And we remain standing, helpless  
in the open field at harvest  
knowing we have the power, but not  
knowing how to use it.

-Michael Estabrook



*II. A. : Denny E. Marshall*

## **Land of the Living Dead**

The gentle breeze has just a hint of coolness to it,  
Barely relieving the humidity even this early in the day.  
The fetid air hangs heavy in the trees,  
The residue of yesterday's scorching thermometer.

Is there hope in that gentle breeze?  
The first in a season of no seasons.  
The land of mold, mildew and bug bites  
Reveals itself as a season of perennial hot.

The man sips his coffee and picks up his pencil,  
Trying to draw the outline of memories:  
Golden days of autumn and snow white cliffs of winter  
Where time moves onward in a perpetuum of days.

The man sits stagnant in a world of empty spaces;  
A vacuum created like a tunnel through the reality of time.  
Nothing ever changes; no one ever reaches for the golden ring of glory  
Or the passion of fulfillment in the land of the living dead.

-Bruce Levine

## TRUMAN'S LANTERN

By N.D. Coley

November 2, 1979--

Principal Wooley,

You asked if anyone knew what happened to Marty, right? I don't know for sure. I kind of have an idea.

On Devil's night, I told Marty not to kick his jack-o-lantern over his hill. I swear. I told him. It wasn't even Halloween yet. What did he think would be there to stop the bad things from getting in his house? And Marty, he was in such a bad mood. He kept talking about how stupid Halloween was. He grumbled and took his mask out of his book bag, a thin skeleton face, ripped it half, and grabbed his lantern. That's when he went to kick it up and over the hill. He gave it a good thump with his foot and told me to ease up on the "stupid pills."

All of the stories aren't pretend. At least that's what Mr. Truman told me---you know, the new English teacher. I remember last week. He finished reading us something scary—it was about a man who went crazy and killed his cat. You should have heard him when he read aloud. It was almost like he was frightened. He always made me feel better when he read stories. Have you ever heard him?

Well anyway. After the reading, Mr. Truman pulled me aside and put his hands on my shoulders. He looked real serious, and he told me that if he were a ghost or a monster or something, that Halloween is when *he* would come out. Who would notice? The street would be blotted with orange and yellow leaves. The smaller kids would be walking about with scary masks or sheets over their heads, and the real goblins would just blend in, you know?

He said the spirits weren't all bad, but who knew? Mr. Truman pulled a finger across his neck, kind of like he were cutting his own throat. He made a gurgling sound and let his head hang, and he looked up and said, "Joseph. There are some goblins and spirits that would do that. Maybe not many, but you've got to protect yourself."

Ask him yourself. He'll tell you.

I don't know what happened to Marty. He stayed in and wouldn't come trick-or-treating with me. It was the first year he missed it. Some other kids told me how he was found. I threw up when I heard it—about how his body was cut open and stuffed with straw, and how his eyes were replaced with pieces of coal. I wonder what happened to his real eyes. Who would want them? Who would do a thing like that?

Marty wasn't a bad kid, you know? I don't blame him for not believing the stories about jack-o-lanterns. He didn't believe in any of that stuff. He would always just shrug when I would talk about it, and stare at his shoes and tell me to stop believing in things that weren't true.

He wasn't a bad kid. He just didn't believe.

--J.

November 5, 1979

Sarah,

I haven't sent you any letters in a while. I'm sorry. It has been a little crazy around here, with what happened to my classmate and friend, Martin O'Neil. You probably saw it on the news, but I don't think you ever met him. Also, tell your mom I said hello, and that she's still my favorite aunt, blah blah blah. Yes. I know. She's my only aunt.

Last night I climbed down the hill behind Marty's house. I got this urge to go and get his jack-o-lantern, the one he kicked over his hillside on Devil's night. I've never had to get up in the middle of the night like that, not even to go to the bathroom. I thought I heard whispers and when I got up. I couldn't tell if they were in my dream. I hate that. I don't like it when I can't tell if I am awake or sleeping, because everything feels so real. Do you ever feel like that, just before you wake up?

I put my sandals on and threw on a sweatshirt and left the house, real quiet. Goodness. Don't tell your mom. Or my mom. They'd kill me if they knew I was sneaking out. Can't have an 8<sup>th</sup> grader wandering off.

When I got to the street, I noticed it was cold. I mean, really cold. The wind blew the leaves around. A pocket of leaves here. Another pocket there. It seemed so nice, like fall was getting ready to say goodbye.

When I got to Marty's, I was able to sneak over his hedges and through the garden. It creeped me out a little. The center of it had a gravel path, and there was an old bird bath in the middle, and a statue of the Virgin Mary. It had patches of moss on it, and she covered her eyes as if she were sad.

I weaved my way through the garden and went down the hill. It was muddy, and my sandals got stuck a little, and my toenails filled with dirt. It was so gross.

At the bottom, resting next to a dead maple tree, was the lantern. For as hard as Marty kicked that thing, it could have looked worse.

But there's one thing that's bothering me. The carving was in the shape of a frown, and goodness I can't remember perfectly, but I thought it was more of a crooked smile when it was carved. Who knows. It was so hard to tell, with it being so dark and all. I had a little flash light, but I couldn't tell, and the lantern was still in bad shape.

I scooped up the jack-o-lantern and tucked it under my arm. I went home and scraped a few seeds out of it. I think I'll plant them.

I hope you had a nice Halloween. I always knew it was your favorite, and I wish you weren't so far away. Hope to hear from you soon.

