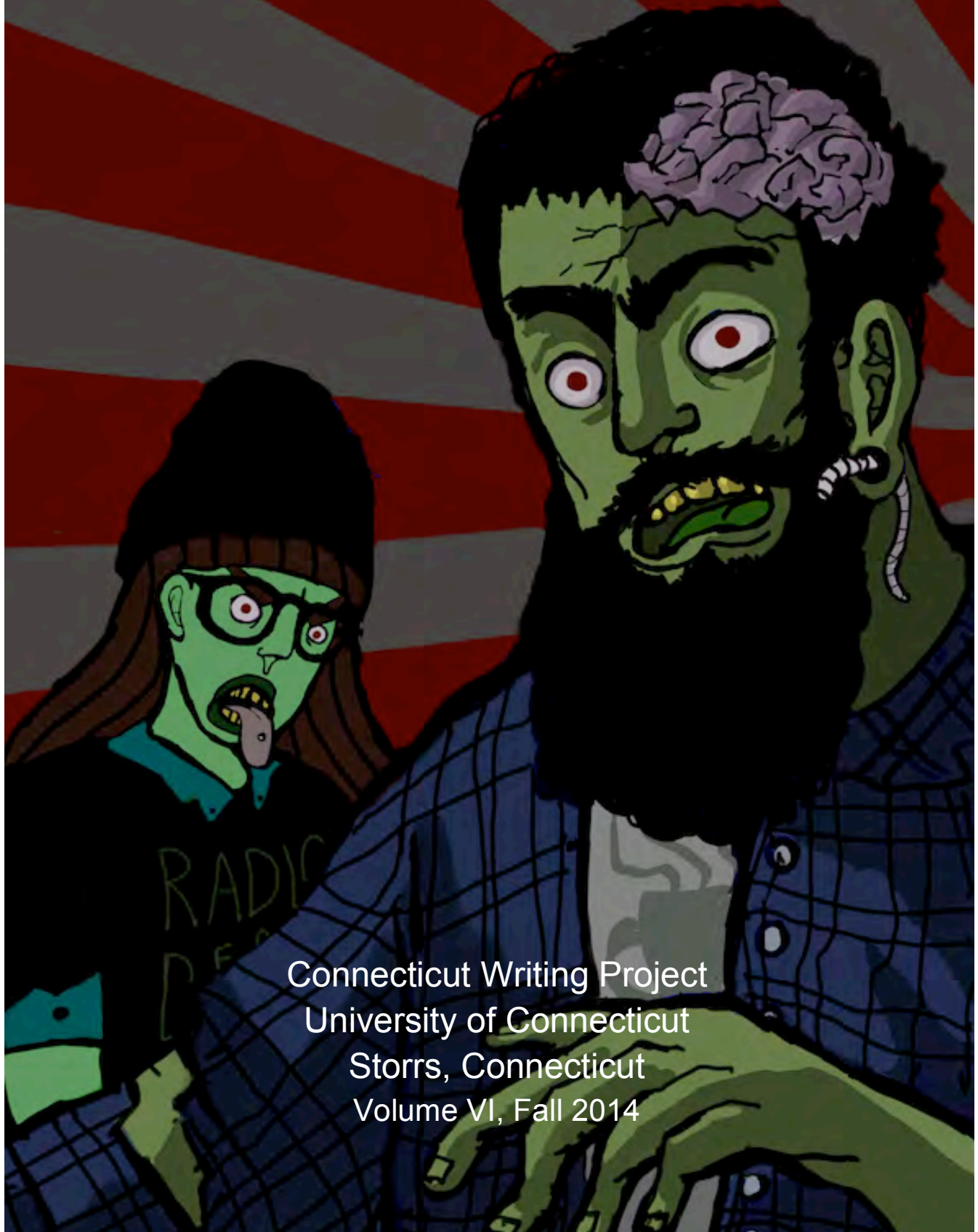


Teacher-Writer
Surviving the Zombie Apocalypse
2014 Summer Institute Fellows



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**Teacher-Consultant Writing Contest
Winners, 2014**

Poetry Winner

Governor of My Heart

By Amy Nocton

Listen,
Governor of my heart,
I didn't ask you to manipulate
my emotions, but
I believe it is my fate
To always find myself in the hands of others.

In the morning I awake with
new red wounds
pink ribbons of cut flesh
indicate the steps I have taken
walking in the footsteps of the nightmares
suffered once by others who now
dance with my tormented demons.

By day my mind wanders
chasing idea after idea
It seems to follow its own rhythm and
it carries me through the day without
allowing me to rest.

Even the sun
uses me as its plaything
converting my salty sweat into
little iridescent rivulets that run
across my clavicle, seen in an instant
in the reflection of a darkened screen
with its back to the triumphant sunrise.

But you,
always more distant than I want you to be
You are capable of controlling my emotions
like no one else can
capricious sentiments
that carry me to unknown places.

How I yearn to be the queen
of myself
even for a day!

Gobernador del corazón

escrito por Amy Nocton

Oye,
Gobernador del corazón,
No te pedí que me mandarás
las emociones mías, pero
creo que es mi sino
encontrarme siempre en las manos de otros.

Por las mañanas me despierto con
nuevas heridas rojas
Las cintas rosadas de la piel cortada
señalan los pasos que he tomado
caminando en las huellas de las pesadillas
sufridas una vez por los demás que ahora
bailan con mis demonios atormentados.

De día la mente vagabunda
corre idea tras idea
Parece seguir su propio rumbo y
me guía por el día sin que pueda
yo descansar.

Hasta el sol
me usa como su juguete
convirtiendo el sudor salado en
riachuelos iridiscentes que corren
por la clavícula, vistos un instante
en el reflejo de una pantalla apagada
de espaldas al amanecer triunfante.

Pero, tú,
siempre más lejos de lo que quiero
eres capaz de controlar mis emociones
como nadie más pueda
sentimientos caprichosos
que me conducen a partes desconocidas.

Cómo me gustaría ser reina de
mi propio ser
si quiera por un día.

Prose Fiction Winner

An Honorable Man

By E. Charles Vousden

I am not, as a rule, a reader of obituaries; the ages listed therein tend to depress me given that they are so commonly lower than the one that would follow my own name. The blandness of the biographical information I also find disquieting: it is disheartening to see lives diminished to slim facts without mention of the intensity, drama, and passion that must surely have filled them. Having all that quiet desperation just dismissed for the ephemeral commotion it was depresses me. I have worked so hard to eliminate drama and intensity from my own life that it seems a disappointment to see it so easily eliminated from others. Nevertheless, one morning a particular obituary did manage to get my attention, though perhaps more for its insignificance than otherwise. The deceased was a former colleague of mine, a teacher of many years. He was a bit older than me and had purportedly been held in high esteem by students and faculty alike at the school from which he had retired several years back. We had never been friends per se, but we had shared a classroom in the early years of my own career. My aspirations had led me to a principalship in another community, and I had not stayed in touch with him after I left. In fact, only by accident had I skimmed the paper, seen the obituary, and recalled our earlier connection. But for a faint recollection of his name, I might never have given him another thought. Then, more on a whim than out of respect for a man with whom I had worked more than two decades previously, I decided to go to his memorial. It was an experience that almost changed my life.

Like obituaries, churches make me nervous. Having grown up in a churchgoing family, I had long since gotten out of the habit, not so much out of conviction as just plain laziness—Sunday morning is prime recuperation time. The only time I ever go inside a church these days is to attend weddings or funerals, events which can be either happy or sad depending on any number of variables. Attending the funeral of someone I had almost forgotten and trying to pretend I had any business being there had seemed a formidable task on the drive over, a drive of sufficient length to give me plenty of time to recall as much about the featured attendee as I could. Try as I might, however, few memories emerged.

As I sat in the back pew of the church, I renewed my efforts at recollection. None of the other people in the church seemed familiar to me. Obviously, the people who comprise school faculties do alter their lives in the course of two decades, but I had hoped there might be someone familiar, someone to reminisce with, however

briefly, before offering meaningless condolences to the wife and family at the formal reception in the church social hall following the committal ceremony. Of course, the backs of heads are not conducive to recognition, especially after the passage of decades, so there may have been living former colleagues in the room, but none that I could spot. No one looked at me in acknowledgement either. I'd put on weight and grown a beard since the start of my career, but I had imagined that someone might have noticed my reappearance. If anyone was at the mass who had been around in the old days, apparently I had been as incidental to their existence as they had been to mine.

Maybe when the family came in and the service began, I would find some connection to this ceremony, but at the moment, sitting in the pew, I felt alone and immaterial. My attention turned to the sanctuary itself, an arena of sorts, fit enough for a huge and hugely religious gathering. Obviously, significant sums of money had gone into this structure. God would feel comfortable here. The stained glass windows were as ornate as any I had ever seen. The church I had grown up in, by contrast, was stark and much less welcoming to an entity as grandiose as God; stained glass had not been in the budget of our building committee. The windows in this structure were expansive and bright. There were twelve of them, six on each side of the long rectangular hall. I did not know the Stations of the Cross, but as I waited I looked at the windows, enjoyed the organist's efforts in the background, and tried to recall the story associated with each image. For a savior, that fellow seemed pretty submissive, I thought. In at least three of the panels Jesus had fallen to the ground. I felt for him, but noted that he did get back on his feet in each subsequent scene. In one of the latter panes, a very beautiful woman with a circle around her head looked up at the crucified Christ. Some less than reverent thoughts intruded as I considered the haloed woman. This was no middle-aged Mid-Eastern woman. She was too young, too much Jesus' contemporary to be his mother. She was also strikingly beautiful, and the idea that such a woman would surrender her life to someone merely for spiritual reasons simply defied logic to me. I wondered what the woman depicted was thinking. Even in glass, her gaze seemed less than pure and angelic, her grief seemed to stem from something much more of this world than another.

Nearing the time for the mass to begin, a less ethereal woman entered the sanctuary, scanned the premises briefly, and then took a seat in the last pew across the aisle from me. But for the fact that she wore a long black coat as opposed to a flowing white robe, she could have stepped out of the glass, right down from Jesus' side. She could have been the model for the glass painter, or at least the model's sister. The resemblance was unsettling. The woman did not look in my direction, but instead looked straight ahead. She was intent on observing the dead man's family as they

began to enter, but the funeral proceedings slipped from my focus the moment that woman appeared. Don't misinterpret my motives. I am a married man with a family of my own, and although I have known, biblically and otherwise, attractive women during my life; during my marriage, I have in fact, never been any more adulterous than Jimmy Carter ever claimed to be. The woman's hold on my attention stemmed not from lust, but from memory. I had seen her before, but I could not recall where or under what circumstances. If she was still in attendance after the mass, I made up my mind to reacquaint myself with her.

In the last moments of the funeral mass, the coffin that had been situated at the foot of the pulpit was surrounded by pall bearers and wheeled down the center aisle. After it passed by my pew, the final one in the church, I looked across the aisle into the face of the woman whose last minute appearance had haunted me throughout the mass. Suddenly I knew her name.

"Miss Snow," I said aloud.

Despite the benedictory organ music, she certainly heard my outburst, for her head turned from the coffin and she looked at me. Almost imperceptibly, she smiled and nodded. Now mute, I only stared in response. She looked away, but not quickly and not peevishly. Whether she remembered me or not I could not glean, but my memories of her were clear. Only the magnitude of her connection to the dead man was still vague. Twenty or more years ago we had all been English teachers in the same high school. Long ago we had all been colleagues: the dead man, the Mary Magdalene twin, and me.

The body was to be interred in a cemetery very near the church so most of us in attendance chose to walk the few hundred yards. Despite it being fall on the calendar, the day was bright and cool, comfortable for walking. I considered all sorts of strategies for approaching Miss Snow on the way to the graveside, wrestling with the appropriateness of each or of even doing so at all when she settled the issue for me.

As the mourners moved en masse through the graves, she appeared at my side and whispered, "Hello, Mr. Trudy."

Filled with curiosity, but trying to be sensitive to the solemnity of the occasion, I whispered back, "I wasn't sure you remembered me."

She spoke the dead man's name with a suggestion of intimacy that surprised me. I hoped that she would not vanish after the rite of committal, but would be available later to tell me more about the man to whom we were saying goodbye and what her connection to him had been. I was very afraid that she would vanish as surreptitiously as she had appeared, and I was very conscious of my fear of that happening. Such an awareness of the presence of a virtual stranger was not a feeling I had experienced often, if ever.

When the priest dismissed us to share in the "emotional rejuvenation of food" to use his phrase, and as the mourners began to disperse from the graveside, I looked around for Miss Snow. I had self-consciously avoided standing next to her in order to avoid seeming impertinently interested, but now, in the uncertainty of the moment, I regretted my charade. Fortunately, once again, there she was at my side. Wordlessly we walked back to the church. I was grateful that she seemed to accept my company without needing to talk. Although I ached to ask her volumes, I could not imagine how to do so without seeming like a journalist, an interrogator, an inquisitor.

Together Miss Snow and I stood in line to pay our respects to Samuel Rutherford's family. Intuitively I believed that the interaction between Miss Snow and Mrs. Rutherford would be informative. Mrs. Rutherford was stately, statuesque, and graceful in her role as widow and unofficial hostess. Solemnity, not tearfulness, formed the basis of her approach to her function. I instinctively admired her. She was strong and striking; it was easy to see why a man would want to spend a life with her. The young couples in attendance to her, clearly her children and their spouses, were equally solemn, equally restrained. In general, the entire family seemed the very picture of confident, but temporarily saddened, New England gentility.

Miss Snow preceded me in line toward the widow. Even while extending my hand and offering condolences to the Rutherford children, I made certain to observe the interaction between the two women who seemed so intriguingly, yet not voluntarily, connected. In the way Miss Snow leaned toward Mrs. Rutherford, in the gentle brush of cheeks initiated by the younger woman, I sensed a knowledge of each other that did not stem from friendship. I saw no animosity, but no affection either. In some ways the women seemed similar. Both were graceful without appearing delicate. Both were clearly women of substance, but Miss Snow had an edge: she was at least two decades younger. I had no way of knowing what Mrs. Rutherford was thinking or feeling, but I suspected that on some level she looked at Miss Snow with a heart tinged with resentment.

