

# The Blue Guitar



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## Editors’ Note

The artists who provided the written and visual works in this issue put in much time and effort in the pieces, from start to finish. I hope you enjoy them as much as we have as we put this issue together.



**Co-Editor  
 Richard H.  
 Dyer Jr.**

The next window for submissions is Feb. 1-March 4 for the Spring 2019 edition.

A fellow artistic welder likes to say “Time to burn metal” before taking on a project. So to you, I say time to type or pick up a pen, charcoal, chalk, stylus, camera or paintbrush – or in my case, an oxy-acetylene, MIG or arc welder – and create. The world is better for it.

\*\*\*

We tend to write an editors’ note after the issue is completed. Sometimes because we are seeking inspiration. Other times it’s to stretch a topic to fill the space. And then there’s an anniversary or milestone, like this issue, Vol. 10, No. 2.

Time flies when you’re having fun, right?

Thank you to all of the written and visual artists who have allowed us to showcase their great works over the years. We hope you continue to submit.

Scroll down the page at theblueguitarmagazine.org and you can download the inaugural issue of The Blue Guitar, Spring 2009. All of the other issues are there too, including when we briefly expanded from two a year to three. Since then, we have added the summer Unstrung poetry magazine (check it out at theblueguitarmagazine.org/6.html) and The Blue Guitar Jr. (the latest issue was just uploaded in mid-November at theblueguitarmagazine.org/4.html), the latter for children’s literature and art.

– Co-Editor Richard Dyer

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The Blue Guitar arts and literary magazine is a project of The Arizona Consortium for the Arts

[www.TheBlueGuitarMagazine.org](http://www.TheBlueGuitarMagazine.org)

Fall 2018

# It Was Quiet in My Head

By Ava Kim

© 2018

**I**t was quiet in my head. A sort of odd silence which I filled up with personalities and thoughts. Who was I? Why am I alone?

I was alienated, I felt so. I was alienated by the bonds that others had. A friend — was it really a friend? I had no idea. It was an odd feeling being alone.

“Talk to me then,” said Person A, who spoke into my mind without emotion. I had wished to speak to someone, so I created a person. They had no purpose other than to ask of my well-being and my life because I didn’t want to tell anything about myself to real people. They were too judging, and they weren’t me. People hid things. I couldn’t hide from myself.

“I am alone,” I told Person A, who nodded. I continued, feeling no fear of Person A because it was not real. It was a child my mind had born because I selfishly needed someone to talk to. “I can’t connect with others, they don’t understand me. I want to die.”

“L’appel de vide,” Person A replied sagely, as if they truly knew what I was talking about. L’appel de vide was a term I had encountered in an insignificant book. It was a term expressing the calling of death. Like the brain telling one to stand in the middle of the road.

“You aren’t going to commit suicide, are you?”

“I’m not, I’m too scared to do it,” I told Person A. If I were to speak this to a real person, they would express fake or genuine worry or sympathy because it was the social norm. Their fake worry and fake faces. My

friends, could I even consider them such? Or perhaps I’m in the wrong; perhaps I am surrounded by people who didn’t care about me. Maybe if I was surrounded by people who cared about me I would be able to confess freely. “I wish I could love somebody.”

“You love your parents,” Person A told me, a biased piece of information. You are to love your parents, you are to love your friends, said the Christian Bible. A book used often by racist people as an excuse for their actions. Love the foreigners because you are one, love all people. How odd a book of love was used hypocritically.

“Do I really? I could be compared to a dog or cat. I was raised and taught to love them. A dog loves their master because the human taught them so. The dog was raised by a man who fed them and cared for them, so as the man being their surrogate ‘parent,’ they did not know of a true love in a maternal form with their own kind. Only what the human allows them to do. So, did I truly love the ones who cared for me because it was necessary for my growth or did I truly love them?” was my long-winded answer. Person A stared blankly at me.

“You are a cat or dog then. Love your masters,” was the short and curt answer. I couldn’t tell if Person A truly meant the answer or if they were just agreeing with me. There was a lot I couldn’t tell with Person A, despite the fact I had created them. Maybe because I

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Ava is a sophomore at Desert Vista High School. She spends most of her time thinking in endless circles that lead nowhere. When she’s not doing that, she’s either procrastinating, writing, or drawing. The future for her seems very far, so she instead focuses on living today in the best way possible.



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created them I couldn't understand their feelings, their emotions. Person A was a part of me, yet such a foreign and removed part of me.

"I am alone," I said again, my head running in shallow tracks and shallow answers.

"I'm sorry," was Person A's answer. The apology felt insincere and heartless. A fake reply to a fake question. I didn't know if I felt alone. Did I ever feel safety and security in another person? I had confessed to a stranger once. Did I talk with them because I felt the safety of never knowing them, the fact that they didn't know me? I would never see them, and they would never see me. A stranger would stop a suicidal person because they could. They wouldn't stop for anyone else.

"Should I tell them the truth? That I am alone? That I am suicidal?" I asked Person A, whom I didn't know at all. What a silly thought; I was worried for a figment of my mind standing in for a caring person I never had in real life.

"They don't look at us," mused Person A. "Whenever we try to talk to them, they ignore us, they don't even see us. Are they really our friends? They don't care for us, we are an interloper from another world. An alien. Why are we blaming ourselves for being alone? They never opened to us!"

Person A died again. I killed this Person A. It was reflecting my dark thoughts too much. I need a confessional that wouldn't turn dark again. Or perhaps this was the true nature of a human being? I didn't understand. Why would my thoughts sour so quickly?

"I am alone," I told a newly birthed Person A who nodded to my question. It was almost a greeting that I gave to every new Person A. "I need a friend."

"I will be your friend," said Person A, kindly and sweetly. I shook my head with a mournful sigh.

"You cannot be my friend. You aren't real." I rejected the offer with a bit of sadness. In real life, nobody would offer such a thing as genuinely as Person A. My confessional, my empty doll I spoke to. I didn't love it as I did humanity because it lacked what I loved in humans. Person A was me, and I hated myself. Indirectly, I hated Person A as I would hate myself.

"It's okay. The best things are fake anyways. Who needs reality?" This time, Person A was being weird.

The offer was too sweet, too tempting. I froze. I had this offer several times, but I had never accepted. I didn't know what would happen if I would accept, if I let Person A carry me away on this offer of friendship. It was a sweet lulling thing and I hated it. It reminded me of everything I didn't have. It reminded me of poison in a teacake.

"I'm lonely," I said to a new Person A. The other Person A died without a second thought. Reborn, reborn, endlessly. Filling in my abyssal problems with recyclable and empty thoughts. It was trying to fill a water tank with a hole by dripping water into it. It would just all spill out.

"I see." This time Person A didn't care about me. It wasn't interested in me.

"I'm alone." A new Person A. I wanted someone who could care about me. Person A did not reply. I killed it almost immediately.

"I'm alone."

"Alone."

"Did you make yourself alone? Why are you blaming others when you didn't open up yourself," spat my self-hate. A vile and disgusting thing it was. I ignored it pointedly and kept looking for the perfect Person A. Where had my confessional gone? Why had it abandoned me? Perhaps Person A no longer wanted to listen to my ramblings, perhaps it hated me too.

"I'm alone," I said out loud. My mind was quiet. It was a silence I had filled with empty and repeating phrases. I would always be alone by the end of the day. There was nothing else left to do but cry.

I was always drowning in my misery. What was the purpose of such action? Why was I crying? It was just comforting, to cry and to cry. I just wanted to scream and cry.

Why does nobody care for the screaming voices of millions? People hide too many things. They can hide their hate, their love, their sadness. I am guilty. I was hiding my true feelings and filling it with fake love and fake emotions. I never understood why people did that. I'm GUILTY of the same thing, however, so I have no say in the matter.

It was quiet in my head. A sort of odd silence which I filled up with personalities and thoughts. Who was I? Why am I alone?

# On Buying a Minivan

By Sahar Mitchell

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The time my brother Dennis left for good, his little ones figured it out before I did. They knew immediately that he wasn't coming back. He'd only been out of prison about two weeks. Usually he'd go at least a few months before falling backwards after doing time. At first, my niece and nephew and I went about our business. It wasn't that much different than when he was still locked up. Besides, Dennis often left for a whole weekend when he was a free man, a battle I chose not to fight. We had a don't ask don't tell policy as long as he didn't bring home any junk, guns or whores. The whores I secretly didn't mind so much because, as Dennis always said, I loved to mother a broken woman.

This week felt different, though, and goddam if I didn't feel terrified by the hole he left. Monday went by, Tuesday did, Wednesday. Thursday, that's when I noticed it with the kids. Brave didn't stick his fingers in his sister's ears like he liked to. Chandra didn't pick at the bits of ketchup that I could never get off the splintering kitchen table as she liked to. Both of the kids asked more questions than usual about where their dad was really going this time, so maybe he said something to them before he left. Couldn't get anything out of them, though. As that day went by, they looked at me funny, faces like little stones. I knew that look from when I was a kid. When you knew the grown-ups were telling you lies. And that's when it hit me.

That night, after I put the kids down, I could barely hold myself together. I had wanted to weep, but I knew crying wouldn't solve anything. It never did. But I also didn't know what to do with myself, so I went outside and sat in the dry dirt of the yard. We lived in a mostly quiet part of the "bad" neighborhood with the few other black people who lived in

Tucson. The police usually just drove on to the apartments at the end of the street because that's where all the action was, not here. It was close enough, though. I knew the kids knew what went on down there. Kids know more than people think they do. Especially since that's where we'd find Dennis when he was looking for trouble. Luckily, we got left alone for the most part, by the junkies, the dealers and the cops.

Boy, when Dennis and I were kids, though, we didn't have that choice. We lived right in the thick of it when we still lived in Phoenix. I remember how the other kids would avoid our block when they walked home from school. Like the rundown haunted witch's house in kids' movies. When Dennis and I got older and we'd have some friends from outside the neighborhood, we would be silent as they would talk about where "the crack was." "Yeah," I would think, "I know. That's the street where I live."

I'm not sure how long I sat there, but my friend Adrian who played the xylophone in my jazz band eventually came out of the house. He was in love with Dennis, and often crashed on the couch in those brief intervals when Dennis wasn't doing time. I didn't kid myself — he didn't stick around just because I hauled around his marimba.

Out of his sweaty palm he weighed my hand down with four dollars in quarters. "What's this for?" I asked, hoping it wasn't some bribe to do his laundry, which I would do if he asked. While I was a sucker for the company, I'd make him fold half of it.

"Get us some Pabst at the gas station. I'll listen for the kids," Adrian said.

Adrian liked to drink Pabst ever since he saw the hipster

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Sahar writes things that people sometimes like. She has been a finalist for the Tucson Festival of Books literary award and her work has appeared in *Sandscript*, where she won first place in the prose competition in 2016. She's a former poetry slam winner and has volunteered with Kore Press, Pima Community College's Creative Writing Center and the University of Arizona's Poetry Center. One of few graduates of both Wellesley College and Coney Island Circus Sideshow, Sahar lives in Tucson, AZ with her husband and two daughters and can often be seen engaging in shenanigans with the Strange Family Circus.



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white kids drinking it at the retro dive bar where we played a regular gig on the last Saturday of the month. Those kinds of places kept us in business, bars that still booked live jazz for the vintage feel of it. Still, the drunks in those kinds of joints were always irritating, the guys in their fedoras and the ladies in their I Love Lucy dresses, dangling cigars, even the women, with way too much money and way too much self-assurance. Adrian liked them because he thought they all had 'style' and would tell me not to complain about the people who paid us.

I felt annoyed the whole walk down the block to the Quick Mart. Milling around the parking lot, a few of those old men with broken lives and no place to go stood under the glow of the gas station's sign. While fairly quiet now, there was still plenty of night to have some drama or other happen and pierce the air with sounds of gunshots or feet running with stolen beer, high-pitched whistles of the dealers.

In the store, I jiggled the coins in my hand. I walked to the beer cooler and thought about Adrian. At least he said 'we' and not 'me,' when he sent me to get beer. Still, I got some coffee instead. Not sure why since it was too late for that sort of thing, it just seemed the better choice. It tasted like rotten cucumbers and I realized on the walk home that I put way too much sugar in it.

Just before I sat back down in the dusty square of the yard, the military planes from the nearby Air Force base began to land for the night. Like every night, I worried that the kids might wake up, although I should have figured they were probably used to the noise by now. Then, the text came from my brother:

Im ok dont worry and fuck you. You think your always right. I'm outta here. Bitches.

It is 'you're' as in 'you are,' Dennis, not the possessive 'your.' I felt a bit like an asshole because that was all I could think about as my phone shook in my hand and my jaw tightened around my mouth full of stale coffee.