--J.

November 4, 1980,

Sarah,

Thanks for writing back. With cousins like you, who needs strangers?

I ended up planting a little patch out of Marty's seeds. It turned out ok.

Halloween was so different this year. It was like everyone was expecting something to go wrong. The scarecrows weren't put up in the school lobby. We all knew why, but we didn't say anything. I usually can't wait for Halloween, but this year I just wanted it to be over, especially since Mr. Truman suddenly resigned over summer vacation. I wish I could have said goodbye to him. I miss his readings, and the way he used to look us in the eye with each word. Even when the words were scary or gross, I could always tell he cared, and that the stories were more than stories to him. I miss that.

I didn't trick or treat. I'm getting a little too old to ask for candy, I guess, but I did take a walk up and down the streets. I threw a sheet over my head and cut two holes in it, just to blend in, but what I was really doing was making sure everyone had their lanterns out. If I noticed someone didn't, I'd pull one out of my cart, an old, red wagon of mine, and place it on their porch. I had a dozen or so, all carved like witches and haunted mansions and crooked, sly smiles.

No, nobody was weirded out by it. Everybody knows me around here. I took off my sheet and just told everyone that I wanted them to have a lantern of their own. It just seemed polite, that's all. Little Joseph Hamilton, passing out pumpkins to the neighbors.

I don't know why, but when I was about through my supply, I felt like I was alone, and yes, there were lots of kids and parents chatting in the street, but I thought I heard some whispers, ones that I couldn't place on the lips of any of the fake ghosts around me. My heart pounded, and I spun around looked at a child here, a parent there. The lights on the lanterns flickered, and candy seemed to fall into the bags in slow motion, and I just couldn't place the sounds.

Then someone bumped into me, a small kid in a cloak. He seemed small, maybe 7 years old or so, and he wasn't big, but the way he hit into my knee. He felt so much bigger, and he hit so hard. I fell back and into my wagon, smashing one lantern and smacking my head off the corner. Blood trickled down my ear.

The kid just stood there, and from where I was, gosh. It almost seemed like he was floating a little. It was so hard to see. I think I was just rattled from the fall. I couldn't make out anything through his hood, save for a smile. His teeth were tiny, and the shape of his smile seemed twisted.

He cocked his head, back and forth, and just turned and kept going. I tried to call after him and I couldn't. It was like I forgot how to use words. I got up, wiped the blood off of my ear, and took off my sheet to get a better look.

But the kid was gone. I looked up the street and under the lights, on the porches, and into the small clusters of wandering ghouls, and there wasn't anyone in a black cloak. I tugged my wagon again, and I sped up. It was Halloween, and I still had work to do.

November 5, 1982

Sarah,

You could try writing once in a while, you know? Has college made you shy of me? I'll be there someday. Hurry up, because I'm catching up.

Yes, I've still taken up to my job of carving out jack-o-lanterns. The patch has kept going. I always keep one pumpkin. It kind of feels like I still have Marty's, and I use the seeds from that to keep that patch alive.

Halloween was better last year. I enjoy carving pumpkins for half the neighborhood. It doesn't cost me anything, so mom and dad don't mind, though they do worry a little. Stay in the lights, they say. Don't give a pumpkin to anyone you don't know. They want me to go with a friend, too, but I don't have many friends these days. I didn't realize how close I was to Marty, even though he was so sour all the time.

Halloween was the easy part this year. It was the night before. I had this awful dream. In it, I put on my ghost sheet, grabbed my wagon, and took to the street. I looked at my shoes and walked up the road, the wagon wheels creaking. Then I felt it. That feeling you get, when you wake up at night and want to go to the bathroom, but you're so afraid that something is between you and the bathroom door. That feeling you get when you're alone but you're not alone, all at once.

I looked up from my shoes and saw that the road was empty. Not a parent. Not a child. No porch lights. No street lights. An owl hooted in the distance. The moon was bright, but the street was so dark, and the sidewalks were lined with jack-o-lanterns, and the lanterns were all looking at me. Every carving was of a frown, with eyes that were turned down and angry.

The pumpkins glowed and I felt a cold breeze tickle my neck, and then, one by one, off in the distance (which went on forever in dreams, because everything goes on forever in dreams), the lanterns started going out. I heard a quiet *puff* sound every time a light disappeared, and soon it was dark and I couldn't see a thing.

The next breeze wasn't the breeze at all, and somehow I knew—do you remember me telling you about that kid in the cloak, the one with the sneer and the tiny teeth? ---I knew his breath was on my neck, and it felt sticky, and I reached back to touch my neck and I knew it was blood, and the breathing it just—what's that word—it pulsated. I've never felt anything like it, and when I tried to scream I woke up, in my bed, sobbing.

But the next day was ok. Halloween was ok. It was like it was every year. Cold and lovely, littered with leaves, and filled with swarms of children. I made sure every house in the neighborhood had a lantern. Everyone would be safe. I made sure.

November 3, 1983

Sarah,

I guess I'm writing to myself these days, huh? A little note would be nice. But I know you read my letters. You're busy. That's ok. I'm used to talking to myself.

I had a whole assortment of pumpkins ready to go this year. I just had this feeling that I was going to need them. I'm a little older now, old enough to venture past the point where my parents say I couldn't go. I'm expanded my territory. I needed more product.

When it got dark and everyone waited for the fire whistle to sound and send us off, I noticed that just about the whole block had lanterns. Maybe they were trying to save me the trouble? I

rounded the bend, and again everyone had their pumpkins out, candles glowing. This went out for block after block, until I wasn't quite sure where I was.