When it was my turn to offer condolences to Mrs. Rutherford, I had no idea what to say. I hate the cliché about being sorry for someone's loss. It reminds me of an old cop show in which the detectives said the line regardless of what their intentions were toward the person to whom they said it; hence, it reeked of pretense to me. Here again, before I could gather my random thoughts into a coherent statement, I was rescued. Perhaps making the connection with another former colleague, Mrs. Rutherford put her hand out and said, "You must be James Trudy. Sam would be pleased to know you were here." I gently took her hand and replied, "He was a good man and a good teacher." "Thank you," she said, smiling softly before turning her attention to the person following me. Relieved to have avoided any unnecessary insincerity, I looked around for something to drink and to find Miss Snow who was standing some paces away amidst the mourners, but not engaged with anyone in particular.

"Do you really think that about Sam?" she asked me as I drew up to her. "Do you actually think he was a good man?"

"Would you like something to drink?" I dodged. "It looks like there is some food and punch at those tables."

"I could use something to drink, but I've said my goodbyes. Let's go somewhere else," she said.

Unsure of what I was hearing, I paused.

"I want to talk to you, but we need a more conducive atmosphere, unless you need to be here."

"No, I'm apparently a persona non grata for just about everyone here, except Mrs. Rutherford, and I think, in her way, she has dismissed me," I said, stalling while struggling to recall any semi-classy place I might have gone for liquid therapy back in the old days. "There's the inn by the river not too far from here. I could drive you."

"I'll meet you there. It's on my way back to the airport," Miss Snow replied. Mixed emotions shot through me: I was both sorry and relieved to realize that this might be a very short visit with a beautiful woman who lived far enough away to need to take a plane to get home.

The inn by the river, which was unimaginatively called The Inn by the River, had a piano bar that carried some significance for me. For one thing, my wife and I had

never been there. For another, it was a place I had frequented as a graduate student. In those days my companion had been another graduate student, a married woman with whom I had been hopelessly in love. Although I never regretted or concealed my feelings for her, they were never reciprocated. Instead, ours had been a platonic, academic affair with lots of exchanged ideas and heated debates, but never the exchange or heat for which I had so earnestly longed. In the end, graduation, geography and career goals had interceded to calm my ardor. Every now and then, at conferences or lectures or other professional events, I have run into my former friend and we have chatted—going so far sometimes as even to suggest that we get together for drinks, though we never have—but afterward, I was always grateful that in those grad school years she had had the wisdom and will to keep me at bay, for both our sakes.

Miss Snow arrived at the inn just after I parked. We walked inside together. The bar seemed small, with a grand piano consuming a substantial portion of the space. In the absence of a pianist the piano functioned as a table, being ornamented by a floral arrangement and a tray of hors d'oeuvres. The sole occupant of the bar was the bartender, a young woman who looked to be of college age. She smiled at us and told us to sit wherever we wished. Attempting to be a gentleman, I hung Miss Snow's coat and my own on a coat rack just inside the door, and then touched her shoulder as I gestured toward the booth farthest from the bar. Touching Miss Snow, even incidentally, did not leave me unaffected. My effort at courtesy only heightened my awareness of my circumstances. As happy as I was to be skipping the last vestiges of the memorial, I wasn't sure that what I was doing would meet with the approval of anyone about whom I cared. Innocent intent or not, my hand on her shoulder, our apparent intimacy in the confines of the piano bar, and drinks in the afternoon did not impress me as judicious. Still, I did not care.

As we headed for the booth, the bartender asked us what we wished to drink. Miss Snow asked for a chardonnay, and although I had a meeting later that evening, I wanted something to help me put this afternoon into perspective. "Stoli, neat, please," I said, having observed a bottle behind the bar. I think I detected a slight eyebrow lift on my companion's part, but otherwise she made no comment.

"Sam considered you one."

"Excuse me."

"A good man, and a friend. Although he found your career path enigmatic. I think

you disappointed him when you left the classroom.”

“I am a teacher of teachers now,” I said, defensively. The truth, even if I did not admit it to anyone but myself, was that I treated my career like a business at this point. For me, education had been lucrative, as well as fun. The administrative bureaucracy I had as a teacher originally eschewed had enticed me when the number of my dependents grew. Eventually, running schools and then whole districts had become a game I found I enjoyed. My income might have been even more significant if I had been a captain of industry, but it wasn’t bad, and it was both certain and secure. Certainty and security, I sensed, were not high on Miss Snow’s list of desirable male traits.

“And what makes you think I was Sam’s friend?” I decided to change the subject. “I really didn’t know him so well. My stint in the classroom was short. I barely remember talking to him, and I have no recollection at all of him talking to you. That’s something I think I would have been aware of.”

“Sam and I shared the classroom after you left. That fall when I told him I was leaving at the end of the year to pursue my doctorate, Sam said he felt that the cosmos was either playing a joke on him or sending him a message.”

“So that year together was significant for you?” I inquired. Camaraderie between teachers could be intense. In some of the schools I had seen, teachers felt embattled and embraced one another emotionally with the fervor of veteran soldiers.

“Whether you knew it or not, Sam admired you. He saw creativity in your approach to the students. He admired your patience, your knowledge, and your enthusiasm. It was a bit annoying to listen to his praise of you. I always wondered if you had felt similarly about him.”

Fortunately, our drinks arrived.

“To Sam,” I said raising my glass.

“To Sam,” Miss Snow said and raised her wineglass. Her hands were elegant. Everything about her seemed sleek and exquisite. Nothing in my limited memory of Samuel Rutherford was elegant, sleek, or exquisite. They just were not a match in my mind, in any way. have changed for whatever reason during the ensuing decade or two. “I see you are not wearing a ring.”

“I am, as I have always been, simply Carolyn Snow.” She did not divulge anything further on that topic, and it reinforced my feeling that there would be a lot about this woman that I would learn only on a need-to-know basis. Her cryptic responses and inscrutable expression as she talked served only to enhance her attractiveness to me.

“So just exactly what was your connection to Sam? You flew to his funeral because twenty years ago you taught with him?”

“I think you know better than that.” She looked directly into my eyes. Maybe I detected the hint of a smile as well.

“Then you tell me. Was he a good man?”

“He was the most passionate man I ever met.”

I have been a teacher, a principal, and a parent for long enough to have a fairly good sense of when I am being lied to, and nothing was registering on my detector. Either I was in the presence of a very capable con-artist, or she was sincere. “You do know that I can’t let a statement like that go unchallenged.”

“Our relationship didn’t end just because our careers diverged.” Her voice was soft enough now to suggest real sadness at the thought of his being gone. Her connection to Sam had not been so perceptible before now. She was not looking at me, but I could see that she was blinking back tears.

To be courteous, I studied my drink, the warmth of which I appreciated. Then, as I can do more often than I should, I vocalized what I was thinking without filtering it. “You couldn’t have been lovers.”

She looked back at me, the sadness replaced by something she was feeling about me. “Couldn’t we?”

“Were you?”

“No,” she admitted. “Not in that sense. He never wanted that.”

My drink was insufficient to help me grasp this. Sam’s age alone should have made this line of discussion out of the question. The existence of his family should have been of significance also. And most importantly of all to my way of thinking, he was no better looking than me.

“Would you have?”

I had willingly suspended the use of any mental filter now, but Miss Snow had not. Her inscrutable gaze and cryptic responses reemerged. “He directed his passion elsewhere, although he made his feelings for me very clear. I was always happy and appreciative to have been a part of his life, even peripherally. He was a good man who never betrayed anyone.”

“So then explain why you called him the most passionate, not the best, man you had ever met.”

“He was not a saint. He believed deeply in what he believed in and he lived it. Sometimes though I think his feelings and his beliefs conflicted and that pained him immensely.”

“Help me put this in context. You weren’t lovers, but you had a long-term relationship that I think Mrs. Rutherford was aware of and not completely happy about. I know you live far enough away to have to fly home. Give me the parts of the back-story that I need to complete the picture.”

“Sam and I grew close during my last year at the high school. We challenged each other. He worked with troubled students outside of school, and I directed plays. We were both passionate about our lives and loves and we respected that in each other. When I got a fellowship at Duke to pursue my doctoral degree, he couldn’t have been happier for me. The afternoon I showed him my letter was perhaps the only time we ever actually touched one another. He hugged me. It was so unexpected and surprising and out of character for him that I just left to go home, but I forgot some papers I needed to grade. When I went back into the room I saw him crying. He was embarrassed, but I will never forget how hard he had tried to hide the pain he must have felt when he learned that my leaving was for real.”

I let her talk, pleased that she was willing to go on at such length. My drink was empty by now, and despite hers being almost untouched, I motioned to the bartender to get us another round. I was pretty sure that Miss Snow would not drink her second glass, but I figured that after hearing enough of this story, I might.

I tried to imagine what Sam must have felt, a man two decades older than his charming colleague who was so full of youth and optimism and opportunity. I can imagine the torment of exclusion that letter must have represented.

“You sure you weren’t in love with him?” I asked. “He must have been with you.”

“Love takes many forms. Whatever we shared wasn’t what you seem to want it to have been.”

“Or what Mrs. Rutherford might have assumed it to have been?”

“It is an irony that Sam complained of. One day after school he started on one of his diatribes. Sometimes he would go on for several minutes before I either figured out what he was talking about or simply asked him to explain himself. Either way, it was always entertaining. The less interpretable his statements were, the more personal I knew his topic was. On this occasion the topic was the legitimacy of our friendship. He said that we had none. Who would believe, he asked, that he only wanted to exchange ideas with me? He went on about what his golf-buddies or his wife would assume if they knew how close he felt to me. I could empathize, but I wasn’t sympathetic. He had a right to have friends of his own choosing. If he had been so ashamed, he could simply have stopped talking to me at anytime. I would have respected his wishes.”

“Would that have bothered you?”

“Contrary to what you seem to think, I can suffer too.”

“If you say so.” My smile reassured her I thought, I hoped.

Our second round of drinks got delivered at that point, and Miss Snow drifted into reminiscence: “Another time he said it embarrassed him to have had a twenty-year head start in life, and not to have been wiser or smarter than me. The thing was that I never saw us as being separated by so many years. That was his issue.”

“I think he had a lot to wrestle with. You challenged some core beliefs about himself.”

Ignoring me and continuing to remember her lost friend, she said, “Something he complained about was a line from a novel by Somerset Maugham that no woman ever loved a man for his virtue. I told him that if I ever met such a man, I might consider trying it. He smiled at that and asked if unproven virtue counted. He said he had many unproven virtues. I used one of his own favorite quotes on him: ‘Unproven virtue is just circumstance.’

“He loved to banter like that,” she went on. “He liked to go right to the edge of

respectability, but he was never disrespectful.”

“He reminds me of an Edith Wharton character,” I interjected, “taking a sip of whiskey each night just to feel the torture of wanting to devour the whole bottle which would destroy him if he did.”

“He couldn’t have been so tortured. He always had his family.”

“And you? Surely Sam’s infatuation wasn’t your only alternative.”

“My life turned out very well, thank you.”

“May I be further enlightened?”

“I hold an endowed chair in English at a university in Virginia. I am a full professor.”

“Wow. Impressive. Sam’s taste in women can’t be challenged. What about a husband and children?”

“Today isn’t about me.”

Damn, I thought. I felt much sympathy for Sam. No mortal man was this woman’s match. In her presence we were all emotionally doomed. The less she revealed, the more compelling she became.

“Fine, then tell me more about Sam. I never met the Sam you knew. For me, sadly, he was just another in a long line of colleagues in a growing list of educational institutions.’

“That’s the sort of thinking that Sam would have expected of an administrator.”

“Guilty as charged. But tell me about your Sam. After your career moved on, what happened? How often did you see him?”

“I never actually saw him again after my final day as a high school teacher. He wrote to me. His was the most beautiful correspondence I have ever encountered. That’s how he stayed in my life. Apart from a letter nearly every month since I left town so long ago, I neither saw nor spoke to him.”

“What did he write about?”

“Anything and everything. I think he thought of me as his muse. Even if all he wrote to was the idea of me, I always cherished his letters. If anything his writing was more charming than his conversation. It was more relaxed, freer. His spirit and laughter infused every letter. It didn’t even matter to him whether I wrote back or not. I could always count on another letter month after month, year after year. It was like having my own private novelist.”

“Why didn’t he just write these things to his wife?”

“I think he was afraid to do so, afraid that her reaction would be skeptical.”

“But yours wasn’t?”

“He had nothing to lose with me. If I had reacted unfavorably to his original musings, perhaps we would never have become friends and he may never have suffered anything more than minor embarrassment.”

“Did you lead him on?”

“I liked his work. I admired him.”

“But nothing more?”

“I told you, he never asked for more.”

“So you never had an affair with him, even though to quote you, he was ‘the most passionate man you have ever met’?”

“Passion takes many forms. I think he was sort of afraid of his own passion. He was always self-deprecating about it. You know he could have chased other dreams. ”

“So why do you think he was just a high school teacher?”

“Only an administrator would use the word ‘just.’ And teaching was his second career. He was a journalist for about ten years or so before becoming a teacher. That’s part of why he was such a prolific correspondent, I think.”

“Then why did he become a teacher?”

“For moral certitude. He quit journalism when he felt that serving the truth lost precedence to serving the medium. Teaching let him enjoy ‘ethical clarity,’ as he called it.”

“He saw no moral ambiguity in his friendship with you?”

“You know he did. As I said, believing that neither his wife nor his golfing buddies would understand his feelings about me was always a source of pain for him. The legitimacy of our closeness always troubled him.”

“But not you?”