Adrian, who had gone back inside, came back out. The light on the porch flattened him into a shadow. He looked paper thin, like I could push him right over. "Keep the door open, but close the screen, I want to hear if the kids wake up," I said to him. He did what I asked and then untied the cushion from my porch swing. He spread it between us and sat on the very edge of one side. I'm not that fat, Adrian. I don't need that much room. He picked up the cup I had next to me, sipped the coffee and gave a sour face that was way too dramatic. I would have said something about him grabbing my cup, but maybe I could have at least gotten him a beer even though I didn't want one.

Still, I didn't say anything about it and neither did he, as I knew he wouldn't.

I stared at the sky and followed the sound of the airplanes. I played with the belt of the apron I wore when Dennis's kids were around. I felt more like an adult with the apron on. And with Dennis's kids, I felt like someone had to be.

"Sorry, I forgot your Pabst," I finally said and then added, "You are welcome to go get your own."

"Did Dennis ever call?" the words in Adrian's voice sounded small. He didn't look at me.

"Yes and no," I said after a few moments. "He sent a text."

"Is he coming back?" he asked.

I didn't answer and kicked at the gravel and hoped Adrian wouldn't ask again.

I didn't want to glare at Adrian, but something in the way he asked made me mad. His girly-ass whining. Maybe I was jealous that he'd been sleeping on my couch the past few days because he missed Dennis, not because of me. Everyone missed Dennis, even people who didn't know him missed Dennis. He was alpha dog, strong and handsome, and that's how it has always been. Even when we were kids. That's what always got him in trouble, too. Still, who wouldn't miss that when it's gone?

I didn't want to let on that I was mad. I didn't want to scare Adrian away just yet, even if his marimba now lived under the camper shell in the back of my ancient truck that had been recently towed from where it had died in front of the kids' school.

I picked up one of the small rocks beneath us. We didn't have the luxury of grass like better people. We were stuck with the reality of the desert, the lack, the thirst. Sitting in the front yard meant dust got all up in your nose, your mouth, your eyes and crusted there. Sitting outside was like picnicking in a rodeo ring, a movie of Cowboys and Indians (and you were most certainly the Indians in those kinds of games), our Tucson.

I rotated the rock to see if it had that hint of sparkle you find sometimes. Bits of shiny things stuck in the brown. When you are a kid, that sparkle meant magic. Some internal light that, if released, might give you some sort of powers. Could use some magic like that right now.

And then Adrian said, "He's not coming back, is he?"

"No, Adrian," I said as evenly as I could.

"Well, then it's time for you to get that minivan, it will make your life a whole lot easier."

"What the fuck do you mean by that, Adrian?" I could feel the anger creeping in and I tried to push it down.

I crawled into a silence and sat there in the dust of the yard.

My head felt so hot, now. I tried to calm it down enough to really get a grip on what was going on. This was it. I knew what the future was. Same as when Dennis and I got taken from our parents by our Aunty. I remember her crying into

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the phone, one of those old phones that sat on the wall and had a curly cord you could wrap around your arm. She'd be braiding my hair or fixing Band-Aids on my elbows as she waited on hold or explained to the 11th person that she didn't have an original birth certificate. The world seemed to punish her for being responsible for someone else's kids — not having the right paperwork, not being accurately listed as a guardian, not having a proper man around to help. I knew the path ahead of me. It started to break me and I couldn't help but yell at Adrian, the rage turning in me like a turbine getting faster and faster.

"I think that's the last thing I need to think about, goddam it. What a fucking stupid thing to say!"

I closed my eyes and settled my balled-up hands into my lap. I didn't even realize I had made them into fists. None of the other stuff about Dennis had an easy answer, so maybe Adrian was right. Even if I got the truck back up and running, the one bench seat was just too cramped for the kids and me. I needed back seats since they were getting so big. Yes, I could use a car I could fit my niece and nephew in, plus band equipment, if need be. Yes, this was the only choice to be made in the giant mess of today.

"Maybe," I said. "Sorry."

Later, lying on the floor between the mattresses I had for each kid, in the one bedroom in the house, I finally fell into a restless sleep thinking of minivans.

\*\*\*

I should have known better. The next morning, I knew why buying a car was at the front of Adrian's mind. I got a text from him when I was in the bathroom. I wasn't doing anything in there, just sitting since it was the only place the kids didn't bother me so much.

And I'll buy the truck from you with my money from last weekend, he texted.

Yep, there it was. The jazz trio Adrian and I were in had played a wedding last Friday, big money for us, so we were both sitting on a chunk of cash right now. That's what I planned to use to buy the minivan. Adrian had hinted at buying the truck a few times, so I shouldn't have been surprised. Plus, when I woke up and saw that the city had put another \$60 "neighborhood nuisance" ticket on my dead truck, I did feel trapped. I had nowhere else to put it but on the street, which would just rack up more tickets. Besides, while a bit of a pussy about many things, Adrian did know his way around cars and could probably fix whatever was wrong with the engine. Hell, I'd probably end up just giving the truck to him at this point since he'd get it gone. Still, I

felt a bit betrayed. What Adrian said last night about "making my life a whole lot easier" had nothing to do with me.

As the kids dressed for the day, moving around like I'd slipped sleeping pills in their eggs, the sadness sunk deeper and deeper into them. I tried to help by drawing ketchup faces on their toast, but neither of them said anything about it. After breakfast, Adrian, the kids and I got on the 22nd Street bus to take them to school — with a salami and cheese sandwich in one lunch box and a peanut butter and honey in the other, the way they liked them. Adrian and I walked up to Broadway from their school on 22nd and took the bus out to the address I had in my pocket.

"It's a nice day for it, anyway," Adrian said as the bus rolled through the midmorning traffic. Clouds were out, which promised rain, but this was the desert, and those promises were often broken. As we sat on the concave plastic seats, we slowly made it to the east side of town. The place with the mini malls that looked like cakes with their peach and pink buildings. Houses with tile roofs and yards like castle moats. Not what we called home.

"Living the dream," Adrian said without a trace of irony.

Walking from the bus, we found the address. The house looked like all the other ones. There was a new Toyota 4 Runner, gleaming with possibility, parked in the garage along with some tools that didn't look very used. In the driveway sat some boxes, tennis racquets, exercise equipment as if prepared for or cleaning up from a garage sale.

The minivan was on the street, clean and shiny. Framed around it, the neighborhood could be a picture for the "Visit Arizona" brochures we ran at my job at the print shop. The front yards clear down the street had prickly pear gardens walled off with some aloe plants. From somewhere in the distance came the smell of wet park grass. The sky even seemed a more vivid shade of blue in between the teasing clouds. These were the kinds of people who, through money and guilt and luck, could keep an 18-year-old minivan in mint condition. I called the number from the piece of paper in my pocket.

"Hello?" a voice answered.

"Hi, um, James? This is Kenyatta, I texted you about the Odyssey," I said.

"Oh sure, how close are you?" he asked.

"We're out front."

"We? Did you bring your mechanic?"

"No, just my friend."

He laughed so loud it blew out my phone. I wasn't entirely sure what was so funny. He spoke with a cheeriness that might have been polite or might have been talking down to

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me. So often in places like this, it meant talking down to me.

Adrian and I waited patiently on the sidewalk. I didn't feel comfortable approaching the house proper. I think Adrian and I both sensed that if we got too close to the house, the neighbors might think we were casing the joint.

When a man finally exited the front door, he looked a bit like an overgrown, balding middle-schooler in his khaki pants, blue polo shirt and red, round face. I wasn't sure if his hair was in some kind of comb-over or simply unkempt. As he came closer to us, it looked like he just woke up.

"Hi, I'm Kenyatta," I said.

"I figured," he said without shaking my hand. His words came slowly but in the same friendliness as his phone voice. He gestured to the van. "You wanna see it?"

"Sure." Walking next to him, I realized how ripped up my shoes were and thought that I should have shaved my legs. I still had the apron on from when I dropped the kids at school. I wondered if he would judge me for looking like an old black, bag lady.

"It's clean. Only about 180,000 miles on it, which is great for the year." The man stopped for a moment and sipped from the mug he had in his hand. It smelled like it wasn't entirely coffee. "All maintenance done, I kept a record when I did it myself, and have receipts when I took it to my car guy. Timing belt just changed out. We were the original owners. Well, my wife was. It was her car. She kept it really clean when it was hers." The man trailed off when he said "when it was hers" and his happy expression broke for a brief moment.

I wanted to deny that I smelled the whiskey on him, but unfortunately, I knew all too well what morning whiskey smelled like. He had cuts on his arms and I thought maybe one of his eyes looked a bit puffy, like he'd gotten in a fight. None of this made sense for the kind of guy I would have expected him to be. Then he started leaning more and more towards me like he was going to tell me a joke or a secret. I tried to step back but he almost had me pinned to the van. He stared at me with glazed eyes as if to say something but then shook his head and stepped back. He put his hand on my shoulder giving me a firm pat and glanced down at the cup in his hands. "Let me freshen my drink and we can take it for a test drive."

I wasn't happy with this guy. I thought that maybe I should leave. Shitty drunk at ten in the morning. This wasn't what I needed right now, another man to let me down.

But, dammit, I wanted this van. I needed this van. I knew I did before I even drove it. I could picture myself in it with the kids in the back. I could watch their legs get closer and closer to the floor from the rearview mirror as they grew into the people they would become.

We got in the car. I wasn't exactly sure what I was supposed to be looking for on this test drive. The truck I had was our old drummer's and that was the first thing I'd ever owned. It seemed like my upright bass would fit in the back, if I folded all the seats down on one side. The bass and kids could fit, so long as one of them rode shotgun. Everything could have its place. And when you don't have much, that was really something.

"You got kids or you going to use it for work?" James asked.

"Both," I said not taking my eyes off the road. Luckily, he was keeping his distance from me. Thank god for seat belts.

"Kind of work you do?" He asked with his outside voice. His eyelids drooped as the van bobbed along the rough streets. In a strange way, I felt comforted that the roads were shitty all over Tucson, not just in our part of town.

"I work in a print shop. But I'm also in a jazz trio. I play bass."

"No kidding, like Charles Mingus?" he asked.

"Um, yep, kind of," I had to slow the car. I wasn't expecting that answer. People in the suburban part of the city in ice cream colored houses didn't usually know who the hell Charles Mingus was. I turned off Broadway at a corner near an antique store and meandered through a neighborhood with too many cul-de-sacs.

"That's great. I love Mingus. I took a jazz appreciation class in college," the man said. "And you have kids?"

"No ... yes," I muttered. "Well, my brother's kids."

And then, he chuckled. Slow and even. The palm trees above us blew frantically, like they were laughing, too. I was at a stop sign so I had a moment to wonder if I should yell at him or laugh along with him. I mean, what the hell? What kind of response is that? I gripped my fingernails into the rubber coating of the steering wheel and decided it was time to head back to his house.

"That's a good choice you're making," he said as I turned onto Pantano Road.

"What, the car?" I asked.

"No, taking care of someone else's kids," he said.

"I'm not sure I had much of a choice."

"You do, you always have a choice, lil' Mingus, so good for you."

We stopped in front of his house. I wanted to ask the last question on my list, "Why are you selling the car?" but it felt invasive. I walked over to Adrian who was sitting on the curb browsing through Rolling Stone's "500 Best Albums of All Time" on my phone. "Get off my phone," I snapped, feeling embarrassed for being laughed at. I reached into his jacket pocket and pulled out the envelope with the cash I had gotten

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from the bank. Adrian, looking for a way to be chivalrous, insisted on holding the envelope.

When I turned back to James, he gave me a pensive look, the most serious he'd been since we met. He then glanced over my head and nodded. He straightened his back and rubbed the long brown and gray stubble on his chin. This motion made a cartoon scratching sound and I waited with the money in my hand. Instead of taking it, he glanced back at me and gave a quick smile that faded and fell as his eyes took in his shoes and his body slumped as if under the weight of a tremendous load.

"How about \$1500, then?" He said.

"It was listed at \$2100," I said and immediately felt stupid for reminding him.

"It's worth that, sure, but for you, \$1200. You know what? Fuck, I don't care, it was the wife's car anyway. Make it \$1000. Save the rest for those kids. Hey, you know anyone who wants to rent a house?"

Bitterness sputtered with these last few words. James rubbed the heel of his palms into his eye sockets and exhaled with a groan. It was like watching a turtle go back in its shell and I wasn't exactly sure what was going on. This guy was obviously having a breakdown, which I couldn't quite wrap my head around. This man appeared to have everything I didn't, and yet, he was falling apart. Through his unraveling, or maybe because of it, he chose to be nice to me? Because that, too, was a choice.

After James handed me the notarized copy of the title and I handed him the envelope of more money than I had seen in a long time, still less than I thought I would part with today, he disappeared into the open garage and emerged with some boxes.

"Here, lil' Mingus," he said, "I don't have much since the wife left with the kids, but see if you can use anything in this box."

I glanced into it and saw some dishes and a few oven mitts on the top.

"Sure, I'll take it, thanks," I said.

And then I walked to the van. I felt like I cheated him. A burn stuck with me like the sting of your own hand when you hit someone in a fight. When you hit someone, even when they don't fight back, it always hits you back. But I hadn't done anything wrong, had I?