Soon I was on a street with an old park. Most of the houses had their lights off. The park looked abandoned, and the fence was rusted up. Inside, a couple of swings swayed. Next to them sat a sliding board. It had a large dent in the center, as if someone had whacked it with a mallet, and four silhouettes sat at a bench. Four boys, it turned out.

They saw me, shot up, and whispered to each other. I walked a little faster, but I didn't have to turn my head to know when they were behind me. I stopped and breathed. I heard one of them chuckle, and another one ask, "You know this kid?" They lifted the sheet that covered my wagon, and that's when they broke into a howl. One of them, who sounded like he had putty up his nose, asked me if I were the pumpkin fairy.

I was quiet. Sometimes, I think, it's better not to talk to people.

I turned around and looked at them. They looked like kids, like me. Maybe even my age, but they looked so hard inside, like they were older. One of them started to giggle, but it wasn't like the laugh of a kid. It had this echo to it, like something, something awful, was *giggling through* the kid. Soon they all joined in. The one with the putty in his nose grabbed a lantern and heaved it against the park fence. Globes of orange went through, and the lantern made a *thwacking* sound. Another kid, who was dressed in a trench coat and a fedora, grabbed two lanterns and held them up against his head. He kissed them, as if they were his biceps, and heaved them straight down, into the pavement.

My lips quivered, and I closed my eyes and started to cry. When I opened them, the kids were walking away. It actually looked like they were gliding away. God it was strange. One of them had a baseball bat wrapped in nails and wiring, which was all I needed to know not to follow. They disappeared into the darkness of the street. Before they fell out of sight, one of them threw a rock at a lone street light. It shattered and turned to black.

I bent down and scraped up some of Marty's seeds. I inspected the wagon and saw that my visitors had missed one. The sheet had fallen on it in a clump. I picked the lantern up and held it close to my chest. It was carved out in the shape of a cat.

Still holding the pumpkin, I straightened out the wagon and pulled it in the direction of home, wherever that was, and that's when I saw a car that I hadn't seen in years: a wood paneled Buick with a dent in the rear fender. It was parked by a little Cape Cod. Unlike the other houses in this street, the porch light was on, and there was a lantern by the door, glowing softly. It, too, was in the shape of a cat.

I walked up to the door and knocked, but there was no answer. I knew who was inside. I could probably have walked right in, but I just sat the lantern down, lit it, and left. I didn't feel like talking much. I wouldn't have known what to say to him.

November 1, 2006

From: J.T. Hamilton

To: Sarah Warner

Subject: So Sorry

Hi Sarah,

Your mom's service was lovely, and once again, I'm so sorry. At least she's not sick any more, though, and wherever she is, I've no doubt that she loves you. Maybe now more than ever. I know that I miss her dearly.

It's amazing how much we can miss things, isn't it? I think it's what people are best at.

Do you remember, all those years ago, after the death of my childhood friend, how I would make all of those jack-o-lanterns for the neighborhood? Oh the stories I used to tell you. I can't remember half of them. Do you still have any of my letters? I wouldn't blame you, not in the slightest, if you had thrown them away. I could be such a silly child.

Incidentally, I still kept up that tradition, you know, where I would carve pumpkins for the neighborhood, and I'm still using Marty's seeds. I suppose I'm not going anywhere. I'm guess I'm just glued to these Western PA suburbs. It's ok. I don't mind being glued to things. Nowadays I set up a cart and, the morning of Halloween, sell them at a farmer's market. There's this one little boy, who calls himself Kurt. He doesn't treat them like they're just decorations. He always asks if he can have an extra, as if he's worried that he might need it. I always wink and tell him yes, he just might.

Yesterday, I went back to that house I told you about, so long ago; the Cape Cod with the paneled station wagon. That neighborhood is all built up now; two story houses with garages, a playground with a new complex and tall, winding slides.

Mr. Truman's home is still the same. Old and dirty, like a black eye on pretty face. This Halloween, I thought I'd drop by and say hello. I'm not kid anymore, and with your mom having been sick and all, I started to realize that people don't actually live forever. And Mr. Truman, he was so good to me.

Just like before, he didn't answer, so I walked in. I found him, sitting in a red plush chair. A fire crackled, and atop the mantle sat all of his favorite books. I could see the dust from where I was standing. I walked over to the fireplace and lifted up a volume of Poe. I leafed through it idly, and Mr. Truman spoke.

"You can have that, you know. It's a second edition. The Black Cat? That was always your favorite. I could tell. The way you looked when I read it to you."

I set the book down and looked at him. He looked so sad. So tired. Had he been sitting in that chair all of these years?

"It was," I said. "I wish you had read it more. Why didn't you stick around?"

"I couldn't."

"Why not?"

"It was my fault."

"What was your fault?"

"Martin O'Neil."

"Marty? He was murdered, Mr. Truman."

"Oh," he said, sipping from the bottle. "And they found the killer?"

"No. No they didn't."

He took a longer sip. "I told you, Joseph."

"Mr. Truman, stop. Please."

He stood up and, dressed in an old flannel robe and slippers, and walked up to me. His eyes were glazed over.

"Before he died, I had a talk with him. Just like the talk I had with you, actually. I told him all of those stories, especially about Halloween, but he pulled away and cursed me. He could be an angry boy. I thought I was just trying to protect him, and I lost my temper."

"And?"