“Only in that it was a source of discomfort for him. I knew his heart. There was no betrayal there, only a generalized wish for everyone’s happiness. Such a hope seems hopeless in the long run to me.”

The last sip of my vodka coincided with that comment. As much as I wanted our discussion to last, I knew it was over. Carolyn Snow looked at her watch, and I knew she was signaling that she was about to return to wherever her real life was. Seeing her gesture, so insignificant, yet so fraught with portentousness, I experienced a small awareness of what Sam must have felt upon learning that this woman was departing from his daily life. Her contributions to his world would not have been easy to forgo or replace. For a moment, just for a moment, I considered asking if I could email her or even call—just to find out more about Sam, of course—but then I acknowledged that thought for the foolishness it was. For me, too, Carolyn Snow was about to vanish. I wondered if the stained glass back in the church was about to have a missing figure reappear.

I paid the bartender and refused Miss Snow’s attempt to share the bill. As I handed her coat to her, I very consciously avoided touching her. Outside the bar, in the waning afternoon light, and with a bit of discretion, I tried to look at Miss Snow and fix an image of her in my mind that would last. Hers was an image that was as inviting in mid-life as it had been in youth. I hoped it would not soon fade. Our goodbyes were perfunctory. No profound last observations would come to me. It was simply time to go.

“Goodbye, Carolyn Snow,” I said as if naming her would make her image more indelible.

“Goodbye, James Trudy,” she replied. She did not move to embrace me or extend

her hand to shake mine, so neither did I.

“Do you still have all the letters?” I asked, just as she turned to walk to her rental car.

“Yes.”

“What will you do with them? They are a part of the man’s legacy.”

“I haven’t decided. Sometimes I think no one should ever know that side of him, and sometimes I think his children would want to know, and sometimes I think there is a lesson in living for everyone in his words. I just don’t know.”

“If you wanted to publish them, I would be glad to help edit.”

“I know you would,” she said, smiling, as she got into her car. Once again, her damned inscrutability taunted me. I watched her drive away, and felt no sense of closure.

On the drive back to my office, I felt gratitude for the education budget sub-committee meeting I had kept in my calendar for later that evening. That would certainly kill any sense of my own passion that I could not manage to purge from myself on the drive back. Later that night, I thought, as I lay next to my wife she would ask me how my day had been. “How was the ceremony?” she would ask and I would reply, “Fine. It was a simple farewell to an honorable man.” It would only be a mild and meaningless lie.

Prose Nonfiction Winner

Garlic Harvest

By Mary Ellen Ellsworth

I had forgotten about them—the garlic cloves that I had planted a year ago—and had watched sprout in spring; as summer ripened, they formed looping scapes and their tops went to blossoms and then to pods of small seeds. Later, I saw only brown, withered stalks. Good! Out of sight, out of mind—and no longer a demand on my energy, and aching joints. Until last night—when we were cooking up an eggplant ratatouille—and couldn't find any of last year's garlic. I was sure I had harvested and saved far more than we would ever use, but a search in the pantry provided no results. I hiked out to my weedy garden, where grasses, abundant raspberry starts, and stray, hopeful mustard plants contend. I brought the four-pronged pitch fork—and began exploring. Below surface, in sloppy rows, were the garlic cloves—grey-brown when they stayed in clumps with their wrappers on, but quarter moons of white when the clumps broke apart. I got down at ground level, to use my hands in the harvesting. I loved the feel of the dark, moist earth, from which I was wresting the garlic. The patch seemed filled with long, lazy, pinkish earth worms. They did not even seem to notice my efforts to remove them gently from my hand-held earth clods, and to set them free again in the now empty clove-holes. Moving along the wobbly rows on my knees, I noticed, in some spots, little crowns, circles, of small garlic pods, which must have fallen weeks ago from the garlic spikes. I scooped up the bulbils—surely their abundance, their faith in the possibility of fruition, their trust in their potential to lodge, grow, and mature, should be honored. As I tossed my motely, now sizeable collection of fresh garlic into an old, battered roasting pan, I marveled at the bunches of tangled, stringy roots, which must have pushed out and down through the soil as the cloves matured. I noted now, too, the sprouts growing out from my mature cloves—they surmising they had another growing season ahead, perhaps. The sprouts, mostly encased in a white, thin, paper-like wrapping, had blended in with the weedy grasses, gone unnoticed. Great—fresh, tender, onion-like seasoning for my salad, I thought, greedily. A spring harvest, really—provided for my palette in late fall. As I worked along, I loved the mixing scents of the garlic, and my mint, which had come up everywhere late season, and was giving off its pungent, fresh smell whenever my boots crushed its leaves—giving gifts, never mind, to the invader. I reminded myself, in gratitude, to dig some small mint

plants for my indoor garden. They probably will not thrive well winter long—but all I will have to do is to press a leaf or two between my fingers on one of our dull November days—and I will have, for the moment, the promise of the new spring. As I pushed back to survey my work, I couldn't suppress a grin, and a bit of conversation with my garden friends. Hanging over my garlic row—because they had spread out in a most assured way—were the scarlet heads of Marianne's dahlia blossoms, from bulbs she gave me years ago. She has probably even forgotten her gift, and I don't think she planted *her* bulbs this year. The garlic—well, that is from Jean. This is my second year as a garlic-grower, and now I must plan to give some away, too. And there, at my shoulder, as I have been working, are the raspberry bushes from my neighbor Evelyn, given to me some 35 years ago. Evelyn herself has been gone for many years; even Evelyn's home, just up the hill from us is gone—an old farm house disappearing one night in an unexplained electrical fire. As I thought about Evelyn, and Jean, and Marianne, and others who have shared their garden abundance, vegetables and fruits and flowers, I nodded my head in recognition to the neighborliness that grows around me—abundantly—year after year. Then I picked up my roasting pan full of garlic and went back to the kitchen, seasoning in hand for tonight's dinner, and more than enough for many a winter's meal ahead.

Poetry Honorable Mention

Terry Lee's

By Kim Kraner

I follow you down to the secret pond where it dozes in the shade.
There I see the white-bellied bullfrog, an amphibious Ophelia,
Where it floats, minus one froggy arm, mutilated by the blue-tick hound
No one seemed to love. "Oh, the dog did that," you say.

The bug spray in my mouth tastes like a fuzzy cartoon.
Where are you when your sisters tell me it's poison for sure?
Tinny alarms ring in my head, but no one comes to help.
Walking down the road, I spat it out, all the way, all the way home.

Strawberry lip gloss kiss on the mirror. We sneak into Karen's room.
First dirty bathroom, first dirty jokes at the sleepover.
We play Barbies and slumber all night on the living room floor.
I scratched the whole next day at the flea bites on my side.

In high school we fall out like your hair, chemo on your tongue.
Your red bandanna covers your downy-pale pate.
You're smoking cigarettes on the seniors' wall.
Eyes slide away. "Hey, how're you doing?" you say.

Now I search for you--us--like the charm from my old bracelet
Lost in the sandbox with the Matchbox cars.
No luck. It seems we're submerged somehow,
Looking up from the bottom of that murky pond.

Poetry Honorable Mention

A Likely Metaphor For Something

By David Polochanin

A child's tooth popped out again
right in the middle of a lesson,
just as I was about to make
some literary point of emphasis.

The boy had been raising
his hand for a long time
and I had been ignoring it
because I had been trying

to teach the concept of theme,
or symbolism, or was it
metaphor? I cannot recall.
It was an early fall

midday, humid still, with
the sounds of fans competing
with my voice. The children were
still quiet and scared,

which is why the boy was so patient
about it, holding up his hand for
what probably seemed to him
to be 10 full minutes.

Finally, I stopped rambling
and called on him, asking
if he had a question – to which
he answered, "Yes... (pause)

Can I go to the nurse?"
His tiny tooth, an incisor,
was resting, bloody,
in the palm of his hand, a look

of surprise on his face and the others who had now gathered around his desk, staring at the small, freshly extracted, bone.

Poetry Honorable Mention

Cat Hair

By Steve Straight

In low-hanging clouds, it scuds
in clumps across the kitchen floor
with each draft from the window,
a bane of my wife's existence.

Petting the big boy here
by my computer chair,
he demanding it with his back
arching for my hand, stroke after stroke
until a new cloud has accumulated
at the base of his tail,
I send it forth and continue.

All the places it manifests—
stuck to the nose pad of my glasses,
tickling my eye; eaten inadvertently
in soup or pasta sauce; every once in a while
one hair waving from the stick of butter.

The amount the cats consume washing
seems immeasurable, at least until that
throaty sound, easily mocked,
under the bed just before dawn,
then the gray log on the rug, as if
an owl had swallowed a boneless mole.

We'll be able to tell where they slept
while we were away, like the nest
we found on the comforter stored
on the third shelf of the upstairs closet,
a shallow bowl ringed by fur,
which we promptly dubbed Apartment 3B.

Now, three hundred miles away,
I consider all the hairs hooked like Velcro

to my vest, practically a cat-hair vest
with some fleece stuck to it, and although
I couldn't tell them apart, all tigers over the years,
here's big Mike, and his whining sister Molly,
and squirming Muriel, the ex-feral,
and even the great Cosmo, always
comfortable aloft, who died
at nineteen ages ago,
part of them now part of me.

Prose Fiction Honorable Mention

CHANGE-UP

By Kimberly Mach

“Irene, would you please sit still?” Momma grips the wheel tight, leaning forward, her back a good two inches from the seat. It isn’t our car. Momma borrowed from Glen’s family. Her hands clench and her lips press tight. Momma isn’t all that used to driving.

We are sitting at a light, one block from the train station. One block from my daddy.

Even though she’s already warned me I wiggle again, trying to scratch my spine against the seat. “I can’t sit still, Momma. There’s something itchin’ me in the back.”

“Itchin’?” Her eyes cut from the side just as the light turns green. There’s a grinding of gears as Momma starts us forward again. The car bucks once then lurches. Momma’s grip tightens on the wheel and I grab the dash.

“Itching, ma’am. Something God-awful fierce.” She doesn’t have time to cut her eyes at me again, or swat me with her right hand, which is well within striking distance. *Almost there.* She down-shifts, slows the car, and sticks her arm out the window making an L for the right hand turn. I say a silent prayer she doesn’t have to make a left again.

The car is hot, even with the windows rolled down. I pull at the neck of my dress. Momma made me wear it. She wanted the fancy Easter one, but when I put it on it was a “less-than-respectable” distance above the knee, so we had to settle for a regular school cotton one that at least brushed my knees.

“Irene, you’re growing faster than I can sew.” I don’t look any different to me, don’t see what all the fuss was about.

Finally in the lot, Momma eases the car up one row and down the other. She settles for a spot at the end of a long row, far from other cars, passing up several other perfectly suitable – and close – spots.

“Momma, why are we parking way down here?”

She pushes the air through her teeth, “Because it is not our car and I want to be careful with it.”

I look around. We are our own little island in the parking lot. No danger of hitting anything here.

I open my door and get out. The old metal groans. I stretch my arms out like I do before I pitch and walk around to Momma’s side. Momma leans toward the mirror, checks her hat pins and reflection one more time. Her hands shake a bit. I’m excited, but she seems almost nervous. She pinches her cheeks with her thumbs and forefingers ‘til she’s pleased with the color. Finally, she opens her door, and swings

both legs out. The car begins to roll forward.

“Momma!”

Her eyes pop wide and her mouth opens. The car is slowly rolling away with her in it, her feet dragging along on the ground. She clutches the door frame like she wants to jump out.

“Momma, the car! Stop it! Pull the brake!”

She snaps back to reality, swings her legs back in, stomps on the brake and pulls up the emergency at the same time. The car stops neatly on the next parking space. Maybe it is a good thing we parked so far away.

“Well, then.” Momma closes the door and pushes on the car a bit, making sure it doesn’t move. She straightens her hat, then her thin jacket, even though it’s got to be nearly ninety degrees. “Appearances, Irene. Appearances,” she had told me before we left. *Appearances for who?* I wonder. Daddy doesn’t care what we wear. Thankfully, I’m too young for suit jackets, or I’m sure I would have been stuffed in one, too.

She pushes once more on the rear of the car and I hear her under her breath. “Nope, not going nowhere now.” I smile. Momma dropped her grammar.

She clasps my hand and we start off toward the station. Her legs are longer than mine, but I’ve got excitement coursing through mine and I’m trying to pull ahead.

Momma is not breaking. She stiffens her arm, holding me back. I have to slow and match her pace.

We step up to the sidewalk. Momma makes me stop just before we go in. She turns me to face her as she straightens the gloves on her hands. Gloves. In ninety degree heat!

“Now, Irene, I don’t want any shenanigans in there. Your daddy has – well, your Daddy’s been gone a long time and we want this to be the perfect homecoming.” She puts her hand on my shoulder and winches up her pretty face a bit. “Be a proper young lady, will you?”

I nod my head. Of course, I’ll try. I always try, well I sometimes try. It’s just other things getting in the way. But I’m smart enough not to say any of this.

We start off again, and as we go through the door a question hits me.

“Momma, what’s shenanigans?”

She ponders for a moment, “Shenganigans are things that get you into trouble – mischief, and in your case a thing you do without thinking.”

“Oh.” If she’s right then I get myself into some shenanigans on a daily basis. I’d have to keep an extra eye out today to make sure no shenanigans get in the way.

We’re early. My momma is always early. If church starts at ten o’clock we will be dressed and pressed in our pew at a quarter til.

Momma sits down on a bench, smooths her skirt, and begins to wait.

I sit down. I stand up. Momma pulls me back down. I squirm. I chew my nails, Momma slaps my hand. I dig in my ear. Finally, Momma hands me a coin. "Go and get us a cup of lemonade from the counter." I jump at the chance to move and take off without so much as a backward glance.

I'm at the counter tapping my foot when I hear a train approaching. The old man shuffling around at the counter has got to be Mrs. Surdowsky's age and not nearly as spry.