As I got into the driver's seat of my new-to-me van, I rolled down the windows. James called to me, "You take good care of those kids." I didn't answer back but looked for longer than I needed at his image in my side mirror. He slouched like a scarecrow, limp and lifeless, against the perfect picture of his house and yard.

I drove away. I drove away and I had a vision of a perfect world, where some guy like James might meet some guy like my brother in a therapy group or something. We'd all go to picnics with their recovery bros, and their kids would come back and everyone would be together. Adrian and I would play 'Take the A-Train' with our band at one of their events and everyone would dance. I would have lost enough weight to fit into my Billie Holiday dress and have a giant orchid on the side of my head just above my ear. People would remember to bring lactose-free desserts for Dennis's kids. We would drink ice tea and no one would feel like their father had disappointed them. Even I would keep my mouth shut. But I knew that would never happen.

\*\*\*

I had a few hours before I had to pick up the kids, so I just drove. I drove and thought of where I'd go in the van — to Food City, the kids' school, maybe out to one of the mountain parks so we too could feel what it was like to be on top of the world. Adrian sat next to me and respected the silence I wanted to keep. I mulled around in my mind the exchange with the minivan guy and tried to make sense of his generosity.

When school was out, I dropped Adrian off at his apartment (he needed some fresh clothes) and brought the kids home in the van. I sat on the curb and the kids came and sat with me. There was a stillness around us, like we were sitting in mashed potatoes. The light through the clouds brought out the yellow in our skin, mine and the kids'. The humidity gave extra curl to Brave's afro and made Chandra sneeze, which shook her skinny, ashy legs.

I thought about Dennis and where he could be in this great big world. I thought about how he'd always charm the folks in the east Phoenix neighborhoods where we'd go trick or treating so we could get extra candy. How he got suspended in junior high for selling Blow Pops to kids for 50 cents that he got for a quarter at the gas station across the street from the school. How when he was 15, he talked the old ladies out of their Social Security money by offering to pick up groceries for them for a 'delivery fee.' Yes, he knew how to run a scam, but he always brought something home for me.

The clouds were thick and low and I loved this. Rain in the desert. I breathed in and let myself miss Dennis.

"I miss Dad," Chandra said, her voice raspy from her usual shyness.

"I miss him, too," I said.

The thick air wrapped around my ankles and neck and I wondered if the kids wanted to go inside. Waiting for rain was probably not the most fun for a 6- and 8-year-old. I grabbed the

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**Continued from page 9**

kids' hands, one of theirs in each of mine. And then, I cried.

"What's wrong?" Brave asked me.

"I'm not sure," I answered.

"You never cry. Did we do something wrong?" he asked.

"No, I think I'm just ... glad to have you," I said.

"And that makes you sad?"

"It makes me happy."

With my back getting sore from sitting on the curb, I

thought of Dennis and how he had been this unseen center of our world. But he was gone. And here we were like the sun burned out. I also thought of the other men — that minivan guy who didn't have to cut me a break, Adrian who didn't have to come along to buy this damn thing.

Chandra offered me some Cheerios from the Ziploc bag that I kept in my purse for them. I ate the ones she offered me, even the ones that stuck to the filth in her tiny hand. And we sat. As close as three abandoned people could sit next to an old minivan, under clouds, before a life together.

# Angikar Sarkar

Phoenix Artist



**“Fifty Shades of Green”**  
Acrylic and watercolors  
April 2018



Angikar Sarkar, 31, is professionally a software engineer and an arts and music aficionado. He is originally from India and completed until third year in fine arts at the Indian Academy of Fine Arts. In 2009, he came to the states to pursue graduate studies at Texas. Since 2013, he has been staying in north Phoenix for professional connections. His wife, Samayita, is the biggest motivation behind his arts. Whenever he gets spare hours, Angikar involves himself in fine arts, poetry and music. Acrylic and watercolor are his specializations, but he also finds immense pleasure in charcoal art, sketching, pastel touches and tempera. He believes that music and rhythm exist everywhere in this universe, maybe in different forms and shapes. As an artist, he wants to explore that symphony and correlate that rhythm with lives, myths, mythologies, objects and nature. Symphony brings happiness and happiness breeds excellent artworks, which is where his arts are coming from. The artist can be contacted by email: [thisisangikar@gmail.com](mailto:thisisangikar@gmail.com), or phone: 409-210-9116. He is also reachable by Facebook: [facebook.com/angikar.sarkar](https://www.facebook.com/angikar.sarkar), where he also showcases different albums of his artworks.

# Angikar Sarkar

Phoenix Artist



**“Serenity Chapter I”  
Acrylic and watercolors  
December 2017**

“Nature always wears the colors of the spirit,” Ralph Emerson once said. It is true, indeed. It is actually impossible to portray the actual beauty of nature in a mere canvas with a few colors and brushes in hand. The vastness is more than that. This is therefore a very miniscule effort to depict the beauty of nature. “The clearest way into the Universe is through a forest wilderness ...” and “Wilderness Chapter I” and “Wilderness Chapter II” try to tell the same thing. “Green is the prime color of the world, and that from its loveliness arises” — “Fifty Shades of Green” exactly speaks about the same thing. Even as everything is green, still there is no monotony, and each and every hue is visible. “Every flower is a soul blossoming in nature,” and rose is the queen among them. It is more beautiful while its scent is mixed with nocturnal enigma, and “Night Rose” tries to portray the same. “Winter is an etching, spring a watercolor, summer an oil painting and autumn a mosaic of them all.” The peace lies in autumn and the “Serenity Chapter I” canvas over the same thought.

- Angikar Sarkar

# Angikar Sarkar

Phoenix Artist



**“Night Roses”**  
Acrylic  
February 2018

# Angikar Sarkar

Phoenix Artist



**“Wilderness Chapter I”**  
Acrylic  
May 2018

# Angikar Sarkar

Phoenix Artist



**“Wilderness Chapter II”  
Watercolors and acrylic  
May 2018**

# 2 Poems By Ambur Wilkerson

## As The Sun Comes Up

© 2018

As the sun comes up  
I look for something new.  
The motivation to try,  
answers to questions left unanswered,  
clarity through the confusion,  
purpose when I feel stuck  
and when the world feels still.

As the sun comes up  
I regret long nights  
and the absence of slumber.  
I wonder what I'm doing  
and where I'm going  
and who I'm becoming  
and I'm realizing that red doesn't mean go  
and green doesn't mean stop  
and I need to find some type of balance.

As the sun comes up  
I say goodnight instead of good morning  
because I just haven't slept yet  
and my mind needs more rest than I do.



Ambur Wilkerson is a 23-year-old who loves writing and the many forms it comes in. She received her B.A. in English with a focus in creative writing from California State University, San Bernardino, in 2016 and is now pursuing an M.A. in journalism at the University of Arizona. She's invested in topics such as social issues, mental health, entertainment, beauty, and lifestyle. Her blog, [theamburaesthetic.com](http://theamburaesthetic.com), focuses on self-growth, mental health, faith, and her experience as a twenty-something-year-old woman. She enjoys telling stories and sharing experiences that will educate, inspire, and hopefully move others.

# This Is Art

© 2018

This is art.

Painfully painted by the tears I wouldn't cry in front of you,  
hand sculpted by the years I gave my all to you

Nothing more,  
nothing less  
than the truest form  
of unconditional love

Pain is art.

And I let you be the sculptor  
while I was the clay.  
I stayed still in your palm  
with the ability to be molded in any way  
you wanted me to,  
you needed me to.  
Tricking me into believing  
this is unconditional love

Healing is art.

Finding truth is art.

And as I lay still on your canvas,  
designed in your image,  
I ache to take on a different form  
where your darkened colors are diminished.

I want that for myself.  
I need that for myself.  
Eager to discover real unconditional love

# 4 Poems By Janet McMillan Rives

## Old Colors, New

© 2018

I built my studio  
under the wooden ironing board  
in our stark white kitchen.  
The medium—Crayons,  
the style—kid art.

I smelled angel food cake  
cooling on a Coke bottle,  
imagined twelve egg yolks  
waiting to become baked custard,  
chose my favorite colors:  
    Prussian Blue  
our New England sky.  
    Indian Red, Umber, Carmine,  
leaves clinging to October maples.

Colors tinted those I loved:  
    Flesh  
my mother's soft skin,  
    Burnt Sienna  
my sister's freckles,  
    Cobalt Blue  
my father's eyes,  
    Black and White and Orange,  
our cat's fur.

New colors pour  
from a fresh pack.  
Wild, brilliant, explosive:  
    Fuchsia, Cerulean, Vivid Tangerine.  
These are not comforting shades,  
just reminders  
of how things change.



Janet McMillan Rives resides in Oro Valley, Arizona. She grew up in Connecticut and Tucson and is a graduate of the University of Arizona. She spent thirty-five years as a professor of economics and is retired from the University of Northern Iowa. Her interests in retirement include flower gardening, golfing, reading, and writing. She is a member of the Iowa Poetry Association, the Arizona State Poetry Society, and the Tucson Poetry Society. Her poems have appeared in *Lyrical Iowa*, *Sandcutters*, *The Avocet*, *Unstrung*, and *Voices from the Plains*.

# Suspended

© 2018

*after Karen LaMonte, "Colored Clotheslines 1995"*

Breezes blow through,  
catch the leg of my pants.

Golden green breezes color  
my day with sunshine.

I hang suspended  
waiting to see  
if the weather  
will change.

# Penmanship

© 2018

was something I was good at  
like baseball and drawing and math,  
not like ballet or swimming, not like science.

I fit capital **E** into the big space  
with the faint dashed line bisecting it horizontally.  
I squeezed small **d** and **b** under the dashes  
and let poles that braced them rise upward.  
My tails on **g** and **p** dipped below the bottom line,  
while **m** and **n** stayed above.  
I let capital **K** take up all the room it needed.

In those days we practiced our capital  
and small letters on double-lined paper.  
Now we memorize case-sensitive passwords,  
codes meant to keep people out of our business.  
We practiced letters back when we spoke in writing,  
back when we saved our written word  
to send as a rare gift to a friend.

# Amish Roofers

© 2018

We see them all over town after the hailstorm,  
carried by van from their farms, too far away  
for horse and buggy of the Old World Amish.  
They answer my morning greeting with *hello*,  
*cute puppy dog* just a slight German accent.

Each Amish congregation must decide  
what to accept of our modern ways.  
These men have accepted little.  
Their clothing is plain and humble: bright blue shirts,  
buttoned pants, suspenders, straw hats.  
Most are clean-shaven, unmarried,  
or bearded, married. No mustaches, though,  
too militaristic for these pacifists.

*Be ye not conformed to this world*, they are taught.  
Yet here they are among us  
doing what they learned at home.  
I watch them work, converse, laugh,  
brother with brother, friend with friend,  
impressed that these men have met a goal  
beyond my reach: They've held back time.

# 5 Poems By David Chorlton

## Dawn

© 2018

A kestrel on a street lamp overlooks  
the day beginning. On each horizon  
there's a glow, breaking through  
the doubts the night  
leaves behind. The animals who made their claim  
to the city  
return to mountain lairs  
with the taste of darkness on their tongues  
while traffic,  
burdened with responsibilities,  
moves more slowly today than it did  
the day before. Sunrise coaxes birdsong  
from trees along the street, a nerve  
tightens in the kestrel's  
claw, and the sun as it rises  
touches each strip of cloud  
with the light touch of the hammer  
on a vibraphone.



David Chorlton has lived in Phoenix since 1978. Born in Austria, he grew up in Manchester, close to rain and the northern English industrial zone. In his early 20s, he went to live in Vienna and from there enjoyed many trips around Europe. In Arizona, he has grown ever more fascinated by the desert and its wildlife. "Selected Poems" appeared in 2014 from FutureCycle Press, and his "A Field Guide to Fire" was his contribution to the "Fires of Change" exhibition. The Bitter Oleander Press published "Shatter the Bell in My Ear," translations of poems by Austrian poet Christine Lavant. David's newest collections are "Bird on a Wire" from Presa Press, and "Reading T.S. Eliot to a Bird" from Hoot 'n Waddle Press in Phoenix.

# Noontime

© 2018

The time with no secrets is now,  
beneath a cloudless sky and a hawk  
who watches whatever moves  
and where it's moving to. Light soaks  
into the pavement and  
the soil alike, while traffic hums a lazy tune  
along the roads from  
work to lunch. The poorest of the poor  
are begging when the signal turns  
from green to red, and desperation has no place  
to hide. But the Earth sways  
gently, the oleanders smile, and the clock's hands  
meet in prayer  
precisely at the hour  
the sun sees more than any other  
time, when every lie meets up  
with its accuser,  
eye to golden eye.