"I dug my fingers into his shoulders, and I told that child that I was wrong to fill his head with stories and legends, or suggest that he set out a jack-o-lantern. I told the ingrate to go home to his and get rid of it and see what happened. I sneered at him. I growled and dared him to kick the damned lantern as hard as he could."

His voice cracked, and Mr. Truman tilted his head and pleaded, "He didn't go out with you that Halloween, did he?"

"No, he refused."

"And they never had a suspect?"

"No."

"Ah," he said. "So I was right."

“Those were just stories, Mr. Truman. You didn’t kill him. It was probably some sick freak. A random lunatic or something.”

He shook his head.

“Tell me, do you still carve all of those lanterns, year after year? I remember the one you left on my porch. Don’t think I didn’t see you.”

He put a hand on my shoulder and continued.

“Why do you do it?”

“I always have, Mr. Truman. It would be weird if I didn’t, I guess.”

“Yes, it would be. Promise me. Keep doing it, ok?”

“Ok.”

“One last thing.”

“Sure.”

“Did anyone every try to stop you?”

“Stop me from what?”

“Setting out all those lanterns.”

“I dunno,” I said, scratching my head. “I think some kids bullied me one time. It was so long ago.”

“I see. Well then. You keep those lights on, ok?”

And with that, he tucked the volume of Poe under my arm and told me goodbye. I walked up to the park and just sat there, reading “The Black Cat,” trying to remember all of the fanciful things he used to tell me. I recalled some things, bits of memories, but I couldn’t remember most of it. That made me sad, and I just sat until it got too dark to read.

I finished the story and looked up, and there he was, standing on his porch. He nodded at me, and in one long motion, kicked his jack-o-lantern. It flew into the middle of the street and splattered, leaving an orange smear. He went back inside, turned off his light, and that was that. I don’t suppose I’ll ever see him again.

I do hope I see you again, Sarah. Maybe next Halloween? It was always your favorite holiday.

--J.

*From “The Pittsburgh-Post Gazette”*

*Area English Instructor Found Dead, Authorities Asking for Leads*

*November 8, 2006.*

*Douglas Truman, 69, was found in his home on November 5<sup>th</sup>, after a mail carrier noticed a bad odor at the residence. The coroner estimates that he had been expired for at least 4-5 days. A former English instructor at West Mifflin Area High, he served his community affectionately before his sudden resignation in the early 1980's. Details regarding the discovery of the body have not been released, but authorities are currently asking for witnesses to step forward with possible leads, as there is some suspicion of foul play. He was beloved by students and teachers alike. A private ceremony is expected, though details are pending.*



*Jim Zola*

## **Mars Mission**

All aboard if you dare  
We must take you  
The journey will be gentle  
Followed by a harshen  
So be very afraid  
Called out the Martian  
To the land of the red soil

This must be what Columbus felt  
Yet some of my fellow delinquents  
Were more concerned they'd melt  
One chirped up  
Sure Matt Damon got back from there  
As we inhaled the last of bit of earth air

We knew nothing about steering or veering  
Just how to trade smokes  
No asking for directions  
From this crowd of blokes  
We're like pirates without parrots  
Leaving behind our place of birth  
That we destroyed  
Planet Earth  
The first load of many evicted  
For having a penis

After all men are from Mars  
Women from Venus.

-Ruth Elwood

## **The Duchess of Castlegar**

The princess arrived in the final days  
Of the tenth month  
Ten years after her brother  
Twelve after her sister

No need for tiara, crown  
Or formal ball gown  
The jewel is in her eyes  
Precious sparkling sapphires  
Gleaming even as she cries  
She has the ability to light up the castle  
With her regal smile

The kingdom is still in jubilation  
Seven months after the arrival of  
This beautiful creation

Destined for a life of laughter  
And of course happy ever after

-Ruth Elwood



***M Robots : Denny E. Marshall***

## THE WHUPPING TREE

By Kristy Gherlone

Henry Hunton wasn't quite right. His father told him as much all the time. He was so wrong, in fact, his mother took one look at him, fresh out of the womb, and ran away.

"Your mother whizzed out of that hospital so fast, my hair got swept away with her. Left you all covered in innards before anyone had a chance to clean you up," his father told him. "When they did, you looked just like a squirrel with a bad case of the mange. Ugliest damn thing I ever did see! Whoo-wee, you was ugly!"

Henry thought about that. He couldn't wrap his mind around a lot of things, but his mother *was* gone, and his father *was* bald. The old mirror hanging above his father's shaving kit told him everything else he needed to know.

"How come you wanted me if I was so ugly?" he asked.

"Well," his father said, scratching at his stubble, "I guessed you were kin, so I figured I'd probably better take you on. Plus, I s'posed you'd be all right enough to work the fields someday."

Henry didn't know if he should be glad or not. They lived on a rundown farm, and his father had him hauling potatoes as soon as he'd learned to walk. It was a tough job and Henry struggled. He tried as hard as he could, but sometimes, even with all that trying, he got it wrong. His brain would tell him to do one thing, but his body would do something else. Or his mind would want to say something, but his tongue would get all mixed and he'd stutter.

"You water the south crop?" his father would ask.

"Y-y-y-yes sir," Henry would answer.

"You ain't right, boy," he'd say, smacking him in the head. "I swear you're nummer'n a pounded thumb. Git on out there to the whupping tree and cut me a switch. I swear I'm gonna beat you until you learn to talk right."