"Sorry there, Little Miss. It's been a might busy today. Just need to get another scoop of sugar here." I try not to groan as he drops the scoop and has to bend to pick it up again. He winces and as he comes back up I hear the hiss of train brakes.

A scoop.

A stir round and round.

A cup.

A fill, and a little splash on the counter.

A cloth to wipe it up.

"Here you go, Miss. Enjoy."

"Thank-you." I smile and give him my coin. I do remember my manners sometimes. I take a sip and it's overly sweet, but pleasantly cool. "It's perfect." The man nods his head like it's the best compliment he's had all day.

I try to walk slowly back to where I left Momma on the bench. Dodging busy people and suitcases as one train has arrives and another is set to depart. I protect my too-sweet lemonade with my hand. Thanks to early-bird Momma I know I've got plenty of time before Daddy's train is due. I keep my eyes glued to cup and take the littlest baby steps I can.

Almost there and then,

Crash.

A man nearly plows me over. "Sorry there, Miss." He steadies my arm, but the damage is done. The lemonade is all down my front. "You all right?" I nod my head and he takes off, dodging others as he goes.

I turn, hoping not to see Momma's disappointed eyes, and I don't. She's not there. I look all around, up and down the rows of wooden benches. I don't see her hat anywhere.

The train.

I drop the empty cup in the trash bin and hurry toward the trains.

There's so many people. I stand on tiptoe and scan, scan, scan. There's a break in the crowd and I shoot through. A couple in front of me is buried in another's shoulders, no space between them. The woman's hat is hanging by a hairpin and as she pulls away to catch it he plants a kiss on her mouth that lets the hat fall. It's white

with the blue trim. My momma's hat. I turn and pretend like I'm still looking for them, toward the other platform.

"Irene!" comes Daddy's call, and then it's me who's running to him and launching myself into his arms. He catches me and swings me around. He's stronger than I remember. A whiff of stale tobacco and peppermint seeps from him and I inhale the strange and wonderful mixture.

He puts me down, but I don't let go. My eyes burn and the buttons on his chest hurt my cheek, but I press further in. Daddy kisses the top of my head and holds me tighter. His armpits are hot, but I stay there as long as I can, until Momma clears her throat. Daddy kisses my hair one more time and lets go. His arm gently peels me away but stays hugged around my shoulder. He'll never let me go. He'll hold onto me as long as I need him.

He hoists his duffle bag over the other shoulder and clasps Momma's hand. Her eyes are all shiny. She keeps swallowing, but doesn't say much. None of says much. We're a family of swallows for now.

Leaving the train station the heat and the sun hit us, blinding me for a bit. It was only a shade cooler inside with the fans, but now it's a harsh heat and I cannot see.

As we start our long walk across the parking lot Daddy finds his voice and says, "Where'd you park the car?"

Momma points a great distance away, to the large black car sitting all alone baking in the lot.

Daddy sighs and shifts the bag on his shoulder. Still holding Momma's hand he plants a kiss on it. "Still nervous about driving?"

"No. I am not still nervous about driving a car. It's a borrowed car and I wanted to make sure no one hit it."

"You've done well. There is certainly no chance of that happening. It's a grand target for birds maybe--"

"Oh, you," Momma play swats at him.

Daddy opens the back door of the car for me and I slide in. Glen's car is old and well-loved, smells a little like licorice and dog. My bottom catches on the torn upholstery; I have to readjust so it doesn't poke my legs.

Daddy thumps his bag onto the seat next to me. I loop my finger into the handle and tug it a bit closer. The canvas is rough on one side and smooth from Daddy's salt and sweat on the other.

Daddy opens the passenger side for Momma and hands her into the car. He watches her decent; I turn my attention to the bag as he kisses her again. My whole hand slides through the loop and I clasp it tight not wanting to let go.

Daddy comes around the front of the car and as his shadow falls through the windshield Momma turns to me. "Happy, Irene?"

“Happy, Momma.” Her eyes drop to my wet front. A wet front that is feeling pleasantly cool in this heat. She gives me a questioning look as Daddy gets in to start the car. His eyes flit from Momma to me in the rearview mirror.

“What’s going on?”

“Nothing,” smiles Momma.

“Shenanigans,” I say, and Momma laughs, a happy release that makes us both smile.

Prose Nonfiction Honorable Mention

Traces of Autumn

By Jane Cook

I was born in October, in the midst of summer's farewell and autumn's greeting. It is my favorite time of year. Fall's mild days and cool nights blow away the humidity of summer and turn deep green leaves to reds, oranges, and yellows painting the New England landscape into a watercolor once a year.

Autumn is a sad time of year as well. It's a time for saying goodbye to the bounty of fruits and vegetables that the warm weather delivers, a time for bidding farewell to summer vacations and days filled with sunshine and solitude, a time for stowing away the trappings of summer, a time for preparing for the cold to come. Autumn is a time for dying.

As I drove up Wormwood Hill, less than a mile from home, I anticipated the beauty of the final leg of my journey. In about a quarter of a mile I would come upon my favorite section of the road. Enormous maple trees line both sides of the road forming a canopy of branches that shade the road all summer. In the fall, yellow leaves trace graceful curves against the blue sky. These magnificent trees signal that I am nearly home and that fall is in full splendor.

As I rounded the curve that leads downhill to Mulberry Road, I encountered a red SUV stopped in the middle of the road ahead, exhaust coming out of the tailpipe. A woman was standing near the car, looking dazed. Behind the car was a white-tailed deer lying on her side. The deer lay facing a house with a large pond, a favorite drinking hole for the wildlife in the neighborhood. I pulled up in front of the deer and behind the idling car. Only then did I realize that the car belonged to my neighbor, Karen.

"Are you OK?" I asked.

"I'm fine," she replied as she looked toward the deer. "I didn't hit her but she's still alive and she's suffering."

Our attention turned to the deer lying on the road. The young doe began to thrash around on the road, trying desperately to stand. Her eyes were glazed with pain and fear. Foam was dripping from her mouth. She struggled to pull herself up on her

front legs and gather her hind legs under her to boost her body off the road. As I watched, I sent a silent prayer that she would succeed and run off into the woods. On her first attempt, she fell in a heap on the pavement. She rolled over on her back trying to push herself over onto her other side. The second time she tried to pull herself up, I saw that her left hind leg was crushed and broken at the joint halfway up; it swung loosely as she tried to stand. Blood was spreading into a wide pool beneath her.

“Take it easy, girl,” I whispered to her as she thrashed on the ground and rolled towards the middle of the road.

In nature, wolves, coyotes, and mountain lions are the natural predators of deer. But in fact in New England, humans are their biggest enemy. We have moved into their habitat and built houses where once they had wide-open pastures and deep forests. We have driven away their natural predators so their population continues to grow. We have driven them into our backyards and roadways, two places where the intentional and unintentional predators of these gentle creatures roam. During autumn mating season, their natural urge to reproduce distracts them onto wooded roads directly into the path of danger.

“Have you called 911 yet?”

“No, I’m going to call Jeff. He’s on his way home from picking up Kyle,” she responded.

As Karen called her husband Jeff, I dialed 911 with trembling fingers. The dispatcher routed my call to a resident state trooper who listened while I described the situation and asked for help. I explained that the deer was still alive and suffering greatly. He sounded unconcerned.

“She’s thrashing around and has now nearly rolled herself into the middle of the road right on a curve. There are a lot of cars driving by and I don’t want to see anyone get into an accident.”

That seemed to get his attention because he finally replied, “We’ll send someone right out.”

I again tried to comfort the deer. I did not approach her because I didn’t want to frighten her any further but I spoke in a low voice saying, “It will be OK soon. You won’t be suffering much longer, girl.” She stopped thrashing and lay still.

Just then, a woman came out of the house diagonally across the street.

“I’ve got a gun in the house. I can come out and shoot her,” she offered matter-of-factly. “I’m on my way out so I can’t stay around but I can do it right now.”

“We’ve already called 911. They’re sending someone right out,” I told her without saying thank you. I found her offer disturbing. She had said gun, not rifle, so I assumed she was not a hunter. I wondered whether she regularly discharged her gun so close to houses. I didn’t want to see the deer suffer but I didn’t want to watch her shoot the deer either, fearing that she hadn’t been trained to shoot to kill and the deer would suffer even more. Though I did weigh the merits of her offer, since I knew nothing about this woman I felt that a police officer would be the more humane option.

She pulled out of her driveway just as my neighbor, Jeff, pulled up in his pick-up truck with four-year old Kyle safely strapped into his car seat. I was grateful that the truck was so high off the ground so the dashboard blocked Kyle’s view of the pathetic sight directly in front of him.

Jeff got out of his truck and began directing traffic deftly around the scene. I was impressed at how calmly and skillfully he set about this task.

“I’m so glad you’re here. People are coming home from work and the traffic is getting heavy in our neighborhood.”

“I have to do this for work all of the time,” Jeff responded as I remembered that he worked for the local cable television company. “I wish I had my work truck because I’d have cones and a flag. I can’t believe these people aren’t even slowing down! At least they are pulling around her.”

I turned my attention to Karen and said, “Why don’t you take Jeff’s truck and bring Kyle home. Jeff and I will stay and wait for the state police to arrive. You may want to back up and take the long way home so Kyle doesn’t have to see the deer.”

“He’ll be alright. If he looks out the side window, I’ll just tell him that she’s sleeping,” Karen answered over her shoulder as she climbed up into the truck and drove away.

Jeff and I waited, trying to slow down the traffic as I watched the deer out of the corner of my eye. Her eyes were still blinking but her thrashing had stopped for the moment. Jeff made a move towards the doe as if to grab onto her hooves and drag

and drag her off into the woods.

“Jeff, I think you should just leave her there. She’s already so frightened and I’m afraid you’ll get hurt,” I cautioned. “The state police are on their way. I called them at least ten minutes ago. They should be here any minute.”

Another ten minutes went by. People driving home from work, just as Karen, Jeff, and I had been, encountered the same scene – a beautiful autumn afternoon, leaves blazing with color, the sun just beginning to set in their rear view mirrors, and a dying deer directly in front of them.

Finally a large white van slowed down, pulled around the deer, and pulled up in front of my car. I was relieved to see the words Animal Control printed in black along the side of the van. A woman stepped out of the van. She pulled out her cell phone. The deer began to thrash around again as another human approached the scene; her movements seemed more desperate than ever.

“Did you call 911 yet?” At that point, I realized that she hadn’t been sent by the state police and was just driving home from work like we had been.

“I called them about twenty minutes ago. They said they would send someone right out. Please call them again. Maybe you have more clout than I do,” I replied.

Jeff continued directing traffic as I listened to her side of the conversation.

“You need to get someone out here immediately. This scene is pretty gruesome,” she commanded to a faceless dispatcher on the other end of the phone.

That should do it, I thought. Now they’ll listen.

“I can handle this from here. You two can go home now,” she commanded.

I thanked her for her help and Jeff and I climbed into our cars to drive the two minutes to home. There was still no sign of the state police trooper but I felt a sense of relief that I would not have to stay and witness the grisly end.

As soon as I closed the car door and began to pull away from the dying deer, I burst into tears. I sobbed all the way home.

Questions flooded my brain. Why had I left work at that precise time that afternoon? Why had this doe chosen that exact moment to leap onto the road? How could someone hit a deer and just drive away leaving her to die alone on the cold pavement? I cried for the dying doe and the turn her life had taken in an instant.

I cried, too, for my dear friend, Doris. Chip and I had found her dead in her kitchen two months earlier when we had gone to pick her up for our weekly Saturday morning ritual of taking her out to breakfast and then going to run errands. This had been our routine since her husband died five and a half years earlier. Having given up her driver's license when she retired, without Sam to drive her, she was a captive in her own home. We all looked forward to those weekly outings. Though Doris had a heart condition, she took her medication every day and had received a good report from her cardiologist during her check-up only two weeks before her death and she was fine when we had seen her the prior weekend. The funeral director said that she had been dead for about three days. The only comfort I took from her death was that Doris died at home where she wanted to be, with her beloved dog, Dolly, by her side.

I cried for Mikey, my 30-year old nephew, who was found dead by his sister, Anna, just a month earlier. Thirty years ago, Mikey's birth had brought great joy to our family. He was the first child for my youngest sister, Judy, and her husband, Michael Bruno Guarco, Jr. My Irish side of the family called my nephew Mikey and my brother-in-law's Italian side of the family called him Mikino to distinguish him from his father and grandfather. He was a very intelligent and active child, who was diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) at the beginning of kindergarten. Mikey had a troubled adolescence, causing his parents and entire family a great deal of heartache. As a young adult, Mikey had changed his direction. A brilliant young man, he completed a dual graduate degree program and received his Master of Business Administration, just like his dad, as well as his law degree, graduating summa cum laude. Mikey was working as an intern in a law firm waiting to take the bar exam. Anna found him lying on the floor in his bedroom with the shower still running. The Medical Examiner believes that the cause of death was a ruptured aorta. The heartache his adolescence caused is nothing like the heartache that his death has caused. He was ripped away from us far too soon leaving gaping wounds in all of our hearts. My hope is that he died instantly and did not suffer.

I cried at the way death comes upon us with no warning and takes us by surprise. I railed at the insecurity and the injustice in the world. I wondered why we don't all walk around like a deer in headlights every single day.

Sobbing in the car is a comforting act that has become all too familiar to me during the past two months. Work is a welcome distraction, a place where I hold myself together because people are depending on me. When I am at home, I busy myself with routine so that I can pretend for a little while that life is not changed forever. But between home and work, the car has become my safe haven where I let pretense fade and begin to face the tremendous losses that I must integrate into my life. I can weep tears of blessed relief, washing the pain away, but only for a while, as long as the ride lasts.

I pulled into the garage and sat in the car trying to compose myself for at least five minutes. As soon as I got out of the car and walked into the house, I began sobbing again. Chip met me at the door and just held me.