# Afternoon

© 2018

A long train hauls a beam of sunlight  
through the desert on  
a Sunday afternoon, when the land  
bathes quietly in the heat  
of day. Above it, flying  
in the opposite direction,  
are Turkey vultures on their way  
to pick the tropics clean  
and leave their bones  
to shine. They all  
have far to go before the eye  
of Heaven winks to tell them  
it is time to rest. The iron heartbeat slows,  
and a kettle circles down  
to sleep. Mountains slip farther toward  
the edges of the Earth,  
each one now a sigh  
that glows on its foundations.

# Dusk

© 2018

The sky puts its lips to the Earth  
and sips the last  
light from the horizon. Now the constellations  
rustle into view  
and it's all the same which year  
shows on the calendar: The ancients  
cannot sleep. They sit  
around their fires and tell the story  
of how they came to be, a different account  
on every continent  
with floods receding to reveal their ancestors,  
improbable conceptions, prayer sticks  
and thunder. There is still  
far to go: The metals  
deep inside the earth have yet  
to be turned into trains  
who learn their high and lonely cries  
from hearing wolves at prayer.

# Midnight

© 2018

Above the patch of grass beside which  
is a garden swing seat  
and a frame with feeders hanging  
for the birds who come by day,  
the full moon absorbs warm light  
from the sun and sends  
cold light down to Earth where moths  
spread their intoxicated wings  
and feel the pull  
toward it. The clock shows self-destruction,  
drunken driving, and insomnia.  
There's nothing to be done  
but listen  
for the shot that breaks  
the silence, and meanwhile watch  
how palm fronds are sharpened  
to a point so sharp  
they cut the air and make it bleed.

# Mindy Timm

Phoenix Artist



**“Taco Tango”**  
Acrylic on wood  
November 2017



Mindy Timm is a Phoenix-born and -raised, self-taught artist and designer with a diverse yet cohesive style. Abandoning corporate “cube life” after decades as an accountant, Mindy views each new day as an artist as her opportunity to bring joy to others through her creativity. Influenced by a love of quirky retro graphics, Hispanic folk and religious art and bold colors, Mindy’s themes range from whimsical characters to dreamy interpretations of desert flora and all manner of whatever strikes her fancy in between. Mindy specializes in creating custom artwork, works in a variety of mediums and designs a line of modified tees and upcycled fashions under her Scissored Vixen brand. “I’m a champion procrastinator when it comes to updating my website, so please follow me on Instagram or Facebook to see my most current work as it develops. You will find a selection of some of my favorite images available on products through Society6, including the pieces featured in Blue Guitar,” the artist says. Go to [www.mindytimmartist.com](http://www.mindytimmartist.com) or [www.society6/mindytimmm](http://www.society6/mindytimmm). Reach the artist by email at [scissoredvixen@yahoo.com](mailto:scissoredvixen@yahoo.com).

# Mindy Timm

Phoenix Artist



**“Succulent”**  
Acrylic on wood  
June 2017

Because my styles and themes can vary so greatly, I really do have something for everyone in my work. Most people won't like everything I do, but almost everyone seems to love something I do. I'm thrilled when I see little kids and their parents – or even grandparents – having the same positive reaction to certain pieces, like “Taco Tango.” The work you see here in Blue Guitar was all painted (acrylic) on wood surfaces, including reclaimed cabinet doors for “Aspens” and “Sunpunchers.” I love the way wood – versus traditional canvas – really grabs pigmentation. I'm also a huge fan of mixing mediums and adding old jewelry, found objects and experimental techniques in my work. You can see an example of that in “Portal,” where I created a representation of a “flow of ideas” with colored pencil on paper. Once the edges of the paper were secured to the wood panel on which I had already painted the lightbulb image, I used an X-Acto knife to cut and pull up different pieces of the “flow” paper. I found a scrap of ball chain and an old key in my studio treasure stash to use as a pull chain for the lightbulb in this piece. Being a lifelong resident of Phoenix, I'm strongly influenced by my natural surroundings, such as the desert... And tacos! I've always loved tacos, but appreciation of the unique beauty of the desert didn't come to me until I was well into adulthood. Humor and music have always been huge influences in my artwork – and in my existence as a human. I don't feel life would be quite worth living without either of those things. Or tacos, for that matter.

- Mindy Timm

# Mindy Timm

Phoenix Artist



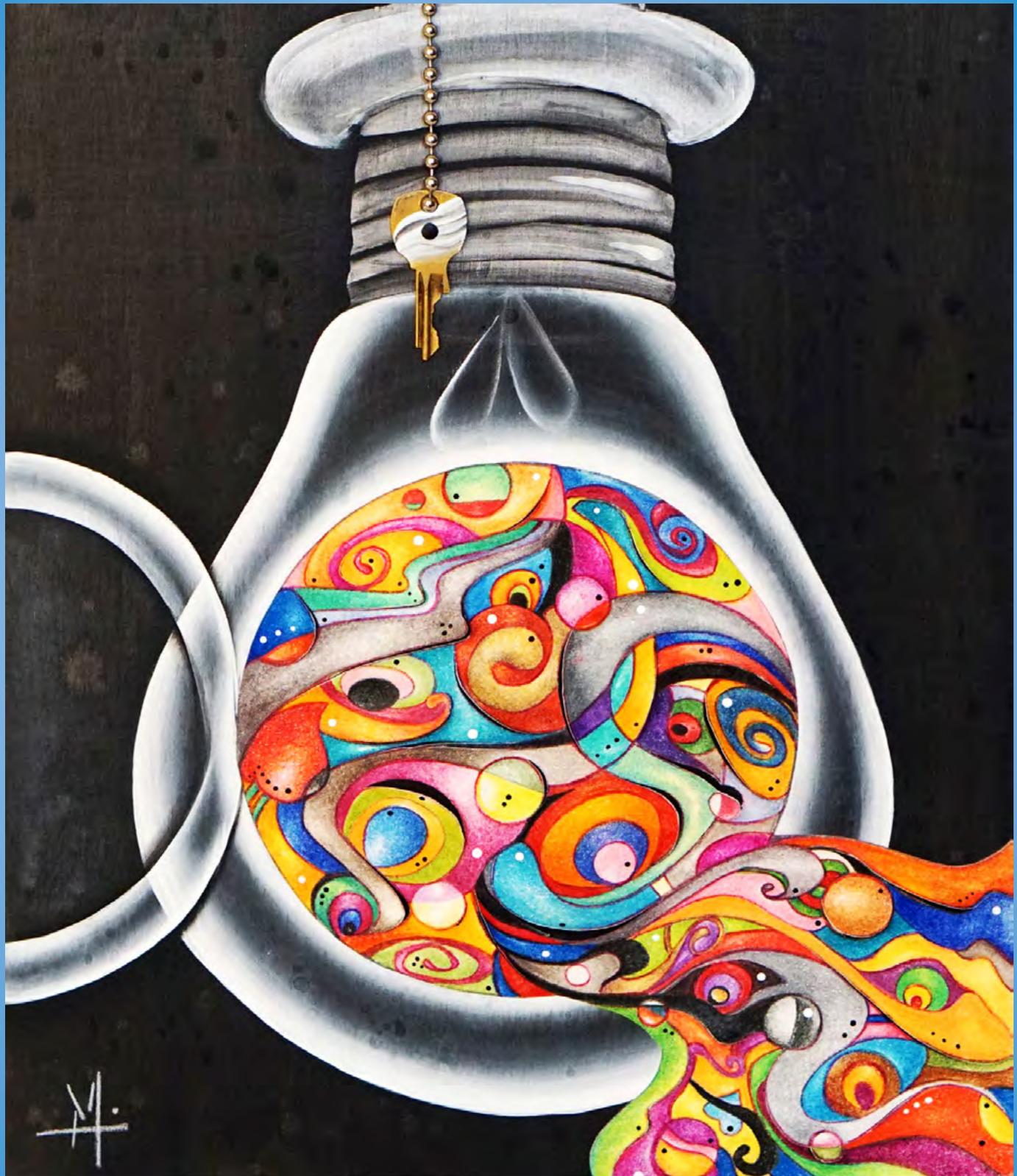
“Sunpunchers”

Acrylic on reclaimed cabinet door (wood)

September 2017

# Mindy Timm

Phoenix Artist



“Portal”

Mixed media (colored pencil, cut paper, acrylic and found objects) on wood  
December 2017

# Mindy Timm

Phoenix Artist



**“Aspens”**  
Acrylic on  
reclaimed cabinet  
door (wood)  
December 2017

# 2 Poems By KaristaRose Harris

## Take Care

© 2018

Run away, I no longer care how you fare,  
Take care, stay away I pray,  
Take care, my world I no longer share,  
Take care, take care, that's all I have to say  
Yes, take care that's saying a lot, yet a little

You threw the poison dart,  
My body became frayed,  
Crushed under your evil-laden cart,  
I silently laid  
You rocked my world apart, all my life I paid  
It's time for a new start,  
I bowed my head and prayed

I feel the heat, I feel the burn of the flame  
I shy away in my seat, and play your game  
Only you could make me feel defeat, feel shame  
This is the last time I feel beat,  
The last time you maim

Enveloped in your dark cocoon,  
I feel like I could die,  
Leaving not a moment too soon,  
I am now a shining butterfly  
I am from you now immune,  
I say my final goodbye  
Singing a new tune,  
Off into the beautiful world I fly.

KaristaRose is a native Arizonan, born and raised along Route 66 in Kingman, AZ. She has called the Valley home for the last 17 years along with her husband, son and their Sphynx kitties. She wrote her first poem at age 13 for a national high-school poetry contest and placed in the top 10 and was published in their national book. KaristaRose not only writes poetry and songs but also enjoys creative expression through painting, fashion designing and music. She attributes her range of creativity to both her parents, especially her father. Her Native American father wrote songs, sang, played multiple instruments and was a hoop dancer. He also painted and sold many of his paintings in museums across the United States. Her mother, as a writer, enjoyed poetry and songwriting and even had a few songs picked up by a record label. KaristaRose is working on several writing projects over the next year, with the first being the co-author of two books, "When I Rise, I Thrive" and "Shero's," scheduled for release later this year. Besides writing when the inspiration strikes, KaristaRose is an advocate for several national organizations and is heavily involved as a local community volunteer. Follow and contact her via Facebook at #karistarose or karistaharris@yahoo.com.



# 1 year of My Life

© 2018

Crying in the rooms,  
Talking in the halls.  
Pounding on the walls,  
Yelling everywhere.  
Hearts of stone,  
Broken with no hope.  
Anger too is shown.  
Wild, rebel children.  
Death awaits,  
Who will be his victim?

Doors with numbers,  
Hard beds, plastic pillows.  
Jail with open doors.  
Caged in like animals,  
These kids lived.

Shutup number 7!  
Timeout number 4!  
Restrain number 2!

Sad eyes, broken hearts.  
This is what was here.  
This was Westbridge,  
I know for I was there.

# 2 Poems By Marianna Neil and Marge Pellegrino

## Her first days in Tucson

Juana spends at Jim and Pat Corbett's small crowded home.  
Safe in the closeness and comfort they offer.

Inside Juana teaches Pat how to catch fleas on her cats, squeeze and pop them.  
Pat laughs and laughs at each capture and execution.

Outside Juana faces the desert's fierce summer heat  
the short sharp coolness of monsoons and steamy stickiness that follows.

Kay, from the camper, one of those who greeted Juana after the border—  
that Kay—invites Juana to come live with her.  
Kay is not a stranger, but a caring widow whose softness  
and easy smiles remind Juana of her mother left behind.

Sadness swirls with comfort  
like sugar and cream stirred into coffee—  
mixed until ingredients yield and transform into a separate thing,  
something that can't be divided or made pure, one thing and the other.  
The bitterness of Juana's terror and pain melts into learning-to-trust.

In the flower-bright kitchen  
Kay teaches Juana how to bake brownies.  
Juana inhales rich chocolate before pans come from the oven.  
She loves how Kay's friends expect brownies,  
how they delight in Juana's accomplished assistance  
how they welcome her into their community.

Even as Kay grows into Juana's *mami*, Juana's extremes swirl.  
The last bite of the brownie and ice cream stab her forehead.

© 2018



Marianna Neil was a Sister of St. Joseph of Carondelet for 35 years, serving in education and in counseling. She served as a Diaconal Worker for the Presbyterian Church at Southside Presbyterian Church in Tucson, from 1987 through 1997, in a program that assisted refugees settling in the area who were fleeing from civil war and torture in Central America. Marianna was instrumental, along with her partner, Amy Shubitz, in establishing the Owl & Panther Project. She continued to work with Marge Pellegrino in the program until she moved from Tucson in January of 2008. Her poetry has appeared in the "Writing from the Darkness" anthology as well as the lyrics for "Clarita."



Marge Pellegrino is a teaching artist who leads writing workshops in schools, libraries, and community settings. Her books include "Too Nice, My Grandma's the Mayor," the award-winning "Journey of Dreams," and the upcoming "Neon Words: 10 Brilliant Ways to Light Up Your Writing" (Magination Press, May 2019). Her poetry has appeared in *Amaranth Review*, *Sonora Review*, "Writing from the Darkness," "Arizona: 100 Years, 100 Poems, 100 Poets," *Long Island Review*, and the aforementioned "Neon Words."