Henry would hang his head and go out into the yard where the old willow tree stood. It had been there since before his great-great grandfather had been born. It was called the whupping tree because everyone in the family had been spanked with the branches at one time or another.

It was a beautiful tree and Henry hated to cut it almost as much as he hated getting a whupping. "I'm sorry," he'd whisper, snapping off a shoot. "I wouldn't hurt you for anything, but Daddy says I've gotta get a whupping."

He would go back inside. His father would put him over his knee and lash on him until he cried.

After the punishment, his father would go over to the pot-bellied stove and rub his hands as if to say, 'that's that,' and throw in the switch as Henry lay sobbing with his backside full of welts.

"Don't sit there blubbering, either," he'd say. "My father used to lick me. Smartened me up and straightened me right out. Yep. Smart as a whip now, and tough as nails too. You don't hear me stuttering, do you? You won't do it either, when I'm done with ya." He'd nod his head and smile.

Henry knew he wasn't smart. He'd never been to school. His father said he wasn't smart enough for school.

"Boy, you're too stupid for school. They'd laugh you right out of there. Nope, you stick to the fields," he'd said, but Henry knew enough to know that a spanking wouldn't help his stutter or make him any smarter.

Sometimes Henry would go out into the yard in the early mornings before he went to work in the fields. He'd sit under the willow tree and talk to it as if it were a real person. "I don't know why Daddy's so mean," he'd whisper, rubbing his bruises. "You suppose I'll be like him, someday?" The tree never answered, but it was a kind and patient listener.

"If Daddy is the way he is, and my granddaddy, and his daddy before him were that way, how come I don't feel the same? You'd think there'd have to be some goodness in someone, somewhere along the way. I don't want to hurt nobody. Not nobody ever. When I have kids, I'm never going to hit them. And I'm going to make sure they go to school." He didn't know if the

tree understood, but he'd keep talking on and on about all the things he wanted to do and about all the things he'd been thinking about while the tree cradled a nest of young birds and rocked them to sleep.

His father caught him one day. He overheard Henry's ambition to become a forest ranger. "You're a fool," he yelled. "That tree can't understand you. That tree doesn't care if you live or die. No one does, except me. I swear, you're softer'n a jack rabbit's scruff. Forest ranger," he scoffed, shaking his head. "You're never going nowhere. You're gonna stay right here and farm potatoes just like I do and just like your granddaddy did and his daddy before him did. I guess I need to smarten that hide of yours up some more. Go on now, cut me a switch. I'm going to make you the meanest and smartest son of a gun there ever was, then maybe I'll get some real work out of you.

Henry didn't know a lot, but he knew that a spanking wouldn't make him mean. He also knew that it wouldn't make him want to farm potatoes. He didn't want to be like his father, or his father's father, or anyone before him.

As he grew older, the tree started to die. The limbs began to dwindle until there were only big ones left. Each whupping became more painful than the last. One day when Henry went outside to get a switch, there was a woman standing behind the tree. He rubbed his eyes to make sure he wasn't seeing things.

"Hi." She smiled shyly and poked out her head. "You sure have grown up tall and handsome. You've changed a lot in fourteen years."

Henry turned around to see to whom she was talking. There was nobody there but him. "Who, me?" he asked.

"Yes, you. What'd your daddy name you?" she whispered.

"Henry," he said. He didn't know what to make of the whole situation. "Who are you?"

"I'm your momma, Henry." She smiled again as she tried out his name.

"Oh. W-want me to go and get Daddy?" he asked.

"No! Don't tell him I'm here," she said, her eyes wide and fearful.

Henry felt kind of sorry for her but didn't know if he should. "Why'd you run off and leave me when I was just a little baby?" he asked.

"I didn't run off. Your daddy threw me out when he took up with another woman. He used to beat me something fierce. He told me he'd kill you and me if I ever came back to claim you."

Henry didn't remember any other woman being around. "You sure you didn't leave because I was so ugly?"

"Heavens, no," she said. "Is that what your daddy told you?"

"Yep, but I didn't need him to tell me. I've seen myself in the mirror."

"I bet you've been looking in your daddy's shaving mirror," she said. "That thing is so old and warped, everyone looks awful in it. When I lived here, it got so I felt pretty ugly, too. It got so I forgot what I really looked like. I was afraid to leave the house because I thought people would laugh at me."

Henry wrinkled his nose. He didn't know whether to believe her or not.

"See for yourself," she said. She fished a tiny mirror out of her purse and handed it to Henry.

He glanced at his reflection and grinned. He needed a haircut, but other than that, he liked what he saw. He didn't look anything like he did in his daddy's mirror.

"You were just about the sweetest baby I'd ever laid eyes on," his mother said.

"But I'm not too bright. Never was. C-can't even talk right."

"Nonsense! All you need is a little schooling. Don't let anyone ever call you stupid!"

Just then, Henry's father came out of the house. Henry's mother ducked behind the tree.

"Where you at, boy? Hurry up with that switch!"

"I'm coming!" Henry said.

When his father went back into the house, his mother came out from behind the tree.

"He sure has changed! He's just a little old man now. He's shrunk five inches! I can't believe I used to be so scared of him," she cried, surprised.

"Well, I've gotta get in," Henry said. "I'm getting a whupping for breaking the harvester."

“He hits you too, does he?” She glared towards the house. “That man is as mean as a snake.”

“Yep,” Henry said, cutting off a large, dead branch. He reached over and rubbed the tree’s trunk, “I’m sorry,” he murmured, “I hope I didn’t hurt you too much.”