Driving to work the next morning I diverted my eyes as I drove by the spot where the deer had lain. On the way home I rounded the curve and came upon the large scarlet bloodstain against the black pavement. Evidence of a life. Proof of a death. It took only two weeks and one heavy rainstorm before the bloodstain had faded completely, leaving not even a trace.

Prose Nonfiction Honorable Mention

Hooper

By Elizabeth Simison

It was 4am and I was locked out of my apartment topless on a deck in the middle of August, having just peed in an oversized flower pot. The two windows were both stuck shut with humidity and dried blue paint. This was all Hooper's fault, and in that moment, I hated that little black bastard more than ever before. The panic ensued when I heard the footsteps of the 40-something restaurant owner from the first floor coming up the wooden stairs. I'd known him for several years, but that didn't make the current situation any less awkward. I crossed my arms over my chest and initiated conversation with a smooth "Heyyyyyyyyy, Chris". I was sober.

"I won't even ask." He smiled, took the cigarette that was hanging out of the corner of his mouth, and flicked it in a pail filled with sand, meant for the beach.

I didn't want to spend the rest of the night on the deck in my current state, but I also couldn't knock on my own door for fear of waking the black demon who would proceed to bark until he was content with himself.

"I'm locked out and the windows are stuck," I offered. I left the whole "I peed in the flower pot" detail out.

After Chris got one of the windows open, I executed a perfectly silent dive forward roll into the kitchen. The size of the window allowed for few entry tactics, I tiptoed quietly back into the bedroom and breathed a sigh of relief that I had not woken the nine week old puppy. The initial idea of putting the crate in the bathroom and turning the fan on to allow Hooper some white noise and perfect sleeping conditions was genius, until Thomas and I realized that it meant we could not use the toilet. This realization came far too late, as evidenced by the deck incident.

Hooper woke within five minutes of my return, so my stealth efforts were for nothing. I was less concerned with Hooper waking up, and more concerned that Thomas would commit the cardinal sin of inviting the little furball into bed with us and sealing our fates as the submissive members of the pack.

Hooper is a good looking Labrador, arguably the best looking dog I will ever have. I would never spend \$1400 on a dog, no matter how much I loved a particular breed, but that is what Hooper would have cost. Also, there is a strong correlation between

pretentious people and purebred dogs, as if people who have them are “too good” to rescue a dog from a shelter. I’m not too good for a rescue, I love rescued dogs (but, for the record, I don’t like those ASPCA commercials where faux abused animals are shown while a Sarah McLachlan song plays in the background). However, I have had experiences in my life that have afforded me other opportunities. And as someone who is concerned with other people’s perceptions, I feel the need to explain the fact that I have an overpriced four-legged companion whose intellect does not mirror his looks. The truth about Hooper is that I never wanted him. He was given to my family after my father and my dog, Jasper, were killed in a car accident; it was one of those tragic experiences that everyone will, for better or worse, experience at least once in life. It is this story that I want to tell when people ask about Hooper’s origins which, during the summer months on Martha’s Vineyard, happens upwards of ten times a day.

It goes like this:

A child’s hand reaches toward Hooper.

“Uh, uh, uh, you don’t know if that dog is friendly. You have to ask first,” a parent cautions. As if I would be parading a vicious Labrador around large groups of people.

“Can I pet your dog?”

Yes.

“What’s his name?”

Hooper.

“Oh, hi Cooper!”

I let it go. People rarely get the *Jaws* reference.

“Is he purebred?” leads to “Who is the breeder? Which leads to “How did you find out about the breeder?”

And this is where it gets difficult. Not because I don’t know the answer, but because of the memories that are conjured up by such a simple question, the answer to which, while truthful, is not so simple at all.

My father was well-known and well-liked in our town, an audiologist who was a volunteer firefighter in his spare time, so when the collision occurred before 8:00 am on a Wednesday, a few things happened that were out of the ordinary. The first responders were pulled off the scene as soon as backup arrived because it is sometimes too difficult to see “one of their own” like that. When the Guy’s Autobody tow truck operated by our family mechanic got to the scene he asked “Was it Paul, or one of the girls?”.

And while the EMTs and firefighters had originally thought that Jasper had made it out and was wandering around the scene of the accident, they found him behind the front seats of the vehicle and instead of letting animal control take the body, brought it to Suffield Veterinary Hospital where my sister, Erin, was an employee.

Both Jasper and my father were killed instantly. The accident reconstruction showed that my father didn't see the red pickup truck cross over into his lane. The team said my father's hands never left the steering wheel, although I do not know how they arrived at this information, and the steering wheel had not been turned which indicated that the truck took my dad by surprise. Apparently if a driver sees a car coming at them, they tend to take their hands off the wheel to protect themselves. As if that is even possible.

Everyone wishes for loved ones to die peacefully, and one of the worst feelings in the world is wondering if my dad felt any pain when most of the bones on the left side of his body were broken- more poetically referred to as blunt force trauma to the (insert body part here), or if Jasper felt anything being thrown against the back seat and then rolling onto the floor, waiting to be found. I can only hope that my dad didn't feel guilty about having Jasper in the car with him. I take solace in the fact that neither one of them had to die alone, even if it wasn't a peaceful passing.

I had the opportunity to go and say "goodbye" to Jasper, which I took not because I wanted to , but because I knew I would regret it if I didn't. My sister Kathryn would not get that opportunity because her \$900 one-way booked-at-the-last-minute flight from Spain didn't arrive until late the following evening. I went for both of us.

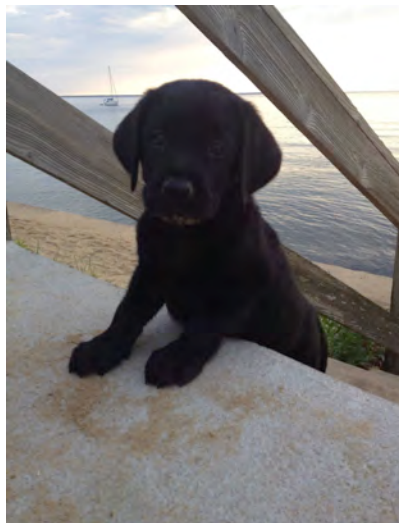
I remember going to the vet that afternoon with my mom, my aunt, and Erin; there may have been other people there but I couldn't name them. And it was right after I left Jasper for the last time that Erin, the token middle child who loves making inappropriate comments and sharing information even if it's not at the right time, informed me that a coworker of hers was a breeder of black Labradors who had just found out her dog was knocked up with nine little nuggets. And we would be given a puppy. Any puppy we wanted. I did not, in that instant, want a puppy. But you don't say no to a puppy.

Hooper was born Memorial Day weekend and Thomas and I picked him up in Springfield at the end of July. I began the slow process of crate training, which is one of the few tasks I do well and have patience for in this life because it's the fastest, and arguably most effective way, to train a puppy. This experience, however, was nothing like training Jasper, whom I got in the dead of winter and I had perfect conditions for the off-leash training that would earn him "working dog" status at the clothing boutique that employed me, and allowed my father to bring him to his audiology office as a "greeter."

Training Hooper, however, happened at the most inopportune time. It was the height of the season on Martha's Vineyard, home of the famous Black Dog, so to even get Hooper down the stairs of our apartment and to his "spot" required putting him in one of those insulated zip-top Stop and Shop bags so no one could stop us, pet the puppy, and ask the questions. It was a struggle to say the very least.

As children, we are always encouraged to tell the truth. And then, at some point in our lives, we come to realize that sometimes not telling the truth can also be an effective means of communication, as some people receive an answer they had not anticipated. Which is why I usually just give whoever inquires the name of the breeder while my mind reels with memories.

I acknowledge that Hooper was dealt a bad hand. The circumstances under which we acquired him coupled with our living situation at the time was not ideal for a puppy to be trained, or to be loved, loved as much as he deserved anyway. But, as I have learned and been reminded of time and time again, and the deck incident was no exception, in the wake of an experience akin to my father and Jasper's accident, you accept help and love and anything else people want to give. Because it is rude not to. Because it is for them just as much as you. Because after the sympathy cards stop arriving and visitors stop coming to your house and the volume of phone calls "just to check in" decreases, you aren't left with as many resources for the grieving process as you had originally thought. Because whether it is an Edible Arrangement, a bottle of wine, a tree, a card, a drawing, or a puppy, everyone is doing the best they can to heal, not to move on, but to move forward.



Prose Nonfiction Honorable Mention

The Waiting Room

By Bernie Schreiber

The brightly lit room makes an attempt at comfort. Two sofas face each other from opposite ends and high-backed cushioned chairs dot the rest of the room's perimeter with the exception of space occupied by the oversized window looking out at a full parking lot. Beyond that is the well-travelled road. Traffic is brisk this morning full of unconcerned commuters. Just outside the window, bare branches reach up through the morning chill and cast their first buds toward the overcast sky. Is it partly sunny or partly cloudy? The kitty-cornered TV next to the window announces the morning news with the stoicism of an executioner. It will be cooler than normal today and there are multiple traffic tie-ups through the metropolitan Hartford area. The new pope will be traveling to South America and the Middle East is in turmoil. The walls show off framed copies of famous artists. There's a Monet, Munch, and even a van Gogh. Nice touch. On the windowsill lie magazines waiting patiently to be opened. Actually, some of their mates already are.

I can't say that I've been waiting patiently. The sofa is soft, somewhat comfortable, but I'd rather not be here. It's been nearly an hour and I'm beginning to wonder whether the news will be good. My guts are churning and I can feel the flush on my face. What will this wait cost me? Will I be able to spend carefree afternoons exploring new places? I remember the time last summer when I hopped in my car and just drove. I wended my way through Colchester and ended up at Devil's Hopyard. I spent three hours just walking trails, hearing a woodpecker's drum roll, and enjoying the gurgling brook and the tumbling waterfall. Children laughed and played in the pool below the fall unaware of my presence.

Now I miss that walk. This wait is a killer. I want to hear the words that will allow me to continue on those unscheduled trips. I yearn for doing things just because I can. I yearn for the spontaneity which may now be put on hold. Voices float my way like dust particles from a sweeping broom.

"We found a problem that needs more testing to find the exact cause."

"How long will it take?"

"If we perform the tests this afternoon, we could let you know tomorrow."

I look around at the two faces buried in magazines, faces pretending deafness and hoping for better news. This is not their issue. It's not mine either, but I can't turn away. This could just as well be me. I see the eyes of the middle-aged woman. They scream concern; they border on panic. Momentarily I feel sorry for her. Her spur-of-the-moment adventures may be ending right here and now.

“Ok,” she replies. I lose the rest of the words. I’m intruding on a private world. I watch her leave with eyes to the floor.

My mind plays dark games with me and takes me back to another stress-riddled time in my life. At the age of 36, I had a very sharp pain on the outside of my shinbone just above the ankle. The CAT scan showed a hot spot there. As my doctor explained, it was a sign of fast multiplying cells. This could be cancer. He didn’t think it was, but had no other viable explanation. He contacted a bone cancer specialist at Yale New Haven Hospital, made an appointment for me, and sent me to see him. After this doctor examined the scans, he asked me if I had ever had an injury in the area of my pain. At that moment, I remembered sliding into second base the previous summer during a softball league game. The cleats on my right foot caught the edge of the base and severely yanked my ankle up. That resulted in a trip to the emergency room of Windham Community Memorial Hospital and a pair of crutches for two weeks. After giving this information to the doctor, he nodded.

“This is not cancer. This is ossification of your bone tissue. It’s trying to grow back your injured tissue. We can take care of this with some physical therapy.”

The P.T. was quite painful, but overall, I’d say it was much better than cancer.

I hear a doorknob turn and my name called. It doesn’t register. I’m still thinking about the conversation with the cancer specialist, the six weeks of physical therapy. I’m wondering if I’ve had my scare of a lifetime already. Traffic beyond the parking lot is still brisk. People are going off to the rest of their lives. Where am I going? The window is streaked with rain. For the first time I notice the windshield wipers moving rhythmically and the suddenly dark sky.

“Mr. Schreiber? Are you here?”

I now realize that the voice is calling for me. Crossing my fingers won’t help. I spring up from the sofa like a jack-in-the-box.

“Yes,” I say. “That’s me.”

A man with an open gray lab coat approaches me. He opens a manila folder to show me the details. Why is he about to share this information with the two other people in the waiting room? Why isn’t he pulling me out of the room? I feel my chest pounding. My flush attacks again like a sudden fever. I just can’t afford bad news now. He removes the top piece of paper in the folder and offers it to me.

“Mr. Schreiber. You’re good to go. It just needed an oil change. That sound you heard was dirt in the brakes. We cleaned it out. It’s as good as new. You can pay at the counter.” I take the paper as he turns to leave.

“Thank you,” I reply. Serenity and relief envelop me and I am suddenly overtaken by the need for an unscheduled road trip.

2014 Summer Institute Fellows

Ode to Cheese

By Kate Butler

Fruit of the utter
Daughter of yeast and time
oh how sweet
no – savory - you are
moldy, and rindy, and salty and runny
I don't discriminate
The entire gamut of flavors is satisfying in my tummy

Yes I just said tummy in my poem for the Connecticut Writing Project. I'm crazy.

Cheese, you sustain me
You are my bodyguard – literally, you guard my body from osteoporosis
I sing Gouda, and Brie, and Cheddar and Swiss.
But not blue. Eww.
I want to frolic in the annals of the dairy aisle
I want to taste and smear and slice and nibble
In sandwiches, soups, popcorn and fondue
I want to taste and honor you

The food pyramid (plate, now, I guess?) is blasphemous

Oblivious

By Ruth Macijauskas

Macijauskas first piece

Progression through the week...

First

In this one, you are with one of the summer kids

Sucking on a Tupperware Kool-Aid popsicle

Your mother froze for you last night

After he was mean to her

Second

In this one, you are with one of the summer kids

Leaning against a warm lobster trap

Sucking on a nice, cold

Tupperware Kool-Aid popsicle

your mother froze for you last night

After he was mean to her.