# Days full of new beginnings

new places, new people.

Even though this *frontera* serves up an easy supply of  
*frijoles, tamales, tortillas*  
Juana tries peanut butter,  
and soon learns to remove sour pickles from her hamburger.

In the mornings, Juana learns everyday things—  
how to time crossing the street before the light turns yellow,  
when Mass is said at the cathedral  
and which bus will take her there.

In the evenings, Juana practices words she learned in the day  
but English words don't stick, they fall to the floor.  
*Es muy difícil aprender inglés—difficult to learn English*  
*w.o.r.d.*  
*by word.*

Kay can feel the heavy burden Juana carries each day.  
She sees her drop to the floor when a car outside backfires  
feels her tremble each time Juana prepares to go out on her own  
wearing the fear that police will recognize her  
holding a worry they will know she is someone without papers  
terrified they can send her back.

At night, storm clouds of the past engulf—  
la tristeza of never finding her disappeared husband  
the terrible longing for her children and mother  
snatch and grab in the dark.

Most nights she can only be soothed by rocking the doll Kay brought her.  
Juana rocks that doll and cries.



Monoprint by Aida Algozaibi-Stoklos.

The poems and artwork first appeared in “The Sculpture Speaks: A Refugee’s Story of Survival” published in 2017 through Mandorla Books. All of the proceeds of the book support the expressive-arts program of Owl & Panther, [owlandpanther.org](http://owlandpanther.org), a program serving refugee families impacted by torture and traumatic dislocation.

© 2018



Aida Algozaibi-Stoklos has been drawing inspiration from her surroundings and creating art as long as she can remember. “I was honored when Marge and Marianna approached me about doing the artwork to accompany their story of Juana. After reading the poems many times, I knew this was no ordinary project. I had to honor Juana with my work. I put myself in her shoes — imagining every feeling she was going through. By doing monoprints painted by hand, the work seemed to have a life of its own. Using no color other than sepia, brought it down to the basic. No frills.” For more about the artist, go to <https://aidaalgozaibistoklos.carbonmade.com/about>.

# Audra McGrew

Phoenix Artist



**“Schadel (German for skull)”**  
**16x20 canvas**  
**Acrylic abstract**  
**2018**



The artist writes, “I was born, in August 1982, and raised here in Arizona. Raised by my German grandmother, I started painting in 2008 while attending college at Mesa Community College and working at the Phoenix Art Museum. I studied art history and psychology and fell in love with painting while taking a prerequisite art history class. Unable to afford the art I wished to own, I decided to see what I was capable of. After a few consignments, commissions and local art fairs, I decided to take a break and focus on my growing family. After an eight-year hiatus and now a mother of four, I decided to start exploring new techniques and mediums. I didn’t waste any time jumping back in. I started working local pop-up markets in February 2018, and after starting my first Instagram in April 2018, the response I received encouraged me to treat my passion for art and creating like more than just a hobby. I’m currently a member of the downtown Phoenix Arts Committee and a small-business owner. I just opened my Etsy shop called Audra’s Dark Designs on Oct. 24. It is at [www.etsy.com/shop/audrasdarkdesigns](http://www.etsy.com/shop/audrasdarkdesigns).”

# Audra McGrew

Phoenix Artist



**“Gelbe Blumen”**

**16x20 canvas**

**Acrylic**

**2018**

Although the art industry drives artists to pick a medium and style and to stick with it, I love pushing my boundaries to see what I'm capable of. I really enjoy exploring new mediums and techniques, some of which end up being commonly found household items. Upcycled crafts are definitely a Huge part of my work. As a mother with strong roots in science and psychology, my work tends to be a bit on the surreal side. With an ever-changing theme, my work can vary from traditional romance to bizarre oddities. Sometimes all in one piece. I am always changing and growing, making it very hard for anyone to corner me into any specific category or label. I would like to invite my viewers to join me on my journey and see the world through my eyes.

- Audra McGrew

# Audra McGrew

Phoenix Artist



**“Vergessene  
(Forgotten in  
German)”  
36x48 canvas  
Acrylic  
August 2018**

# Audra McGrew

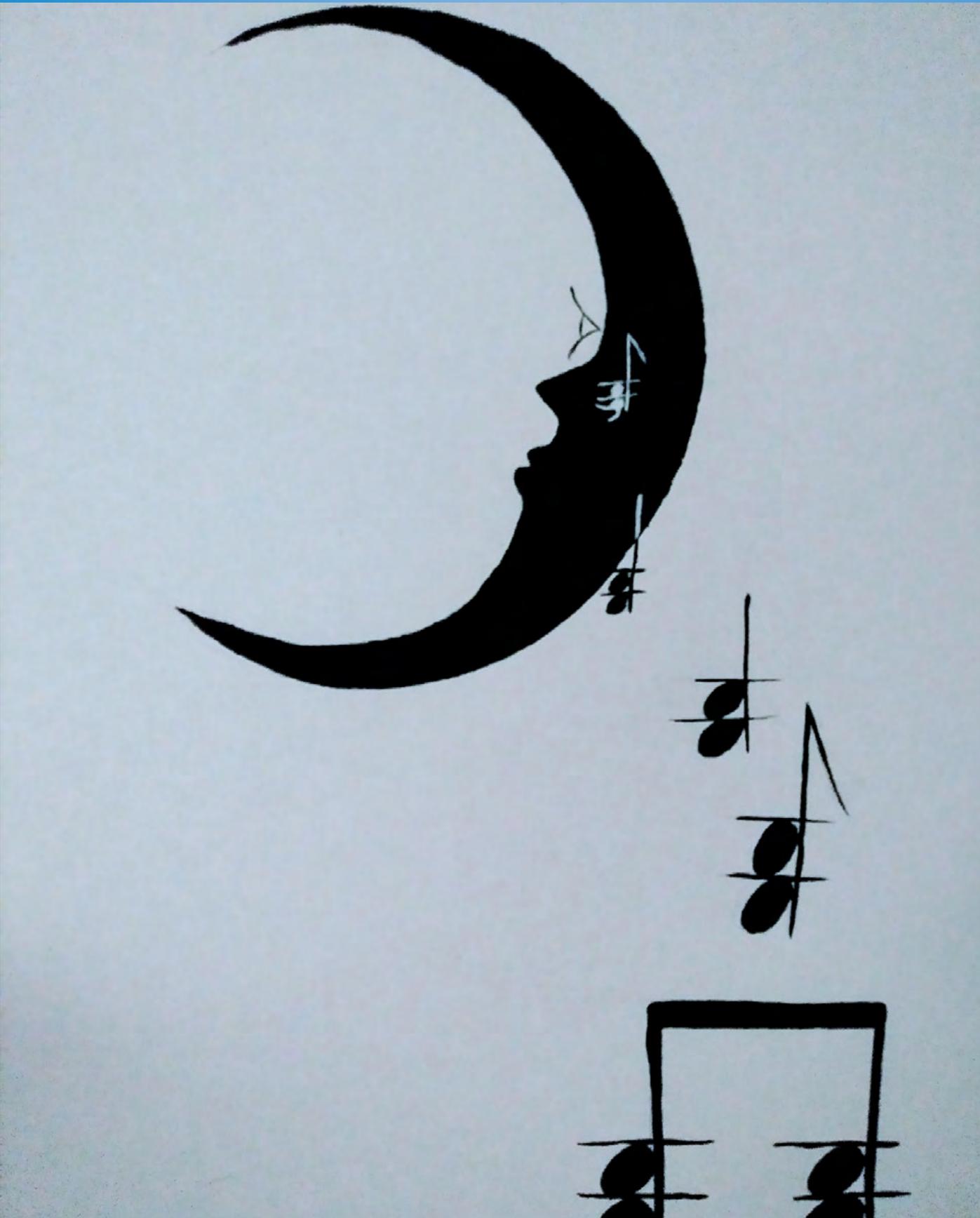
Phoenix Artist



“Bee Drawing”  
5x5  
Ink on paper,  
Pointillism  
Technique  
2018

# Audra McGrew

Phoenix Artist



**“Just Like Heaven”**  
16x20 canvas  
Acrylic  
2017

# Two Poems By Sandy Eisenstadt

## Night and Day

© 2018

The stars and moon shine bright in the night sky

A light breeze with the scent of orange blossoms is in the air

The only sound breaking the surrounding silence is the scurrying of an occasional small animal in the underbrush

And as the light from the moon ever so gently dances along the ground, gray and white colors appear and seem to sparkle and shine like the stars in the sky

As the night dissolves and the stars and moon slowly fade away, the first rays of the day peek through the once dark sky

Blue sky, scattered clouds and the sun hang high in the daytime sky

The golden rays from the sun reach down and warm the once cold air

And the silence that was the night is broken by the bustling sounds of people living their daily lives

And so, the day goes until it too slowly dissolves into the night as it has done a million times before and will do a million times more.



The poet writes: "I am originally from Scranton, Pennsylvania, a small town located in northeastern Pennsylvania. I have lived in Tucson, Arizona, for over 30 years. I attended Keystone Junior College and Temple University. I graduated from Temple University and studied creative writing while attending Temple. I am currently a member of a poetry writing group here in Tucson. In addition to writing, I also enjoy abstract painting. My e-mail address is [appraiser-2@hotmail.com](mailto:appraiser-2@hotmail.com)."

# Television

© 2018

Television always there

Many hours of our childhood spent in front of its screen

Never judging or arguing

Its sights and sounds seemed so real

Captain Kangaroo, Howdy Do Dee, and Sky King our first best friends

As we grew older and put our childhood fantasies and toys aside, television became less and less important to our lives

Knowing something had to be done to get us back and keep us near, television also grew and evolved

The television of our youth, the small little box with a screen inside, gone never to return

Flat screens, 100's of channels, with most if not all, available 24 hours 7 the norm and anything less will never do

We may come but the sights and sounds of television will always be there

# The Beast Calls – I Answer

By Victoria Glod

© 2018

**Y**ou crept in, like an intruder into the shadows of the night. You knew the power of your magic, the sensual caress of your spell. You knew I would fully surrender to your power to excite my senses, and you knew my complete inability to resist you.

That was who you were, and that was who you so completely knew yourself to be. Once I succumbed to your magnetic pull, you knew I would give all and risk all to be with you, again and again and again.

I let you take me to places I never knew I could go, deeper and deeper still, sometimes flirting with death, but always ready for more of you. Your allure was insatiable.

I am standing at a door. It is a door that I do not know, in a part of the city I do not know. There is nothing familiar about this, other than my sense of urgency. I knock, the door opens, and there you are, a representative of you. Then it happened, suddenly and unexpectedly, like a cosmic 2 x 4 slamming into me. That same cosmic 2 x 4 that can come along when we are flirting with danger, perhaps even death. It is our warning.

I look at you, gaunt and haggard, a mere skeleton of a man. As we prepare for the exchange, money for package, it suddenly happens. This loud voice, clear, and definitely inside my head, speaks very forcefully. "That is not who I am." I understand that I am not the junkie standing before me. I also get that it is not who I want to be. I made the exchange for the

last time, and for the last time I felt the rush of you entering my arm, clearly knowing how to prolong that rush as you quite literally moved through my veins.

I now know I need to leave this city, the place where I am from. It would be safer for me to go back to Hawaii, and so I prepare to leave. This city of Chicago where I was introduced to so much: war protests, racism, the Hippie subculture with its wild lifestyle, and Hepatitis B, which eventually blossomed into Hepatitis C.

I had just enough money to fly back to Hawaii. I would be in a relatively safe and beautiful place, living in a country house on the beach with friends. I say relatively safe, because I still had the pull of the mood-altering chemicals within me. I just began making some relatively safer choices, some of the time. On the way to Hawaii, I visited with my sister and brother-in-law in San Diego. Many tropical drinks comforted the withdrawals from the Beast.

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**T**he rest of this story and the book are available on my website. This book, "The Girl Behind the Fence: Anger," is the second in a series of books for women. All of the books are available in soft cover and pdf.

This is the project of Mozelle Martin, and there will be 15 books in the series. Many co-authors share their story and how they transformed. The first in the series is "The Girl Behind the Fence: Loneliness."



After working in the medical field and various mental-health positions, Victoria went on a mission to find her soul work. It began with a profoundly sacred experience with a dying wild animal, and thus began her study of animal communication. She later studied a powerful spiritual clearing process known as SRT (Spiritual Response Therapy). A memorable clearing she did was for an American veteran with PTSD, which resulted in the removal of all the trauma symptoms. Victoria is a co-author in this series of books for women. She plans to have her first solo book published this year, "Animals in Transition: Love, Loss, Grief, and Guilt." After two English teachers told her she needed to write, she has now begun. She can be contacted on her website at [www.VictoriaGlod.com](http://www.VictoriaGlod.com). Books are available in soft cover and pdf format on her website.