“You talk to this old tree, too?” she asked, giving it a slap. “I used to do the same thing. It was about the only thing I had to talk to.”

“Yeah, I talk to it, but it’s pretty near dead now. I don’t know what daddy’s going to use to whup me with when it’s gone.”

“Henry, I bet you’re two feet taller than he is, and I bet you outweigh him by a hundred pounds! He can’t beat you if you don’t let him.”

Henry hadn’t thought about that. He was much bigger than his father. He couldn’t even put Henry over his knee anymore. Still, though, he feared him. “I can’t go against him,” he said.

“You can if you want to. Why, I bet you could give *him* a whupping”, she said, testing him.

Henry looked at the branch. It *was* a big one. It was big enough to break bones; but he didn’t want to hurt anyone. Not even his father.

“Nah,” he said. “I can’t hurt nobody.”

“You’re nothing like your daddy, are you Henry?” his mother asked quietly.

“Nope. I don’t suspect I am.”

“That’s good,” she said, relieved. “Would you like to come home with me? We could sign you up for school.”

Henry thought about that. “Would you hit me?”

“Never!” she gasped at the question. “I could never hurt anyone.”

Henry grinned. He didn’t know a lot, but he knew right then and there where he got his goodness from. He also knew that he’d have to go to school if he ever wanted to be a forest ranger. “That sounds okay,” he said.

“Good,” his mother smiled. “You go and pack your things. I’ll wait out here.”

Henry went inside to tell his father.

“Like hell you’re leaving!” his father spit with rage. “You give me that stick. I’m gonna whup you double now.”

Henry looked at the stick and then back at his father. “I’m bigger than you and probably a whole lot stronger,” he said, surprised when he didn’t stutter.

“What’s your point?”

“Well, I figure I could probably whup you if I wanted.”

“Is that what you aim to do?” his father asked, fixing his jaw, but stepping back a few feet.

“Nope. I’m just going to leave,” he said, and that’s just what he did. He went to live with his mother and his aunt a few towns away. He went to school and worked hard. When he grew up, he became a forest ranger, just like he’d always wanted to.

One day, Henry received a call while he was at work, telling him that his father had a stroke. Henry wanted to see him, because no matter what, his father would always be his father. He made the drive over, his stomach flopping around the whole way. All the wounds inflicted upon him, growing up, felt raw again when he pulled into the driveway. He rubbed at old bruises as he got out, opened the back of his truck, and took out a can of poison. There was something he needed to do.

He walked into the yard. Henry got tears in his eyes when he saw his old friend. The once beautiful whupping tree was now a crumbling stump. “You were a good friend for listening to me all those years,” he murmured. “I know it wasn’t your fault that I got spanked so often, so I hope you understand what I have to do.” New budding shoots sprung up from the ground underneath it, promising new life and another generation of whuppings. Henry didn’t want to take any chances there that might be some bad in him somewhere. He placed his hand on the withering trunk. “It’s time for you to go,” he whispered. He uncapped the poison, poured some into what remained of the tree, and went in to the house.

His father was lying in bed. He couldn’t talk very well or move anymore; the stroke having stolen his functions. Henry fed him some soup.

“Th-th-thanks, H-henry,” he said, drooling and looking embarrassed. “I s’pose you oughta get a switch and whup me. C-c-can’t even talk right n’more.”

Henry wiped the soup off his father's chin, "Nope. I figure this family has taken enough beatings. I'm just going to love you."



***Croatian Bites : Seigar***

## **The Flame**

You walk together dressed in white, between  
the trees into the night. The rocks beneath  
your feet so rough, a march through blackest green  
to hallowed bluff. Against a tree, underneath  
its blossomed branches lee bequeathed. His hands  
inside your lacy dress, he whispers past  
despair and hopelessness: "I have a plan,  
my little bear," a voice you follow fast  
and anywhere down this path to the stake.  
He lifts you up; your hands he takes, clasps  
and binds with righteous rope. The knot he makes  
chokes out all hope. Jeers you hear, as you gasp  
your last. His pupils flicker, first to catch,  
before he smiles at you and lights a match.

-Kristin Garth

## **Prey**

You're lost inside his woods when you first hear  
It. Not the trumpet, like he told you, while  
he's tying hands behind you. Rips a sheer  
T-shirt with ease. You shiver, almost smile.  
He whispers: "Just a chase, a game," and you  
believe him even knowing how he has lied.  
The drive with your eyes covered, sounded true  
about his parents, "Want to meet you" but guides  
you to his woods. You'll never go inside.  
A game, you'll play, a heart you hope to win.  
The blindfold and your clothes go with your pride,  
a horn you flee that screams beneath your skin.  
What breaks your heart will be that second sound:  
too many feet that follow on the ground.

-Kristin Garth

## **Maritime**

last night, we built a cloth house  
on a sand floor, dined on jam  
and slept curled under sea pines  
gilled, we raced sharks through black water  
and descended to ghostlike realms  
of giant clams and skeleton coral  
where nymphs darted through shipwrecks  
and sirens crooned to cuttlefish  
moonset found us blinking  
in our aging terrestrial bodies  
surf etched the coast  
the Milky Way stained the sky  
and we asked the rising wind  
were you sleeping just now  
while we were up, spinning yarns  
which of us was dreaming of the other?