Oblivious

In this one, you are sitting beside one of the summer kids

leaning against a warm, wooden lobster trap,

gazing past the slowly rising tide, and

sucking on a nice-n-cold

Tupperware Kool-Aid popsicle

your mother froze for you by night

after he was mean to her.

Elegy

By Danielle Pieratti

One million singing wings and a mountain of night.
Your black meadow—pretend quiet.

You were then more wellspring
more blunt chord
than fire. The *baita*, the world—your skin

to it. Then with white rocks
and sky in your gut you learned

to prize fungi. Now you lean less wild:
eject mid-hike to invites
penned by polite daughters.

Steel-pierced and blood-spelled, once
you drummed Pat-a-pan

at the piano. Then
you held trees, cold lamb— knew
the trough

from which she drew her
water.

A Folk Tale

By Ethan Fortuna

Many centuries ago, there was a village that was strong and prosperous. The main market teemed with the finest of goods, as you walked around this market your eyes would behold freshly baked breads, newly picked barley, recently caught pike, high quality farm and fishing tools, and some of the most beautiful precious stones in the known world. The families here lived in peace and harmony with their neighbors, and all appeared well in this community. There was a problem though. The prosperity that had come to the village also brought a massive rise in the population. After a time, the village became so crowded that people were running out of structures to shelter their families in, the river became clogged with far too many boats, of far too large a size, and in the market that was once full of the best food and goods was now filled only with the haunting silence of past glories and success. In the midst of this unfolding crisis, three brothers from this village, named Rus, Czech, and Lech, became so alarmed that they decided to do what no one had dared even think before. They decided to leave the village and find new lands for themselves, their families, friends, and followers to live on, for generations to come.

The eldest of the three brothers, Rus, was the hardest and strongest of them, he therefore decided to venture off into the vast frozen plains of the east where only the most resolute and stout could survive. There, despite the terrible cold, lack of supplies, and short farming months, he successfully labored to provide warm homes and enough food to create a new home for his people. Czech, the middle brother, was the cleverest of the three brothers. He decided to settle in the vast hills and mountains of the west. There, he toiled to create a haven for his people. He faced a serious problem though; in these mountains there was not enough farmland to provide his people with substantial food. However, being the cleverest of the brothers, he sought to use the mountains that so limited him, to aid him with a solution. He used the rock from the mountains to make a metal harder than any seen before. He would use this metal to trade for the food he and his people needed to survive there, in what came to be known as the Iron Hills.

The final brother, Lech, was not particularly strong like Rus, nor did he possess vast intelligence like Czech. What he was was brave and noble. He would not subject his followers to the harsh cold of the east, or the inhospitable terrain of the west. He would make a home for them in the vast fertile plains of the north. As he travelled these plains, he looked for a sign from the heavens that he had reached the perfect place to establish his new home. One day as he scoured the plains, he spotted a very large, ancient tree that could provide him with shade from the hot summer sun. As he sat beneath this tree, he heard a loud rustling of branches coming from above him.

He looked up to see what caused this commotion, and as he did, his eyes fell upon a branch where he spotted the rarest of birds. It was a beautiful eagle whose feathers were completely white, as if made of the purest winter snow. At that moment the eagle spread its broad, powerful wings toward the sky, and took flight with an ease that affirmed its immense strength. As Lech watched the bird fly above him he looked on with wonder as the sun shined off the beak and talons of the bird making them appear as gold. At this moment Lech knew that it was in this place that the heavens had destined him to make a new home for himself and his people.

For weeks Lech labored to build a suitable homestead for the many people he planned to bring back to this spot in the shadow of the ancient tree, under the watch of the eagle. Each day Lech would take a break from his labors to observe the eagle, but one day he noticed something new. The eagle's nest was filled with younglings. Lech had been an avid student of falconry all his life, and had always dreamed of taming an eagle for his own. He therefore decided to take one of the younglings from the nest.

However, Lech was sorely mistaken when he thought the eagle would allow this. As Lech climbed the tree towards the nest, the eagle attacked him with a swiftness and ferocity Lech had never seen before. The eagle clawed at Lech with its razor sharp talons and pointed beak tearing into his flesh and spilling his blood upon the ground. Determined as ever, Lech fought back against the onslaught and returned the injuries in kind to the bird. Despite being vastly outmatched by a grown man, the eagle showed its willingness to die rather than allow the injustice of losing one of its young. Lech was deeply moved by the unyielding spirit of the bird to protect its young, and ashamed that he had caused the bird to be so wounded that its beautiful white feathers were now stained crimson. Rather than continue in his pursuit, Lech decided to honor the bravery of the bird by leaving it, and its young, in peace, not just today, but for all time.

In the aftermath of this event Lech went back to his work constructing his home. Still, each day he would stop to observe the eagle, and make sure no other predators sought to take advantage of its weakened state. After a time, the eagle was healed, its young were flying with it overhead, and the village was complete. So Lech ventured back to his forsaken home to gather his followers and bring them to their new home. When they arrived at the new village Lech gathered the people under the ancient tree where he had first discovered this place, and allowed them to gaze in wonderment at the eagles that flew overhead. He told them of the struggle that had taken place and of his shame in the event. He told them that they, the Polonia, the people of the plains, would join him by honoring these birds. They would name this new home Gniezno, meaning the eagles nest, they would adopt the eagle as their

symbol, and place the image of the eagle on a field of crimson so everyone, for all generations to come, would remember the bravery and sacrifice of the eagle. He completed his speech by proclaiming that anyone, now and forever, worthy of this new land would defend it just as the eagle had defended its nest, and would willingly give their lives, as the eagle was prepared to do, to safeguard the freedom and liberty of this new nation. So long as they did this, Poland would never be lost.

Horror Stories

By Kim Kraner

The surgeon's phone call came a week after the surgery. Since she had promised results within a few days, it had become almost impossible to cling to my hope that all was well. I tried not to think about it. The day she called, I took the phone into my bedroom feeling lightheaded. I looked out the window and traced my finger through the dust on the sill, gripping the phone so tightly that the bones hurt in my hand.

"I've got some good news and bad news for you," the surgeon said. "I've had the lab working on the biopsy for a week. They found seven areas in which cancer was beginning to grow." My world seemed to dim and narrow. "The good news is that the cancer was completely encapsulated," she continued.

"Completely encapsulated," I repeated.

"Yes," she said.

I was dizzy with...relief? Shock? I couldn't tell. The clichéd phrase "dodged a bullet" had sudden, visceral meaning for me. In one phone call, I'd gone from being a healthy person who'd just had a surgical procedure to being a cancer survivor.

I later learned that thyroid cancer is not as aggressive as other types, or as my endocrinologist put it, "It's the kind you want to get." The micro-follicular carcinoma that had been silently, secretly growing in the nodule that had nestled at the base of my throat could have taken years to kill me. This type is also the only thyroid cancer that was impossible to detect using routine needle biopsies.

The following week brought another surgery to remove the rest of my thyroid gland. When I had healed from that, my endocrinologist told me that I would need radiation, too. "It's what I would advise my own family members," he said, "the radiation will destroy any remaining thyroid cells, even if they have migrated to other parts of your body." I imagined little refugee colonies of cells hiding under my spleen or by my kidneys. "We use radioactive iodine to deliver the radiation," he told me. "The thyroid cells suck it up like sponges." The first drawback of this treatment was that I would have to stop taking my synthetic thyroid hormone for six weeks. Since the thyroid regulates metabolism, I would become extremely lethargic. The other negative aspect was that I, myself, would become radioactive for a short period of time.

"You'll have to stay at least four feet away from others," my doctor advised, "for at least two to three days. Most of the radiation is eliminated in your urine on the first day, but it takes longer than that for the levels to be safe again." My older children would understand, but I couldn't imagine telling my four-year-old daughter that I couldn't hug her for three days. The possibility of frightening her terrified me

more than the diagnosis. Reinforcing this condition of my illness would force me to consider, even fleetingly, piercingly, the perspective of a terminally ill parent. I decided to stay at my in-laws' condo for the duration that I would be hazardous to everyone else's health. My in-laws wouldn't be there, and my father-in-law was a retired nuclear physicist; he had a closer relationship to radiation than anyone else I knew. I had the surreal experience of discussing the treatment with him.

"Which isotope are they using?" he asked, "Is it I-128, or I-131? I can't remember which it would be. We worked on that as postgrads, you know."

"I don't know," I told him, "I'll check." But I never did.

At the hospital, the fully shielded technician walked with me into a room and up to a lead canister on the counter. The contrast between my casual summer clothes and his lead-lined protective gear chilled me as much as the air conditioning in the room. He carefully handed me a glass of water and took a capsule from the canister. The small pill seemed too innocent to be the vehicle for such a dangerous power as radiation. My stomach was churning before and after I took it, so I couldn't tell if it had any immediate effect. I sat in the waiting room for the required ten or fifteen minutes while I imagined the reasons for precautionary measures: *Would I instantaneously combust? Would I develop superpowers that I'd unleash on an unsuspecting world? Would my superpower be radioactive urine?*

After my release, I made my way to my car, packed with food, clothes, and the horror movies I brought to watch on my laptop at the condo. I watched them all, but the one I remember most vividly is *Gothika*, in which Halle Berry plays a psychiatrist who wakes to find herself a patient in the mental health institution for the criminally insane where she herself had been working, accused of murdering her own husband. As her bizarre ordeal unfolds, she is haunted by the specter of a young woman whom Berry's husband had abused and then killed. Images from that movie, intertwined with memories of my own self-imposed internment, carry with them the feeling of nausea and the acute exhaustion of hypothyroidism. I slept a lot and heated frozen food in the microwave. After a few days, I finally ventured out to a grocery store. Even at this point, I felt slightly guilty, as though I were exposing unwitting, innocent bystanders to harm. I kept my distance, feeling like I was contagious, a leper.

Some weeks after the surgeries, the surgeon told me to massage the rope-like lump of scar tissue that snaked across my throat in order to break down the adhesions. I didn't even want to touch it, but I did what I was told so that I wouldn't have the ridge there forever. Now, the scar is just a thin tracing of white across my throat. What's more difficult to bear is the invisible burden of surviving cancer and feeling unqualified to join the ranks of cancer survivors. In society today, surviving a cancer diagnosis implies at least a degree of heroism or grit. I lived through the ordeal knowing that I had an excellent prognosis, good care, and a supportive family. There

is no doubt in my mind that most cancer survivors' experiences are much more arduous and soul-scarring than mine, likely requiring mental fortitude, physical endurance, and courage beyond imagining.

I know what you're thinking. Horror movies—seriously? True confessions: I'm a fan of the genre. I've read just about all of Steven King's *oeuvre*, and in recent years I've benefitted from some so-called literary authors' forays into the genre: Justin Cronin, Colson Whitehead, and Glen Duncan, to name a few. It's a guilty pleasure. I don't often reveal my fascination with films that transcend the bounds of reality. To do so runs the risk of judgment by many who consider them adolescent and lacking intellectual substance. And I do have standards. One could say that, when done well, horror flicks are more satisfying than other genres. They characterize evil that isn't real: zombies can be killed by a blow to the head; ghosts and demons can be exorcised by any priest with a bottle of holy water; and vampires can be staked or incinerated by the sunrise. Unlike real fears, cinematic monsters can't withstand the light of day or reason. True terror lies in the unexpected phone call, in the life-threatening diagnosis, in the gut-wrenching, chasm-opening vagaries of fate that affect us all. True terror lies in the vulnerability of our fierce attachments to our loved ones and the very real potential for loss that walks behind us always, like a phantom stalker in a dark alley.

Nook

By Emily DeFord

Tanned valley of your neck,
cup my cheek.

I -unable to speak- must
stay silent.

Words buzz through my brain
and leave me to claim that nothing
is on my mind

so I -silent-

nestle tighter in your arms.

Your arms -your arms-

keep me safe

while my head tends to race

with uncertainty,

you embrace my frailty -and kiss me-

Now the valley of your neck
-the one that cups my cheek-
becomes home.

Here in that cave -between muscle and bone-
your warm brown sugar skin
is where I look for comfort.

Here in the chasm,

-where your neck slopes to your clavicle
and triangulates with your shoulder-

my cheekbone finally rests

and I confess that no thought

or doubt

or inkling of insecurity

can reach me.

Time spent in your nook -meditation-
demands cessation
of restless inner demons.

Tantalus

By Amy Nocton

The naked trees tremble before cold daybreak. Like sleepwalkers they awake slowly after having dreamt of their sumptuous verdant trappings of July. They long for summer and, like Tantalus who always wished for what he could not have, the trees extend their branches in vain, praying to the mocking sun, covetous of the heat now so out of reach.

There is a street called Bone Mill Road. A rocky grey wall stained by moss and lichen chases the dirt road. An abandoned farm sits a sleepy vigil, skeleton buildings. A crow calls from a roof. In a cemetery between a spring and a small, young forest, the founders of the once exclusively farming town, lie in their hallowed tombs. A herd of cattle still graze in the surrounding fields. My father passed through here a few times with me and he always commented how much the landscape made him remember the old country of his parents.

Among the thousands of articles scattered across the floor of our father's Florida apartment, in the wreckage of the newly emptied boxes, my brother and I discovered photos. Smiling and holding the hand of an unknown beauty, my father is crossing a street in Dublin. He is wearing checked pants, his dark wavy hair falls happily on his brow, and it is easy to see in his posture that he has a certain confidence in himself. He had recently renounced his studies to become a Catholic priest and I can see that he is feeling free. He is embracing the world and the feminine affections that had eluded him during his seven years enclosed in the seminary. A midday light illuminates the couple from behind, and I see him as he was in that moment, a fallen angel with invisible wings, ready to wander the world without the faith of the god of his childhood.