# Bad Boy Roo

## By Roxanne Redfawn

© 2018

I'm almost done braiding my long white hair after my morning shower when I hear them squawking like some old coyote maybe crawled under the fence to get them. Blackfire—I bet it's Blackfire after them. I'm bare-ass naked but I slip my boots on and run outside, down to the pen, my hair unwinding itself and flowing wild, my bones all rickety-like.

Sure enough, it's Blackfire raping my girls again. All day long raping my girls. And they don't like it. They sure don't. My big fat Piquante, she's running around the pen with that too-gorgeous midget rooster in tow on her back, complaining something awful. But it does no good. Blackfire's sticking the budding nubs of his spurs into her sides and hanging on with his beak in her hackles, and there's no toppling him off. I'm no good either, because by the time I get here, it's all over, "Thank you, Ma'am." And, anyway, if I try to stop him, he'll just do it again. Well, I don't have anything against sex, but you can see this ain't no gentle loving. Since Blackfire grew up enough to get his cajones in a tither, I've asked myself, "Annie, what good's a rooster, anyhow? We don't need any more chicks, my hens and me. We were fine just the way we were."

Now he's riding Ginni, and it's Redfawn next, one right after the other. Piquante shakes the likes of Blackfire out of her feathers. She looks at me and whines, telling me how it is.

"I know, baby. I'm sorry," I say to her in Chickenese.

I can't even pick up my girls any more to comfort them, because Blackfire gives me a dirty look, doesn't want me to touch them. My heart aches to cradle my babies in my arms again and smell their sweet feather scent. I want to bury my nose in Redfawn's extra-long little red neck. I need to love and kiss them. They're like human babies to me.

Well, it's all over now. At least it doesn't last too long.

Roosters are supposed to protect the hens, but if I was a hen, I'd rather get eaten by a coyote than tangle day in and day out with that roo.

Hens and roosters are different, see. The worst thing my hens have ever done is peck at each other now and then to show who's boss. I've never seen them even draw blood. And as soon as the other hen gives in, they're friends again. Well, I don't like it when I see this pecking order stuff. It kind of makes me sick. I try to teach my hens to be nice to each other and stop that meanness.

I just got through raising Blackfire and Redfawn together as chicks. Now Blackfire's on the make and Redfawn's laying little-bitty eggs. They'll get bigger later. A neighbor gave me these two chicks before you could tell whether they were boys or girls.

My little Redfawn, she's smaller than the other hens. Piquante's a big, heavy old bird, and Ginni is middle-sized, but it's Ginni that turns out to be top hen, even though Piquante has seniority in both age and time in my pen. That's because Piquante's a chicken—she's a chicken chicken.

I go back to the house to put on something to accompany my boots since it's a little chilly this morning. I don't like to wear clothes, and I don't have to wear any out here where no one can see me, because I'm at least a mile from the nearest house, except Jesse's, which is three quarters of a mile away. Reason I go naked is it feels so good with the breeze and sun on my skin. Loose and free—that's what I feel. People wear clothes to hide their bodies even on a warm day. It's not natural to cover up when the weather's good.

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Jean Hodgson, who writes under the pen name of Roxanne Redfawn, says: "'Redfawn,' the name of a real chicken, is also one of the characters in this fictional story, 'Bad Boy Roo.' Notice that 'Redfawn' is the last name of my pen name. The first name of my pen name is 'Roxanne,' which is the name of a goat. I am proud to be named after a chicken and a goat."

Roxanne Redfawn has pursued careers and hobbies in psychology, farming, philosophy, reading, art, teaching, scientific research, poetry, and, of course, fiction writing. She was raised in San Francisco and currently resides in an off-the-grid straw bale house on 40 acres in Cochise County, AZ.

When Blackfire and Redfawn were almost grown up, I took them out of the house where I'd been keeping the chicks warm until they had enough feathers, and after a while, I put them in the pen with Ginni and Piquante. When I came out to feed them, I saw those two older birds pecking at little Redfawn whenever she came to eat from the bowl. Redfawn, she came running to me: "Mommy, mommy, they won't let me have any!" I can tell what she means by her body language and I comprehend Chickenese. If you really watch chickens and try to relate to them, you'll be amazed at how they can communicate. Even people who have raised chickens for years, especially commercial chickens, sometimes don't know much about what they can do, unless they watch them closely and relate to them.

Anyway, I put out a second bowl for Redfawn, and Ginni came over to that one, too, and hogged it and pecked at my little red girl, then Redfawn hurried up to go back to the first bowl and tried to get some, but Ginni and Piquante came and scared her away from that one, too. I tried a third bowl, and that didn't work any better, because the bullies wanted all three bowls.

Well, I sure was disappointed in my hens when they did that, and I tried scolding them and shooing Ginni and Piquante away from the bowl I set out for Redfawn, but nothing I did worked. The hens got it that I didn't like it when they pecked at Redfawn, and sometimes if I was nearby, they didn't do it, but soon as I turned my back, I heard a little screech from Redfawn. Finally, I realized that you just can't wring that pecking order stuff out of a chicken.

Redfawn always got enough to eat, though. She just had to wait until the other hens were done eating, and then they didn't mind that she ate the rest. And she never got really hurt. It was just the unfairness of it that bothered me so.

It kind of puts a stain on my way of thinking about my hens, like it's a blot on something sacred. I struggle to put it all together in my head. I love all my hens, even when they're being lowdown meanies. I keep telling myself, "Forgive them, for they know not what they do." And that's true, I can see that with chickens. It's built into them and they really can't change it. And it isn't real meanness in them that makes them do that. I do forgive them, I really do.

It's like this: People say you can't housebreak a chicken. But I did, sort of. I housebroke Piquante. But then I know that if I leave her in the house long enough with the door closed, she'll go on the floor and not know to beg to be let out in time, like a dog or a cat would. It's probably just that Piquante's so tentative about being in the house, with all those years of me shooing her out, that now, when I let her in and leave her be for a while, she's kind of walking on eggshells, so to speak, so her bowels are kind of tentative, too. But you might say chickens

can change their nature a little bit even if they can't get over that pecking order business. Still, I don't ever leave Piquante on a rug.

Here's the thing. My hens have a sweet nature all in all, so there isn't that much anybody should want to change in them. There just isn't much slimy stuff that they need to get rid of. So, it isn't so hard to forgive them for not being perfect. Just like it was easy to forgive my son when he was naughty or my dear dead husband when he forgot our anniversary, or my boyfriend, Jesse, when he snuck up on me naked that time before he officially became my boyfriend, after I told him never to come over to my house without my expecting him.

And all three repented. Ha, ha. I made Jesse go down on his knees and beg for forgiveness, as if what he did was so terrible. Then I laughed at him because, I knew it wasn't sinful to marvel at the naked body of someone you love and that loves you back, and I knew he loved me even then, and he was pretty sure I loved him, too. My son never did the same naughty thing twice and my husband never forgot my anniversary again, and Jesse, well, Jesse still sneaks up on me naked, but by now he's already seen me naked lots of times, with my consent. Nowadays, I only bawl him out for sneaking up on me and scaring me half out of my wits, not for admiring my old body. I can forgive people for doing much worse things than my son or husband or Jesse ever did.

Jesus loved the sinner. If the sinner was a little hen that pecked another hen because that's what chickens are made to do, and if she didn't know any better and didn't know how to change herself, and if she didn't do it out of meanness but just because that's what chickens do, and if deep inside the chicken's real sweet and a good little thing, then I can see loving the sinning chicken.

Humans are another matter. On the one hand, some of the things some humans do go way beyond revolting. On the other hand, sometimes people do know exactly what they're doing, and they do it anyway. They don't care. Or sometimes people hide what they're doing from themselves to make themselves not responsible, but you can't hide an Easter egg without knowing you're hiding it, and without knowing where you're putting it. I think it's a sin to love some of these kinds of sinning humans, because it's like you're on the side of them instead of on the side of the creatures they injure so bad.

If they repent and really change, then maybe you can love the sinners because they came over to the side of the sweet little creatures. I don't think even Jesus could love a real slime ball, the kind that has no redeeming features that aren't in the service of the badness that's in him—like they might be funny and charming and all that, but they use that charm to steal your heart or your last penny—unless the slime ball sincerely repents. Or

maybe Jesus knows something about slime balls I don't.

As I said, I raised Blackfire along with Redfawn from a chick. I kept them in the house, so they were warm. I cleaned out their poop two or three times a day and I gave them fresh water and food maybe ten times a day because in just two seconds they'd knock all the freshened food and water out into the poopy pine shavings. I checked on them every couple hour even at night to make sure they were warm and happy. Just like with my human baby boy, I didn't get much sleep for weeks.

Well, while Redfawn was a gentle, respectful, appreciative baby, who looked me in the eye and responded and talked to me all day and night, peeping in Chickenese that she and I both somehow understood, Blackfire was a little asshole from the beginning. Excuse my language, but I went down a whole long list of words in my head to describe him and that was the one that fit best. Because he was so small, he couldn't do much harm, but you could see a little gleam in his snaky eyes even then. I noticed it right away, but I didn't think a lot about it then because, as I said, he was just a baby and couldn't do much to reveal his nature at the time.

But today I look back on him when he was a chick and I picture that look in his eyes. And I remember how he didn't respond to me at all. He just jumped out of my hands if he could when I picked him up. He'd look at me like all I was worth to him was something that would bring him food and water and get him what he wanted. Like I was just a tool. When I looked at him, it was almost like he was sizing me up and smiling. Yes, smiling! Like all I was to him was a mark!

Well, that's what I see now when I look back on him when he was a baby, but at the time, I didn't make much of it. Maybe I noticed he was bold, and kind of selfish, but since I hadn't ever raised chicks that were so young before, I didn't really know what they were supposed to be like. I just thought how different that baby bird was from Redfawn.

When he was a chick, he was black as my oiled iron frying pan, all slick and shiny when his second feathers came up. I didn't know what kind of a breed he was, just that he was half Bantam and half some big old chicken. Bantams are miniatures of other breeds and they're often colorful. Bantam roosters are generally mean, despite their small size. He grew up to be about the same size as most of my hens because of the one big breed parent, but the Bantam in him gave him his flair. Against a jet-black undercoat, flames of red, orange, and yellow feathers flared up magnificent as a bonfire. I waited to get to know him better before I named him, but after he was all feathered out, I called him Blackfire. If he was a human man, I'd warn all women, "Watch out!" You know, the kind of man who's so beautiful he's irresistible but who's also got no conscience at all and will con you and leave your heart shredded like hash,

so you don't want anything to do with another man ever again. Even then I thought he might turn out to be a real bad boy.

Good thing hens have enough sense to not be taken in by manly cockiness and looks to die for. Seems all he does now is rape my three hens each one at least four times a day—Blackfire jumping onto their backsides and sticking it in and the hens running around the yard squawking in alarm with that gorgeous bad boy whipping it up like a cowboy on a drunken rampage. You can tell the girls aren't getting any pleasure out of it.

What's a rooster good for? Nothing in my opinion. Of course, if you want to breed chickens you need a rooster to fertilize the eggs, but I didn't want meat birds, and three hens were more than enough to give me an egg a day and have some left to give to friends. Looking back, it is evident that Blackfire had an adult dose of testosterone streaming through his blood all the time. What a cocky little cock chick! When he got mature, he must have had a triple dose of it.

Now, another thing a rooster is supposed to be good for is to protect the hens from meat-eating critters and to guide them to food. It's true that none of my hens got eaten when he was there, but I didn't let them out of the yard much at that time. When I did let them out to free range, I saw him pointing out a bug or a morsel of dandelion sprout, and I saw the hens come running. I saw him stand back and smile while they devoured the green tidbit.

"What would you ever do without me?" he seemed to say, grinning. He likes to make sure they appreciate him.

"What, Blackfire, you think the hens can't find their own wild foods?" I say. "My hens know a bug and green grass when they see them and can spot or catch them just as good as you or even better." Blackfire, he just ignored me and kept his eyes on his hens, with that lecherous smile of his. He thinks he's so smart!

Trying to be a good provider? Maybe. But more likely he was just plotting to get in their good graces, so they'd be easy to catch first thing in the morning when he leaps on top of them. Just like the human man that out of the goodness of his heart offers to fix your plumbing for you but what he really wants is a free home-cooked meal and to spend the night, and then he leaves your plumbing busted and water spurting out of it when he figures you aren't going to let him into your bed.

I know there're some good human men, and I hear there're some nice roosters, too, but Blackfire's the only roo I know, and he ain't nice. Fortunately, he only harasses my hens when he rides them.

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It's only been a few weeks since Blackfire matured sexually, and he's more trouble every day. I'm wary as I enter the chicken yard this morning, naked as usual, and

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**Continued from page 46**

I'm thinking, maybe I should put some clothes on when I come down here from now on. I lean over the little house where they all sleep at night and where their nest is, so I can pick up two just-laid eggs. I've been gathering my hen's wonderful eggs for years now, but I'm still always amazed, delighted, and grateful when I see an egg in the nest—just like I was the first time I saw my girls performed that miracle. “Oh! Two beautiful eggs, thank you girls, thank you!”