**-Amy Karon**

## **BIOGRAPHIES**

### **OYINDA SALAKO**

As a senior attending California State University Long Beach majoring in Economics and minoring in Management Information Systems, Oyinda Salako loves exploring an array of diverse opportunities and academic accomplishments. From a background in business, much of her previous experience has stemmed from working with professionals ranging from talent management in West Hollywood to non-profits about education in the South Bay to supervising volunteers at a local retirement home. But in the off-hours, sharing what she has learned and loved has become more and more of a new passion. Oyinda has written for both her university's newspaper and magazine, creating columns called *the tvtb* and *DIG Globally*, respectively, in which she discusses television shows from the late 90s and explores travel in an abstract light. Now she is writing for *the Mystic Blue Review* - expressing her views on travel, the places she has visited, and the community and intellect that it spurs. With so much to explore, Oyinda is excited at the prospect of sharing her new passions.

### **LINDA M. CRATE**

Linda M. Crate is a Pennsylvanian native born in Pittsburgh yet raised in the rural town of Conneautville. Her poetry, short stories, articles, and reviews have been published in a myriad of magazines both online and in print. She has three published chapbooks *A Mermaid Crashing Into Dawn* (Fowlpox Press - June 2013), *Less Than A Man* (The Camel Saloon - January 2014), and *If Tomorrow Never Comes* (Scars Publications, August 2016). Her fantasy novel *Blood & Magic* was published in March 2015. The second novel of this series *Dragons & Magic* was published in October 2015. The third of the seven book series *Centaur & Magic* was published November 2016. Her novel *Corvids & Magic* was published March 2017.

## **SEIGAR**

Seigar is an English philologist, a highschool teacher, and a curious photographer. He is a fetishist for reflections, saturated colors, details and religious icons. He feels passion for pop culture that shows in his series. He considers himself a traveler and an urban street photographer. His aim as an artist is to tell tales with his camera, to capture moments but trying to give them a new frame and perspective. Travelling is his inspiration. However, he tries to show more than mere postcards from his visits, creating a continuous conceptual line story from his trips. The details and subject matters come to his camera once and once again, almost becoming an obsession. His three most ambitious projects so far are his "Plastic People", a study on anthropology and sociology that focuses on the humanization of the mannequins he finds in the shop windows all over the world, "Response to Ceal Floyer for the Summer Exhibition" a conceptual work that understands art as a form of communication, and his "Tales of a city", an ongoing series taken in London. He has participated in several exhibitions, and his works have also been featured in international publications.

## **RICHARD KING PERKINS II**

Richard King Perkins II is a state-sponsored advocate for residents in long-term care facilities. He lives in Crystal Lake, IL, USA with his wife, Vickie and daughter, Sage. He is a three-time Pushcart, Best of the Net and Best of the Web nominee whose work has appeared in more than a thousand publications.

## **JIM ZOLA**

Jim Zola has worked in a warehouse, as a security guard, in a bookstore, as a teacher for Deaf children, as a toy designer for Fisher Price, and currently as a children's librarian. Published in many journals through the years, his publications include a chapbook -- The One Hundred Bones of Weather (Blue Pitcher Press) --

and a full length poetry collection -- What Glorious Possibilities (Aldrich Press). He currently lives in Greensboro, NC.

## **JOHN GREY**

John Grey is an Australian poet, US resident. Recently published in the Tau, Studio One and Columbia Review with work upcoming in Naugatuck River Review, Abyss and Apex and Midwest Quarterly.

## **DENNY E. MARSHALL**

Denny E. Marshall has had art, poetry, and fiction published. One recent credit is cover art for *Dreams And Nightmares* 106 May 2017. See more at [www.dennymarshall.com](http://www.dennymarshall.com).

## **TED MYERS**

After twenty years trembling on the brink of rock stardom and fifteen years working at record companies, Ted Myers left the music business—or perhaps it was the other way around—and took a job as a copywriter at an advertising agency. This cemented his determination to make his mark as an author. Ted's nonfiction has appeared in: *Working Musicians* (Harper Collins), *By the Time We Got to Woodstock: The Great Rock 'n' Roll Revolution of 1969* (Backbeat Books) and *Popular Music and Society*. His short stories have appeared online at *Literally Stories* and in print in the *To Hull & Back Short Story Anthology 2016*. In 2017, his epic and amusing memoir, *Making It: Music, Sex and Drugs in the Golden Age of Rock* was published by Calumet Editions and his short stories appeared in *Iconoclast* magazine and Centum Press' *100 Voices Anthology*.

## **ATHENA MELLIAR**

Athena Melliar is a freelance poet, writer and essayist. She writes for online publications such as [Frear.gr](http://Frear.gr) and [OffsiteCy.com](http://OffsiteCy.com). She is an UNESCO award winning short story writer. She holds a Bachelor's Degree in Humanities and is bilingual in English and Greek. She tweets @AthenaMelliar.

## **JOSEPH M. FELSER**

Joseph M. Felser, Ph.D. is a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Boston University, and received his doctorate in philosophy from The University of Chicago. On the faculty at Kingsborough Community College/CUNY in Brooklyn since 1997, he is on the Board of Directors of the renown Monroe Institute (Faber, VA), the author of two non-fiction books, *The Way Back to Paradise* (2005) and *The Myth of the Great Ending* (2011) as well as numerous articles published in both popular and scholarly journals. He recently began writing poetry and has had his work published in both print and online journals.

## **KAYLA BASHE**

Kayla Bashe is a student at Sarah Lawrence College. Her fiction and poetry has appeared in *Strange Horizons*, *Liminality Magazine*, *Mirror Dance*, *Ink and Locket's "LGBT Warriors"* anthology, *Cicada Magazine*, and *The Future Fire*. She has also released several novellas.