In another he reclines on a towel next to the sea. It's additional photo from his trip to Ireland. At his side, my father's first cousins and some young women companions enjoy the scarce Irish sun. I see the waves softly saluting the shore and I imagine the Selkies playing beneath the surface of the water. This mythic trip was later woven into tales my father told to sleepy ears at bedtime.

At fourteen years old my delicate paternal grandmother left her home in Elfin, a picturesque miniscule town in the "west" of Ireland. She began to work in a factory in the capital and sent money home to support her family. With her was another, a best friend from the same lost town, and on weekends the two would make mischief, escaping to the sea. Her hometown was far from the ocean, and perhaps, for this reason they were drawn to the enormity of the water. Once and again they invented lies and stories spun to bus drivers and guileless guardians to be able to return to this magical place without having to pay the bus fare.

At seventeen years old, her parents sent her passage to cross the Atlantic with her friend to go to live with an established Irish family in New York City and start a new life. She hadn't seen her parents since leaving Elfin, and she would never see them again.

With her pale skin of indescribable white, curly black hair and dark vivacious eyes, my grandmother embarked on a long journey. Shortly after her arrival and the receipt of her first paycheck, my grandmother went to buy a modest fur stole and a stylish hat. A professional photo followed her purchases and was dispatched to her family in Ireland to show to them how well she was doing in New York. It mattered not that she spent long hours working on the shop floor nor that she was earning half of what the other girls were since she was an immigrant, my grandmother knew how to enjoy life and she was going to do it. And on the Sundays she had free? It didn't take long for her to find a beach to nourish her soul alongside her best friend. So inseparable were they that they became known by the shop customers as Mossy and Ivy, after two plants often found side-by-side in their native land.

When I was little we would wake up early on summer Sundays to accompany our father to the beach. It was a ritual of ours, or better said, *his*, and if my siblings and I woke up too late, he would have left without us. At least one time each winter, we would wake up one Saturday to learn that he had left and he would return in a week. He had gone to Florida for the sun, the water, solitude and the purification of his being. There were no good-byes, which he had never liked, nor were there phone calls to speak to us. We would receive the news about him from our mother who acted as messenger. Now I realize how sensitive he is and I understand that having to have bid us farewell would have made it difficult for him to go inside himself and find the strength to continue being our father and her spouse. After so many years of meditation and investigation in the Oblates, our father needed to isolate himself from everything. He needed to be near the mystical water that had also whispered to his mother. Our father needed this escape so that he could live the life that had entrapped him.

A couple of years after his first grandchild was born, he decided to break up with the Indian woman he had been dating for almost eleven years and move to Florida, to "paradise." The decision seemed sudden, springing from nowhere, and now we see it as the first clue of the effects of the disease now gnawing at his brain. And he left. This time he left promising frequent visits, phone calls and emails. His mother had recently died at 93, and now he wanted to fulfill their shared dream of living near the sea. We visited him once with our children, and he came up to see us a few times, and each encounter left us more certain of the fact that he was losing his mind. There were a few chaotic visits with my brother, followed by a painful decision to force our father to move back north. His visit to paradise only lasted five years too

short for his liking.

His mother used to say to me that that her mind was like a grey sky. Before she died, I sat with her caressing the back of her hand, recording the sensation of her soft skin in my fingertips. I have heard that memory doesn't only reside in one's mind as many believe, but that memory also exists at a cellular level, and I hope to safeguard the recollection of this contact—this affection—always in my fingers. When I was very little, in another effort to feel connected to someone who I adored, I would nestle in next to my seated father with my head on his chest and try to make my heart beat in rhythm with his. I would try to breathe in sync with him and, by doing so, try to calm the incessant worry that has accompanied me since I childhood.

In spite of complaining that her mind was cloudy, my grandmother always knew us. She was always happy to see us, though she couldn't sustain a long conversation nor could she tell us stories from her past any longer. The difference was that she was already much older. My father has only recently entered his 70s. He has no short-term memory, and is more absent by the day. One early March day, I drove along Bone Mill Road. Everything was grey. The blue sky remained trapped behind the threatening clouds, the cold walls maintained their vigil over the herd of cattle, and the trees trembled with cold. With my father now living in a new kind of cell, on a Memory Care floor, I thought about an uncertain future. My father's sisters once told me that when my father was first diagnosed he began to write about just that. His uncertain future. The memories, once his, now held tantalizingly out of reach. Our father wanted to allay our fears, to reassure my worries. Now that he is no longer able to put pen to paper, I want him to know that I am avariciously collecting my remembrances of him. I hoard his thoughts, recording his shared experiences wherever I am able in a desperate act to save his mind from the encroaching storm.

I appreciate the gifted treasures: his mention of his work with community organizer and activist, Saul Alinsky; the flashback to when I was five with my head on his chest willing my heart and breath to match his; the tickle-fights with him and my siblings; my father as a somewhat severe softball coach; his fierce temper; his reserved love; the adoration he had for his mother; his great intellect; his trust; his suffering; and the books he gave me with detailed inscriptions. I will continue accumulating fragments of his soul before he disappears into the fog without knowing how to find us any longer. I embrace the grey sky because by knowing it, I better understand the richness that still exists in the shadow that remains of my father.

[Kissing on] Primrose Hill

By Lauren Midgette

Our last night
in our city
 pictures that we always knew
 we were going to take
because you remembered,
you remembered
 I wanted to see the city
on a high.

The exposure didn't want to
 cooperate,
the lights a flurry like my stomach.
 I wanted you to
see the city from the same high,
 throw that penny in the Thames
after kissing it
 and kissing me.

Do you know the wish I made?
 That last night in that glorious city,
surrounded by red buses that I loved
because they allowed me to sit
 closer to you, hugging your arm,
I made a wish.

The wish was granted
 kissing
[on Primrose Hill,
 on Millennium Bridge
 on St. Paul's steps
 on top of the world]
and we fell asleep
holding hands,
 everything satisfied
on our last night
 in our city.

luci

By Robert Pirrie

Luci lay in the light of the window, letting the December sunshine warm her ample belly. She hummed a little song to herself--something she'd made up when she was young. The tune was a bit sing-song; Luci wasn't what you'd call a composer. Half-asleep, the words floated up from the recesses of her mind:

"I am sweet and wonderful and oh so cute and beautiful and if you don't agree with me I'll **CLAW YOUR EYES OUT!!!**"

The violence of the last image startled her out of her reverie; she rolled over quickly and jumped up. She'd thought up the song many years ago; perhaps that wasn't what had brought her out of her stupor. Perhaps it was Ellie, running around, yelling at the top of her lungs about being trapped.

"Trapped!" Ellie was yelling. "Trapped, trapped! Let me out, let me out!"

Lunatic, thought Luci.

Luci felt a wheeze coming on, tried to stifle it, failed. She had asthma and would spend insufferably long periods of timing hacking with her neck extended. The neck extended part of it was always a bit hard, as her kneecaps would often pop out of place and she'd have to stretch her legs to re-set them. She had to get her kneecaps back in place quickly, because whenever she hacked one of the people would grab her, pin her down, and squirt some god awful fish-flavored crap down her throat. She tried smacking them, which sometimes helped, especially when she drew blood. The male seemed especially afraid of that, which gave Luci grim satisfaction. Ellie ran up to her, looked at her desperately, yelled "Trapped!"

"Get a grip, fer chrissakes", said Luci, but Ellie just stared at her and said incongruously, "You smell like ocean whitefish". She then resumed running around, batting ineffectually at the doors. Luci was about to go slap some sense into her, when Ellie, scabbling at a window, spotted a squirrel on the back deck railing. "Ooh, squirrel," said Ellie. Now she began whispering, in a decidedly loopy manner, "Squirrel, squirrel, squirly-whirly, squirly squirly SQUIRREL!" Shouting the last word, Ellie launched herself at the window and bonked her forehead. "Ooh," she said, and staggered slightly. "Bonk bonk bonk. Bonka bonk." After mumbling this to herself a few times, she spotted the squirrel again, which had now climbed a tree and was looking down suspiciously. "SQUIRREL!" Ellie shouted, and bonked her head on the window again. Luci watched the proceedings, no longer surprised at anything Ellie did. She crawled under the couch, found the dark spot she liked best, put her head down and closed her eyes.

Dislocated kneecaps. Jesus. What kind of a freakin' affliction was that? Toula had goddam hyperthyroidism, and was always complaining about it, but at least it kept her skinny. She took her medicine wrapped in freakin' cheese, *cheese*,

goddamn it, and she would still throw herself down on the floor afterward and bemoan her plight. "Oh, I feel so light-headed," she would say, in that airy fairy voice. "I'm swooning," would be the next utterance, as if anybody said "swoon" when they swooned, and then she'd barf all over everything. Goddamn barf, all for a stupid little pill. At least she didn't get her legs locked down by one of the people while the other shoved a syringe down her gullet. Fish flavor! What was the point of that? "Oh so nice nummy num num," said the moronic male. *Quit with the effin' num num*, Luci wanted to say. Who the frig wants crappy fish flavored anything squirted down their throat? Luci imagined herself powerful, throwing the male down, forcing random substances down his throat. "Here's your goddam socks, and here's an effing fuzzball I found under the couch, and here's a friggin' rubber mouse! Oh no, poor nooky-noo, they don't fit? Well, HERE'S A GODDAMN STICK THAT I'LL JUST USE TO CRAM THE STUFF DOWN!!!"

"I'm trapped!" Ellie yelled again as she ran by. Well, at least the trapped part was right. Luci was trapped, too, in a house with Ellie, who had a demented enthusiasm for whatever wandered across her field of vision. Luci had seen pictures of people holding their temples, and wished she could emulate the gesture, but it wouldn't have made any difference. Besides, her kneecaps would probably pop.

At least Toula had a modicum of intelligence, but she squandered her whole goddamn supply talking about her stomach. "Ooh, my tummy," she'd moan, and then when she'd notice that no one in particular was watching or giving her statement any attention, she'd go find the female, throw herself down and say "I feel so funny, like I have butterflies inside." Butterflies, Jesus Christ, BUTTERFLIES! CLICHÉ! SHE GETS AWAY WITH A FRIGGIN CLICHÉ? WHERE WAS THERE A COPY OF GODDAMN STRUNK AND WHITE WHEN YOU NEEDED IT? Luci didn't want to read it to Toula; she wanted to whack her in the head with it.

That wasn't the end of it, because at such moments the female would invariably hunker down and start rubbing Toula's belly and say things like "Toula-loula, who's a good girl, izza good girl, izza izza." This would devolve into such inanities as "Toula-baloula, unchy squunchy bunch of cuddle muffin, booda booda booda," while Toula, who wasn't really feeling anything in her tummy at all (as Luci coldly calculated), would writhe around on the floor going "Ooh, yum yum yummy yes rubby tummy," until Luci could not help but cringe. She could feel her gorge rising at moments like this, which invariably brought on her hack, and then she'd get thrown down again and the syringe would come out.

Toula. What a freakin' people pleaser. What a drama queen. What a scratch whore.

Everything was quiet for the moment. Luci cautiously crept out from her hiding place. Seeing that the coast was clear to her left, she looked to her right, and was startled to see Ellie's face an inch from her own. "TRAPPED!" yelled Ellie. "TRA—" Ellie

stopped mid-blather as something on the floor caught her eye. “Ooh, fuzz,” she murmured. “Fuzz, fuzz fuzzawuzza, fuzzy fuzzy FUZZ!” She jumped, knocking Luci aside in her fracture-brained passion. Luci lurched away as best she could but bumped into Toula. “Don’t,” Toula pathetically wailed. “Can’t you see I don’t feel well? I have such a tickly feeling inside...”

Nietzsche's will to power? Kant's categorical imperative? The dialectical materialism of the Marxists? *Don't get me started*, thought Luci. Mere piffle. Dilettantes and posers. Camus--now there was a thinker for you. Life is freaking absurd.

Luci wandered, disconsolate, into the dining room. She tried to jump up onto a chair, but her knees locked and she missed, merely knocking the chair over. Luckily the chair missed her head, but it did catch one of her knees, which sent a bolt of pain through her leg, making her hiss. The female came into the room, righted the chair, stared at Luci for a moment, and then went down into the basement.

Luci crawled under the table. The song returned to her mind. “I am sweet and beautiful,” she started, but the song trailed off. She tried again to make it onto a chair, managed it. She hid herself under a coat.

Then the female came up from the basement, carrying a box. Luci peeked out. She was rather fond of boxes. Lo and behold, the female had lined the bottom with a wool blanket. She put the box on the floor, took Luci down from the chair, and placed her inside. The box was just the right fit, the blanket soft and warm. The female studied her for another moment, went to the kitchen, and came back with a few treats. She whispered to Luci, “Don’t tell the others.” She rubbed her, ever so gently, under the chin. “You poor thing,” she said. And ever so reluctantly, Luci could feel the comforting rumble begin in her chest.

People were a pain in the ass. Still, they did feed her, gave her a place to sleep, kept her warm. They couldn't help being idiots, with their goddam nummy nooky noo-noos. But she was safe with them, and she knew she was loved. And occasionally, just occasionally, it felt good to be rubbed under the chin.

Ellie ran by with some random hairy thing in her mouth. "BUDGA FUB!" she shouted excitedly. Somewhere off in the distance, she could hear Toula retching.

What was it Sartre had said? Hell is other people? *Sartre had no friggin' clue*, thought Luci. Hell is other cats.

Hipster Zombies

By Jason Efland

Felipe dragged his emaciated body haphazardly towards the dusty Miller High Life mirror. Peering through the blood splattered smears of handprints on the wide reflective surface, he noticed his ridiculously long and curved mustachio was caked with the remnants of his last meal. His horn rimmed bohemian glasses were askew; and the hair, that he had once spent hours in front of his vintage looking glass to achieve that perfect disheveled look, was now matted and mangy.

The bloodstains around his mouth reminded him of when his teeth sank into the spam fed yuppie from SOMA. He could really tell the difference between overly priced vegetarian grass fed meat and that generic bullshit laden with hormones and antibiotics. But that was nearly a week ago and he was growing hungry. Felipe released a low inaudible sigh that resonated in his empty mind and sent blood trickling down his taut and worm infested cheeks.