I'm lifting my head out of the hen house with the double gift in my hands when something sharp stabs me on my bare butt. I drop the eggs as I swing around and see Blackfire, a three-pound cock bouncing back and forth on his two feet like a boxer jogging in place and getting ready to pounce. I shake my finger at him and say, “No, no, no, you bad boy! Don't you ever dare do that again!” Blackfire doesn't flinch and hops in place even faster on his skinny chicken legs, shooting that evil eye at me. I'm the one that backs away. The eggs now lay broken where I dropped them.

That evening when Jesse comes over for our daily walk together, he's wearing a bright red shirt to match his red hair, and he has a smirk on his face. He hands me a nicely wrapped little box with a ribbon on it. I open it, expecting a ring or something, but, instead the fattest, biggest cockroach I ever did see leaps out. I lurch away, cringe and shake, then beat on Jesse's big chest with both my fists while he revels in his fit of hysterics.

Jesse's like that—a big tease. He knows I hate cockroaches. I slow my walking down so he knows I'm mad and not wanting to associate with him. It's not until his horse laugh subsides into intermittent tittering and finally peters out and he walks backwards to my side that I cool off a bit, but it is only near the end of our walk that I tell him about Blackfire.

“Maybe he doesn't like you taking the fruit of his cock loins out of the nest.” Jesse smiles when he says this and walks ahead of me a bit, as if leaving me to think about his wisdom.

“Well, maybe.”

He sits on my porch bench and I sit beside him and feel my cock-wounded bottom, and I'm thinking from now on I'll have to gather eggs in the late afternoon when Blackfire can't see me—when I let my birds out of the pen to forage on bugs and wild grasses and such.

We get up from the bench and Jesse stares at me with that look—eyelids half closed, eyes intense with widening pupils, facial muscles and lips all loose and relaxed. I run into the house and Jesse chases me through all the rooms.

“You lecherous old rooster!” I call from the bedroom.

He grabs hold of me. Well, see, I, unlike my hens, like it when I get caught.

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I sleep well that night. But next morning I remember how Blackfire stabbed me with his beak, and I'm good and mad all over again.

“Cock loins or no cock loins, that roo better not give me any more trouble.”

I put on my jeans and T-shirt. I'm longing to hold my little Redfawn and have a satisfying conversation with Ginni and Piquante. I go down to the pen with a treat of greens and chopped tomatoes. I let Blackfire out of the pen and give him a whole lot of them to keep him busy eating while I feed the hens. Then I lock the gate, so he can't get back in, and I greet my girls who run toward me for the treat, peeping excitedly. “I brought you something special.” I say. “You just love tomatoes, don't you, Piquante.” They jump up for the greens in my hands before I even have a chance to put them down. Then I watch them communicate their gratitude and pleasure with short bursts of little grunts, and every time when I say something, they answer me with different tones of peeps and squeaks, and clucks. Oh, my dear little girls. I love to watch them eat.

As usual, Piquante chases Redfawn away from the tomatoes. Red looks up at me, to make sure I saw what that mean Piquante did, and asks me, “Peep, peep, peep,” to make it all better. Which I do, of course. I call her over behind the hen house and give her her own secret stash of tomatoes and spinach. But they don't stay secret for long. Ginni runs over to steal Redfawn's vittles, and Piquante comes next, pecking Red's neck. Red then rushes over to the first bowl, the other two following her. Finally, I pick up Redfawn along with the bowl and hold it, so she can eat from it, the other two hens whining and begging at my feet for what was now out of their reach. The second equally good bowl of veggies stands all by itself behind the hen house, until Ginni and Piquante discover that they aren't going to get anything from Redfawn's bowl.

Blackfire, outside the gate, is finishing his treat about the same time the girls' food is all gone. I gather their eggs and put them in my pockets, then I let Blackfire in the pen and scatter some more tomatoes for him. I pick up Redfawn, press her to my breast and kiss her on the neck and on her hot little red crown.

Suddenly, when my back is turned, Blackfire throws his gorgeously lean little body at me with such force that I topple over into the pine shavings and manure pile, while Redfawn flies out of my arms. I leap to my feet, grab a stick and thrash the ground with it just to the side of Blackfire. He makes a teeny little sidestep, watching me with his fearless smiling eyes. I come down again with that stick with all my might just to the other side of him, and he doesn't hardly move at all. Even though the stick broke with that last blow, that rooster just looks at me, all calm and collected, like he's having a great old time. I

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**Fall 2018**

pick up another stick, then back out of the yard and run toward the house.

“You’re gone, Blackfire!” I beat a boulder with the stick until it shatters.

A few minutes later, I see Jesse walking up the dirt road. Jesse’s carrying a little bag brimming over with purslane for the birds. I run up to him. He has the kind of chest you want to bury your head in, and I bury mine. I feel his wiry arms, hard and strong, and run my fingers in his curly still-red hair that is lush for an old man. He kisses me, and it’s none of your business what kind of a kiss. I feel better.

“My Bantam rooster attacked me.” I tell him. “He knocked me clean over.”

Jesse laughed. “That little-bitty thing? What were you doing when he came at you?”

“Holding and kissing Redfawn.”

“Maybe he thinks you’re a rooster.”

“A rooster! You mean he thinks I’m raping Redfawn?”

“Could be.”

I tell Jesse what I did to deal with the little demon, including beating the stick around him.

“You’re too soft,” he says. Jesse doesn’t try that hard to hide his smile.

“What am I supposed to do—kick him or kill him? Hurt that little black chick I nursed day and night like he was my own baby? I loved that Blackfire from when he weighed just three ounces, even though I saw the beginnings of a psychopath in him even then.” My rage rises again.

“Looks like you can’t stand him now.” Jesse’s still grinning.

“Maybe I can’t. That roo looked at me like he could have spurred me to death if he had his spurs grown out, and it wouldn’t have fazed him at all.” I clenched my fists.

“Ungrateful—that’s what he is.”

“He hurt your feelings?” Jesse can’t quite squelch it, and he cracks up.

Crying’s been coming for a while now, and here it is, tears spurting all over—all that hurt bursting out of me. Jesse puts his arms around me, still howling because he can’t help it, but affectionate-like, so I’m not too mad at him. I melt into his chest and pour it all out.

Jesse is serious now and sits me down on my porch bench. He tells me this story:

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“**W**hen I was about six I was sent to stay with my aunt for a few weeks on her farm because Ma was in the hospital having a baby. Aunt Bee had a bunch of Bantams. She had the hens and roosters running all over the place. I went out to play with the hens. I was petting one of them, and this little bitty Bantam roo, he

came running up to me, charged me, and knocked me down in the muck. He pecked at me till he drew blood. Your cock’s only part Bantam, and he’s got some big chicken in his breeding line, which probably makes him milder, but this little roo that was my nightmare didn’t even weigh two pounds. He was vicious. I rolled out of his clutches and ran screaming to my aunt, waving my arms, scared out of my skull.

“Aunt Bee says, ‘What did you do to make him mad?’

“I say, ‘Nothing, I swear.’”

Jesse imitated the high-pitched voice of his aunt and the scared little boy voice of himself and made me laugh.

“Aunt Bee says, ‘Don’t you swear now, you hear me! If you aren’t mean to him, he’ll leave you alone.’

“Me, I say, ‘But...’

“Aunt Bee: ‘Go on now, and just don’t tease him.’

“She didn’t believe me. I tried to stay as far away from that damned bird as I could. And I tried to make sure I knew where he was always. But that very afternoon, I was minding my own business over at the pond, and he came after me. He came charging me and wounded me all over with his beak and his spurs. I managed to get away and showed my aunt my wounds.

“She told me he never hurt anyone else before and asked, ‘Just what are you doing to him?’

“I protested, ‘Nothing, nothing!’

“She thinks it’s my fault. ‘Are you fooling with his hen? He doesn’t like that.’

“I says, ‘No. I wasn’t anywhere near his hens this time.’

“Aunt Bee asks, ‘This time? What were you doing with them the other times?’

“Me: ‘Only one other time, Aunt Bee. And then I was only petting that black and white hen.’

“Aunt Bee told me to just stay away from both him and his hens—Like it was my fault.

“I defended myself. ‘I was way over at the pond this time, and he came after me!’

“Aunt Bee says, ‘Nonsense.’

“She just wouldn’t believe me. I was scared to go outside and wanted to stay in the house, but Aunt Bee shooed me out. ‘Little boys should play out in the sunshine.’

“So, I hid, and I watched. Every time I rounded the corner of a shed or a bush, I was terrified that bird would jump me. And sooner or later he did. The last time he came at me, I thought he was going to kill me. He ripped into me with his spurs and I thought I was going to bleed to death.”

I gently patted Jesse’s hand.

“I got so mad, I picked up a board and smashed it down on him, so he looked like he was run over by a truck. I killed that bird and, what’s more, I didn’t regret it. You know me, I’m gentle with animals, but this was the first time for almost two

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weeks that the dread was lifted off me. I'd even dreamed about that roo sneaking up on me when I least expected it, but now, no more."

I nodded. "I know you're kind to animals," I said, massaging is his thigh.

"I buried the bird, so my aunt wouldn't know I'd killed him. I hid my wounds, too, even though some of them were real bad and got infected. If she'd seen the gashes she would have blamed me for the missing cock. As it was, she thought it was a coyote or an owl that carried him away, since I didn't tell her anything about my other attacks in the last several days. I thought my aunt would have been real sorry if I'd died instead of that bird. I pictured her mourning over my body at my funeral and blaming herself for not believing me."

We both laugh.

"Next morning, I ran down the porch steps feeling free and happy and safe for the first time since I got there. I ran around the meadow and then over to the hen house to let the hens out to free range. When I picked up that sweet black and white hen and pet her, I told her about what the rooster did to me. Suddenly, I felt a stabbing pain in my calf, and looking down, there was the ghost of that cock come back to terrorize me again. I ran away off the farm, down the highway, all the way home, about two miles.

"I said to my Dad, 'There's this ghost roo after me and I'm never going back there, ever.'

"Turned out that my aunt had two twin roos so, there wasn't any chicken ghost demon after all."

Jesse and I chuckle and sputter for a good while after that story. My fears of that Blackfire peter out a bit. They aren't all mixed up with the supernatural and demons and such any more. He's just a bird that's meant to protect his hens and to fight for them against other roos, like me.

Jesse tells me to fill a spray bottle with water and spray Blackfire with it if he tries anything again. "They hate that," he says. I told him I don't have a spray bottle. "You can pour a bucket of water on him, too." Good idea. He tells me some people don't tolerate a roo like that and put him in the stew pot or throw them across the pen. If I could find a home for him, he'd put Blackfire in a cage for me, so I could take him and give him away.

\*\*\*

**T**hat evening when it was time to tuck my birds in for the night, I was thinking that even though I don't really believe Blackfire's possessed by a demon or something, if I were to paint a picture of the devil, I would paint Blackfire's face, all fearless, determined, and without any pang of pity or feeling for the mother that fed and cared for him when

he was a baby—I'd paint the look of a human serial killer.

I'm not looking forward to facing that little terror again, but I must head back down there to feed and water the birds and clean up the hen house before they climb in to go to bed. Blackfire had taken to sleeping with the hens in there. I don't intend to go near him bare-naked any more. I put on my second-hand military store arctic boots, thick jeans tucked into the boots, a long-sleeved leather jacket, and gloves. I bring a bucket of water with me.

Well, the hens and Blackfire are all asleep in their hen house already, and I'm not daring to touch the hens or pick up Redfawn and give her a good-night kiss. I just carefully stick their food and water in there and close them up for the night.

Guess he doesn't mind if I feed them, only if I take the eggs or touch the hens. But it doesn't matter. "I'm not going to let any roo keep me from petting my hens. Blackfire's going to have to go," I say to myself.

\*\*\*

**I**t's the following night. Jesse picks up Blackfire when he's asleep (I made him put on gloves) and he puts him in a cage and puts that into my beat up old truck, and then I drive the roo over to my neighbors, Nat and Sadie. They raise Bantams and have a lot of them and lots of Bantam roos, too. Sadie's a tough old woman who once was, and still is a beauty, and who had to hunt in dumpsters to feed her children at one time and now makes sure everyone she knows has enough to eat; she'll give anyone a bag of food who wants it. Nat's almost 90 and a war hero, still going strong, with a brown beard hanging down to his belly button. I tell them that Blackfire knocked me down and pecked me on the butt. They're happy to have my dazzling, colorful rooster. Nat gently dumps Blackfire out of his cage into their chicken house that night when all the birds are asleep.

This is the first time I've ever seen Blackfire scared. His beak is wide open, like he's screaming, his eyes are bugging out. He is scampering to me as fast as he can, dashing to his mama for protection, but Nat closes the chicken coop door before Blackfire can escape.