Find her on Twitter at @KaylaBashe.

## **SNEHA SUBRAMANIAN KANTA**

Sneha Subramanian Kanta is a GREAT scholarship awardee and reads for a second postgraduate degree in literature in England. Her poem 'At Dusk With the Gods' won the Alfaaz (Kalaage) prize. She is co-founder of *Parentheses Journal*, a collaborative venture that straddles hybrid genres across coasts and climes. She is also the poetry editor for Counterclock. Her work is forthcoming in indefinite space, Calamus Journal, Mad Swirl and elsewhere.

## **STEVE LORING**

Steve Loring is a lyricist/poet currently living in Los Angeles, CA. His work can be found in Akashic, Omnific and Jitter Press books. He has written lyrics for popular local bands including DAB, Means to an End and Pathogen.

## **HANNAH J. SHAW**

Hannah J. Shaw is a graduate of the College of the Holy Cross. Her work has appeared in *The Red Cedar Review* and *The Purple*.

## **A. CONSTANTINOU**

A. Constantinou is a UK-based poet and can be found on [pelagicpoet.tumblr.com](http://pelagicpoet.tumblr.com).

## **ANDREW W. FRENCH**

Andrew W. French is a 20 year old poet born and raised in North Vancouver, BC. He currently resides in London, ON, where he studies English Literature at the

University of Western Ontario. Andrew has previously been published in *Snapdragon*, *Symposium*, and *Nom de Plume*.

## **MICHAEL ESTABROOK**

Coalition of cheetahs, clutch of chickens, colony of bats, caravan of camels, cast of crabs, crash of rhinos, congregation of alligators . . . and what might be the best appellation applied to a gathering of poets? Convocation? Cluster? Chattering? Collection? Clutter? No, no, perhaps cacophony would be the most apt descriptor. Anyway, Michael Estabrook is one of the cacophony, his latest collection of poems being *Bouncy House*, edited by Larry Fagin (Green Zone Editions, 2016).

## **BRUCE LEVINE**

Bruce Levine is a native Manhattanite who lives with his wife, actress Lydia Franklin, and their dog Daisy. He's spent his life as a writer of fiction and poetry and a music and theatre professional. His shows have been produced in New York and around the country and his writings have been published widely including in *Brimfield Publications*, *Heuer Publishing*, *Rodale Press*, *Visitant*, *Foliate Oak Literary Magazine*, *Friday Flash Fiction*, *Every Writer*, *Grey Sparrow Journal*, *WestWard Quarterly*, *Leaves of Ink*, *Eskimo Pie*, *Flash Fiction Magazine*, *The Bookends Review*, *Poetry Quarterly*, *50 Haikus*, *Haiku Journal*, *Three Line Poetry*, *Dual Coast Magazine*, *Mused Literary Review* and *Literally Stories*. Bruce's novellas, *Reinvented* and *An Accidental Journey* are available from Amazon.com, Barnes & Noble and iBooks. [www.brucelevine.com](http://www.brucelevine.com)

## **N.D. COLEY**

N.D. Coley currently serves as an instructor of English at the University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg, Community College of Allegheny County, and the University of Phoenix. His work has recently appeared in *Near to the Knuckle*, *Shotgun Honey*, *Deadlights Horror Fiction Magazine*, *Indiana Voice Journal*, *Corner Bar Magazine*, *Jackob's Horror Box*, *Massacre Magazine*, *Funny in Five Hundred*.

*and Crack the Spine.* In his spare time, he laments the human condition, reads satire and dark, depressing literature, plays with his son, irritates his wife, and tries to keep a smile on his face. You can irritate him at [ndcoley1983@gmail.com](mailto:ndcoley1983@gmail.com)

## **RUTH ELWOOD**

Ruth Elwood is a nineteen year old from Galway, Ireland. She is a first year student of creative writing in the National University of Ireland Galway. She has read several times at public readings and her work has been featured in the popular blog Poethead and the Rose online magazine. Her work was also featured in NY literary magazine Her non-fiction work was displayed on the blog “We Create Lit” Her work has also led her to publications in A New Ulster She was also long listed for the Over the Edge new writer of the year poetry prize 2017.

## **KRISTY GHERLONE**

Kristy Gherlone was born and raised in northern Maine. She attended the University of Maine. She spent several years working for the state park system, and as an Early Interventionist for children with autism. She is the self-published author of three novels, and some of her shorter works can be found in The Squawk Back, Every Writer’s Resource, Short Fiction Break, The Mystery Tribune, Wild Women’s Medicine Circle Journal, and Bedlam Magazine’s Loud Zoo.

## **KRISTIN GARTH**

Kristin Garth is a poet from Pensacola. She’s stuck on sonnets. Her sonnets have been featured in Anti-Heroin Chic, Infernal Ink, Occulum, Moonchild Magazine, Digging Through the Fat, Quail Bell Magazine, The Society for Classical Poets and

more. She's currently working on a poetry chapbook entitled *Pink Plastic House: Three Stories of Sonnets*. Follow her at [twitter.com/lolaandjolie](https://twitter.com/lolaandjolie).

## **AMY KARON**

Amy Karon's work has appeared in the e-chapbook *Inking the Unthinkable: Poems about Poetry* (Lagan Press) and *Iowa Heritage Illustrated*. She lives and writes in San Jose, California.



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THANKS FOR READING!