As if on cue, the horde of undead occupying the bar turned towards him and answered in chorus, "Gaaaaaaahhhhhh!"

What remained of Felipe's pretentious mind stammered forward at a sluggish pace. *Imbeciles. Mindless imbeciles*, he thought. The mirror captured his head swaying back and forth. His gaping mouth opened wide as maggots began to fall onto his effortlessly tied keffiyeh. The zombie patrons answered again in unison to Felipe's call with a blood curdling, "Gwaaaaaahh!"

Between the movements of these poser zombies, the bloodstained wall mirror captured an eye roll as Felipe shuffled through a floor littered with crushed PBR cans. His left leg seemed to be suffering from an acute case of rigor mortis forcing him to drag his now musty and blood drenched Toms across a sea of Pabst towards the door. Felipe clumsily reached for his dusty and worn paperback copy of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* from where he left it on the faded wood bar top. The printed words were unintelligible and some of Nietzsche's finest quips were stained with dried blood.

The sound of mindless moans and lock step shuffling feet was too much for Felipe. Years of berating customers at Four Barrel Coffee and pontificating on the latest trends in fashion and art were for nothing all because that J. Crew-wearing-corporate-consumer-slave bit his wrist.

The first few days after the attack weren't that bad for Felipe. He remembered feeling under the weather but assumed that was because his mom served him coffee that wasn't shade grown fair trade from the forests of Tanzania. His mom sold out long ago when she bought that blue dodge minivan and made him attend youth soccer. She just didn't understand this world.

But after a week the fever grew in intensely and his brain clouded over. Customers, to his dismay, countered his insults with ease. After the fifth customer left him speechless, Felipe had declared a smoke break and headed out to his fixie. "Fuck this place," he said to the closed back door in an act of passive defiance. He rolled up the right pant leg of his skinny jeans, slung his canvas messenger bag over his shoulder and rode to his loft. After that night, he remembered little.

Absent mindedly, his fingers covered with dark earth and putrid skin traced what remained of the sparrow tattoo. Teeth marks from the J. Crew mainstreamer ruined the ink. He looked at the tattoo and thought, "That mall-shopping-conformist even ripped out part of my Whitman poem." The Gurgle from his decaying mouth sounded like the last remnants of water escaping from a hair-clogged bathtub.

"Bwaaaaaarrrrrrggg!" his zombie companions attempted to comfort his angst.

Months had passed since he became a zombie and despite Felipe's sense of indignation, the last ounce of self-righteousness was slowly being consumed by the need for human flesh. Maybe he could find some grass fed asshole who wasn't tainted with canned meat down at the Co-op. His decaying shell of a body released an apathetic sigh. He could not believe that of all fates, he had to become something so mainstream as a zombie.

This Photograph of You

By Elizabeth Simison

Close your eyes; center and access memory; try to hold on to a photograph of you and other people or an image caught in tableau which can act as a photograph. Start writing with this phrase as the beginning:

“In this one, you are.....” (Addressing yourself in the second person)

In this one, you are posing for the first time with your future husband, but you do not know it, yet. And even if you do, he certainly doesn't because you aren't even his girlfriend. You have not discussed your *status* with him because you don't want to scare him off. You haven't had a boyfriend for the better part of five years, so while you're clingy in your mind, you're following his external nonchalance. This proves difficult because you have different standards of communication than he does. He would send you a text: *how was you're day?* You'd wait a half hour before responding because that's what high school students do to be cool and ambivalent, and since you're a high school teacher, you follow the lead of teenagers, hoping that it will work for someone who is 28. You dismiss the judgement that rises in you mind about the usage of *you're* and hope to God that it was an autocorrect and not deliberate. You ask yourself if you could date someone who makes the *your you're* and *their they're and there* mistake. It takes him three days to get back to you when you ask him how his day was. His response? *Goodnight*. A complete disconnect from the previous messages, but a responses nonetheless so you take it.

He is leaning in for the photograph, his jaw looking extra square. It's not how you picture him in your mind, so it might just be the angle of the camera. You've only shared a few caesar salads and meals with him, and he doesn't yet know that you hate sharing and can't stand someone else's hands wandering on to your plate uninvited. You can't tell him that thought because what if he never wants to eat with you again? Sharing food can't be a deal breaker. You need to grow up. And not turn your nose up at chicken tenders. The monotony of his choices reflect his upbringing; he grew up in a family of 12 and his mother rotated three meals that didn't include salt or flavor, but it didn't matter because sustenance was the main goal. It is this upbringing that has resulted in him calling every meal you cook, whether a five-minute box of couscous, or a perfectly seared filet of cod, *gorgeous* or *lovely*, adjectives you've never heard to describing food until you met him.

Your Best Friend, Adrienne is also in the photograph, and even though she is in the middle, she is not the one you focus on when you get the copy of it. You see yourself in a black top and floral skirt, boots and tights. It's not the best photo of you but you love it anyway because it's the first photo of the two of you together. He's wearing a black top, too; a cardigan, probably manufactured by Diesel, that is just the slightest bit small on him, but you know that's only because he's European, a "metrosexual", and that's now their breed rolls. His hair is spiky, and although you do not know it at the time, you now know that on that particular night, he spent upwards of ten minutes getting every strand of ginger glory in the right place. He now does this when he uses the toilet early in the morning. He goes for a piss, a word that used to be hard on your ears, but is now common, and when he comes back, a ginger with perfectly styled strands gets back into bed, and falls back asleep. The same routine ensues before he goes for a run, but you have given up on making fun of him; you don't even have to say a sentence because he reads you so well that with a certain look, you communicate how ridiculous his habits are, and he accepts it with a laugh and one last adjustment of his hair. *Simison*, he says, *look at me! I'm chiseled out of granite!*

The photo is black and white, and was taken in a bar called Seasons, which has since closed. You don't remember anything about that night, whether or not there was a sporting event, what you were drinking, if you ate a caesar salad (you probably did), or who you were with, although you can probably speculate, but it doesn't matter. You didn't end up scaring him off, he now knows to ask before poking around your dinner entree, and he is aware of your *status* as he proposed last summer. He still takes days to respond to text messages, which is strange seeing as how you live together, but he picked you, so you let it slide.

Biographies

Kate Butler is a third-year Language Arts teacher at CREC's Medical Professions and Teacher Preparation Academy. She enjoys strong coffee, thunderstorms, the Atlantic Ocean, The Connecticut Writing Project, grilled cheese, and well-written HBO shows. Of course, books play a big role in her life. She's also a fan of writing silly third-person bios, and (on a more serious note) would like to thank Jason, Kelly, and Jane for their dedication to The Connecticut Writing Project and to the general enjoyment of the teachers involved. She would also like to thank her mother and father for birthing her, and for encouraging her to stretch herself both academically and creatively. Kate attended the 2014 Summer Institute.

Jane Cook has been working as a Literacy and Technology Coach for over 30 years. Since 2007, Jane has served as the CWP Technology Program Leader, designing and helping maintain the CWP Web site and providing literacy and tech seminars. She loves providing technology support to the Summer Institute participants. Jane began writing for her high school newspaper and has never stopped. Jane attended the 2007 Summer Institute.

Emily DeFord earned a BA in English as well as a BS in Secondary Education at the University of Connecticut. She is currently working towards her MEd in Instruction and Curriculum, also at the University of Connecticut. She is a Teacher Consultant for the National Writing Project, working closely alongside colleagues at the Connecticut Writing Project's Storrs site. Emily is currently working to compile her own collection of poems and flash fiction for publication alongside completing her Master's Inquiry project on high school writing centers. Emily attended the 2014 Summer Institute.

Jason Efland has taught social studies for twelve years. He is currently starting his 8th year at Suffield High. Beyond his love of primary documents, he hopes to help his students become better writers and spare them the pain of being unprepared for life, something he notes as a personal conflict he experienced when he entered college. Outside of the classroom, he is fascinated with zombies and the social and political critique they offer us. His favorite reads include *The Onion*, Terry Pratchett and anything else that will allow him to laugh out loud. Jason attended the Summer Institute in 2014.

Mary Ellen Ellsworth, whose Ph.D. in English is from Columbia University, has attended several CWP workshops. She has taught writing for over 30 years at CT colleges and universities, including Connecticut College, Eastern Connecticut State University, and Quinebaug and Three Rivers Community Colleges. While at ECSU she also directed CT Humanities Council grants that brought teachers of writing together with museum and research specialists. She is the author of *Gertrude Chandler Warner and the Boxcar Children and A History of the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1799-1999*. She and her husband raised their 4 children in nearby Eastford, CT.

Ethan Fortuna is a social studies teacher whose expertise is early modern Eastern Europe, primarily Poland and Lithuania. He has many varied interests and is currently using his free time to work towards fluency in multiple foreign languages. He is also working towards the goal of joining the elite Highpointers Club, which requires summiting the highest point in all of the 50 states, a feat that only 273 people have achieved. He is also a huge Ultimate Frisbee and bowling enthusiast. He is also looking to return to graduate school to obtain his master's degree. Ethan attended the 2014 Summer Institute.

Kim Kraner is an English teacher at Avon High School. Before she became an educator, she worked as a freelance writer and in marketing. Kim attended the 2014 Summer Institute. She lives in Granby with her family and three border collies. Besides reading and writing, she enjoys black coffee and long walks in the mountains.

Kimberly Mach attended the Central Connecticut Writing Project at CCSU during the summer of 2013. She completed all requirements of the program and currently teaches in Region #13 at Memorial Middle School in Middlefield, CT, as a grade 6 Language Arts teacher.

Ruth Macijauskas Ruth teaches 8th grade ELA at Two Rivers Magnet Middle School. She's mostly a mom and a teacher, but in her rare spare time, she enjoys hiking and kayaking. Writing has always been a passion of hers and the Connecticut Writing Project has only strengthened that passion. Ruth was named Connecticut Adult Educator of the Year in 2008. She attended the Summer Institute in 2014.

Lauren Midgette is a graduate of the University of Connecticut. She currently teaches English/Language Arts to 11th and 12th graders at Bulkeley High School. Lauren helped launch the Warrior Writing Center at Windsor High School in 2013, as well as teaching a course for UConn's ConnCAP program. Lauren attended the 2014 Summer Institute. She would like to thank her friends and family for their constant love and her amazing students who inspire her to get better and keep writing every day.

Amy Nocton teaches Spanish and Italian at RHAM High School. During the 2013-2014 academic year, she began blogging with her UConn Early College Experience students and discovered that the blog has been a useful tool for teaching writing in a second language. In November 2014, Amy will be presenting a paper at an international conference on teaching languages in Florence, Italy based on her experiences with blogging in the second language classroom. She travels almost annually with students, and is lucky to be part of an annual sister-school exchange program with Córdoba, Spain. She lives in Storrs, CT with her brilliant professor husband, Jason Courtmanche, and their two quirky, spirited children, Cormac and Elsa. Amy attended the 2014 Summer Institute.

Danielle Pieratti teaches high school English at South Windsor High School. Her poems have been published in *The Paris Review*, *Boston Review*, *Rhino*, *Barn Owl Review*, and other journals. She is the author of "By the Dogstar," the 2005 winner of the Edda Chapbook Competition for Women, and a new chapbook of her poems is forthcoming from Dancing Girl Press. She also facilitates the CWP's monthly Teacher-As-Writer workshop.

Bob Pirrie is a teacher of chemistry and other sciences at E. O. Smith High School in Storrs CT. He has no bloody clue as to how he got started writing, other than a vague memory of having read Anne Lamott's "Bird by Bird" one summer in a cabin on an island off the coast of Maine. He enjoys teaching science and very much appreciates all the help he has received from his English department colleagues and fellow CWP-ers in producing anything that could be considered worthwhile. Bob attended the 2014 Summer Institute. For further information please send a S.A.S.E. to E. O. Smith, c/o the author.

David Polochanin teaches at Gideon Welles School in Glastonbury. His essays have appeared in *The Hartford Courant* and *Boston Globe*, and his poetry has been published in *Albatross*, *Sentence*, *Blueline*, *Negative Suck*, *Toasted Cheese*, and other journals. He was a Connecticut Writing Project fellow in 1999.

Bernie Schreiber spent his first twelve years between Germany, Israel, and Sweden. After emigrating with his family to the U.S., Bernie lived and went to school in Connecticut, graduated from UCONN with a BA, and later received a master's degree in Language Arts Education from ECSU. After teaching at the Ashford School for 32 years, he retired to focus on his growing family, violin and fiddle playing, and writing. Bernie attended the 2011 CT Writing Project Summer Institute and audited a class on creative nonfiction with Lynn Bloom during the spring semester of 2014.

Elizabeth Ellen Simison is a ninth-year English teacher at Bacon Academy in Colchester, CT and an adjunct for the First Year Writing Program at the University of Connecticut. She enjoys the ocean, black Labradors and Irish gingers (especially the one who asked her to marry him). She soldiered through (and survived) the 2014 Summer Institute of the Connecticut Writing Project with ten other brave souls and is a better person for it. As an added bonus, she now feels confident that she will survive the upcoming Zombie Apocalypse, whenever that may be. She loves to read for pleasure when she has the time, but more often finds herself buried in essays of the academic and creative nature written by teenagers.

Steve Straight is a professor of English and director of the poetry program at Manchester Community College. His two books are *The Water Carrier* (Curbstone, 2002) and *The Almanac* (Curbstone/Northwestern, 2012). He was a Connecticut Writing Project fellow in 1990.

Charlie Vousden participated in the CWP during the summer of 1983. After getting his Master's Degree in English from the University of Connecticut, he taught English and an array of other courses at Manchester High School until 2012. He currently lives with his wife and daughter in Coventry, CT, and works as a financial researcher for one of his former students. Like every other English teacher, he is working on a novel in his spare time.

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