I look in at him through the coop window. His red and orange and yellow flames of feathers are glinting in the moonlight beams that are streaming into the window of the chicken house. He looks like he's on fire, like he's in hell, with his own feathers burning himself to death. He sees me and runs screeching to the window. He's never even bother to look at me before. He's never needed me before. And the door was shut in his face. Nat tears me away.

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I drive home in the dark, bumping down my pitted dirt road in my rusted-out truck, the potholes jostling me about. I stop to blow my nose. I feel like a bad mother to give him away, and I worry about him being scared in a new place, even though Nat said he'd be alright since he's bigger than the other Bantam roosters. I can't get the picture of Blackfire out of my head. I'm afraid I won't ever see that little chick again.

I call Sadie early the next morning. She says, "I just come back from letting the birds out into the run. Blackfire had his head stuck in a corner of the coop. I tried to feed him and water him, but he doesn't want anything to eat or drink. Even with all the roos gone out in the run, he keeps his head in the corner. Maybe he thinks that if he can't see them, they will disappear."

I call Sadie again later that morning. She says when Nat went in to check on Blackfire again, his head was still squashed into that corner. There wasn't any sign that he had even sipped his water once, nor touched his crumbles.

I call Sadie that afternoon. She says, "Still no change, even after Nat let the birds out of the run to free-range and locked up the coop with only Blackfire in it."

I call Sadie that evening. Nat answers the phone. He says, "I put all the birds to bed a little while ago. Blackfire still didn't eat or drink anything. I picked him up, and your little roo didn't struggle at all. Instead he burrowed his head and neck under my armpit. I took Blackfire out of the coop and put him on the porch. He doesn't know it, but Blackfire's safer in the coop with the other roos than he is out on the porch with the wild animals all around at night. But maybe at least now he'll eat something."

Next day when I call, Sadie tells me she opened the door to the porch this morning and found Blackfire with his head in the crack of the door.

I call every day after that to get the news of him. Nat says, "On the third day he ate something and was moving off the porch a little, but he's still hanging around the house most of the day. I tried to put him back with the other chickens, but he jumped out of my arms and ran back to the big house where the people lived. When I come out onto the porch to go do my farming, Blackfire follows me, right at my heels, unless I'm heading for the chicken pen. I don't let the other birds out to free-range anymore, so as not to scare Blackfire. Sadie says some varmint is bound to get him one of these days with him out at night and no pen around him."

I tell Nat and Sadie how grateful I am to them for being so tender to my little roo. They're kind people, Sadie and Nat are. "Not a lot of people would be so good to a rooster," I tell them.

Then Nat tells me a story over the phone: "When I was a little bitty boy, my father used to beat me, just for the fun of it, beat me bad, too, like broke my bones, my arm, my leg, cracked my

scull, burned me real good at one time or another. I still got a burn scar in the shape of an iron on my back. The only thing I had in this world before my mother got this bad man put away was my Bantam rooster, a gentle rooster, as personable as any hen. I'd carry this roo around with me everywhere I went. I didn't dare for a minute get out of the roo's sight. I even slept in the chicken yard with the him right next to me, chicken poop and all, when my father wouldn't let me keep the roo in the house at night. See, this rooster reserved his viciousness for anything that threatened me—and that meant my father. Pa wouldn't touch me if that chicken was nearby, so I saw to it that he was always nearby. Pa didn't dare hurt me. My roo would have killed him, and Pa knew it. Only thing that kept Pa from exterminating that rooster was that he was a rare and expensive breed and produced the best Bantams around. And he was a show bird that won a lot of money prizes."

"So, there are real good hero type roos, too," I said.

"Just like people, there are all kinds."

I heard Sadie say to Nat, "Give me that phone." Then, "You know, Annie," she continued, "we can't keep him like this forever. If he won't go into the coop with the other birds soon, either a coyote will get him, or we'll put him in a stewpot."

"I know, Sadie."

\*\*\*

Over the next week, I think seriously about taking him back. Maybe he's changed. But maybe he'd just go back to being that old Blackfire. Well, I can't make up my mind. Then I run into Sadie at the feed store where Sadie sells her eggs and where I pick up my chicken pellets. The store clerk is counting the egg cartons Sadie is taking out of a crate and putting on the counter.

"Blackfire just wouldn't go back into the coop," she says, brushing her hair out of her eyes and lowering her glasses down on her nose. "A coyote was lurking around the night before last trying to get at Blackfire who was perched on the porch railing. Your bird woke up in time and started making a racket and we came out and scared the coyote away. But we didn't have much choice. Sorry. We ate him."

My mind goes blank and Sadie's voice sounds far away.

"Better than a coyote eating him. We didn't really want to cook him either. He wasn't the best eating because he was too tough, getting close to a year old. Plus, he didn't have much meat on him—being a Bantam and a roo to boot. We saved his stunning feathers for crafts. Do you want some?"

I don't answer. I'm thinking, "It's my fault since I was so slow to decide. No, I don't want his feathers to remind me I let him die."

"Real sorry we couldn't keep him alive, Annie. He was attracting wild animals that could get after our other chickens."

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Fall 2018

“I know, Sadie.”

I walk away.

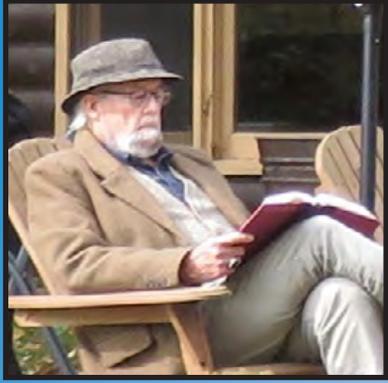
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So that’s what happened to my little black chick baby. Guess he never had any limits put on him, and when he did, it was just too much for him to cope. Never knew how good he had it back home with me and the girls—till he wasn’t there anymore.

I still love that bad boy roo. But I’m glad he isn’t here at my place now. I wish he had had a longer life, so long as he didn’t make any hens or people miserable. But he was that kind of a rooster. What can you expect? I know I didn’t do anything wrong to make him what he was when I was mothering him and raising him. And I don’t believe there was any ghost or evil spirit in him that possessed him to make him bad. That’s no explanation anyway. How does the evil spirit come to be bad, and how come it goes into the roo in the first place to possess him and make him do bad things? Just more questions to explain. No, I think Blackfire was just born that way.

Some people are so much like Blackfire, and when I understand them, I can forgive them. I can’t hold a grudge against Blackfire now. He wasn’t so bad. What he did to me wasn’t nearly as horrible as what I did to him, sending him away and letting him get eaten. That hurts me worse than anything he ever did to me. He was just a cute, tiny chick that grew up selfish and proud until he was chopped down a few notches to the bottom of the pecking order of this world. I loved him when he was a chick—and when he a pitiful roo all scared with his head in the corner of the pen. And I love him now.

# 5 Poems By Richard Fenton Sederstrom



Richard Fenton Sederstrom was raised and lives in the North Woods of Minnesota and the Sonoran Desert of Arizona. Sederstrom is the writer of six books, including “Eumaeus Tends,” based on the few lines of “The Odyssey” that are axial to our understanding of the power and complexities of love. A new book, a new experiment, “Selenity Book Four,” appeared in February 2017, and “Sorgmantel,” an experiment mostly elegiac, is forthcoming. (“Eumaeus” and “Selenity” are available on Amazon.)

## Never Enough Air

*Fentons Folly, summer 1949*

© 2018

“You know I can’t—  
can’t breathe  
when you keep all the windows shut!”

My mother’s consumption is  
always severe  
but only mind-deep.

All the windows here are wide open  
on three sides of the screen-porch,  
the porch open as it was always

open  
before windowpanes.  
Only one glass pane then in our new door.

The single glass pane reminds me now  
of the false place  
outside—

Europe’s cold war only a storm-past zephyr,  
Korean conflict a sticky miasma—  
bloody cypher to come.

We in the part of America  
we claim as America  
are faithlessly victorious.

Behind glass.  
Sheltered in our porch  
east-facing

in a crisp wind from the west  
that we’d have to think to face before we  
discover the source of air.

# Swamp Gas

© 2018

## 1. Ignis Fatuus

Reason is  
that the way through the world is  
often distracted by rough bits—  
difficulties, confusions,

sometime moments or hours or longer,  
incendiary occasions when  
the predominant images seem down-right  
ugly.

We must not over-refine these times.  
Even tarnished purity lasts,  
lingers, smells,  
teases the future  
with sensate uncertainty.

Those of us who were raised  
the weedy scions of carboniferous families  
share the advantage  
that we are un-reared,  
free of homely constraints.

We choose the rivers we paddle about in,  
and we share the smell of hubris  
and decaying verdure,  
ooze of potential energy,  
the red-tide bubbles of reality—

outsized salamanders  
born out of lightning-struck fern-trees  
that reach for the dense ozone  
hovering forty feet above ignition.

Newts two meters long  
with sloshing eel-tails slop among swamp-edge  
ferns and horsetails—  
all food and fuel,  
waiting out their centuries of languorous appetite  
and weighted by Latin names  
unfamiliar to all in the rank swank fen  
but their Anthropocene descendants  
in two-meter eyeglasses.

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2. Will-o'-the-Wisp

A feeble muse,  
*Pieris rapae*, Cabbage White,  
flutters again out from the igniting flora,  
over white-caps into the blue wind  
of my attention.

How many summers since last time?  
Was it before the winter  
my aunt Nancy looked  
out her window

and saw  
through our blinds closed tight  
the woman in white  
wintering in our empty house?

Such in-sight is the explosive propellant  
of the out-wrought imagination, the  
age-damaged spirit guide—

Our concoction of glimmering fantasies  
among the accidents of energy,  
the madcap defenses  
against the adventure of dotage.

# Better that

© 2018

we walk out of the forest again—  
avoid the wet lips of the drooping  
edge of trees.

Out to the west is the open plain.  
The sun shines from behind our  
warming backs.

We can see ahead,  
feel the warm comfort  
stroke our backs.

In the forest we are secluded, safe  
in the shadows of trees.

Out here we are vulnerable to the sun,  
to what the sun may shine upon  
that comes our way.

We will see whatever comes come.  
We can prepare for it,  
prepare our fear.

But in the trees we cannot see  
what may come.

What is our fate that hasn't come is  
our comfort—that hasn't come.

Our safety comes from remembering  
what that might be—  
our only comfort is the pall of forgetting.

On the plain there is no forgetting.  
Our eyes on the field of distant horizon  
remember for us.

Better that  
we return to the forest.

Better that  
we turn and go out onto the plain.

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Continued from page 55

Better that we return,  
that we turn.  
Better . . .  
better . . .

or . . . yes . . .

only better

but better enough  
to keep care aware

# Two of Us Talk Mortality

© 2018

*1. Seventh July 1764 (74 years of age)*

Swam this afternoon.  
Nathaniel is still dead.  
Six years?

Swam is not exact, I don't suppose.  
The fear of leg cramps.  
Even in the shallows.

Above my waist  
the water is deep enough that I might  
not have body-weight to push the cramp out.

—Are you getting this, Richard?—

\*

*2. July 22, 2018 (74 years of age)*

I keep my great-grandmother's caul  
in a leather wallet  
and I know therefore that I cannot drown.

I did not know my great-grandmother.  
but my grandmother's reminiscences  
indicate to me that her mother

was not to be trusted with any future  
that she, my great-grandmother,  
had not invented—

who invented only for herself  
before she disappeared  
into the oblivion of the Fens.

\*

*3. 21 August 1779 (89 years of age)*

The sky is clear.  
Drifting pillows of new-born cloud.  
Blue. My mind

and the sky are clear.  
One more than the other.  
One cannot say . . . one

Continued on page 58

**Continued from page 57**

cannot say.

The other will not say.

Which is which

is which

...

?

# Crow and Squirrel: My Deadly Consistency

© 2018

1

5:30 - morning

Crow caws from a pine in the distance.

Crow is answered by young crow recently fledged

Yak!Yak!

Yak!

Young crow will get the hang of *crow*

learn to Caaw!      Caaaw!

and pace the caws for energy conservation and maximum

irritation.

Chatter

outside the window.

The sun is up on the other side of our house.

Surely it is a squirrel

a red squirrel.

A red squirrel in the wiring of this old house is a red house fire

and I am afraid

I shall have to kill the red

red squirrel.

2

5:30 - morning

Crow caws from a pine in the distance.

Same distance.

Crow answered by young crow recently fledged

**Continued on page 60**

Yak!  
Yak!  
Yak!

Young crow will get the hang  
of *crow*,  
learn to Caaaw! Caaaaw!

and pace the caws  
for energy conservation and  
maximum

irritation.  
Chatter  
outside the window.

The sun is up on the other side of the house.  
Surely it is a squirrel  
a red red red squirrel.

A red squirrel in the wiring  
of this old house  
is a red red red house fire and

I am afraid  
I shall have to redden  
the squirrel excessively.

3  
5:30 - morning  
Crow CAAAAs from  
a pining distance

from which I will admire  
my red red menace, my mortal mirror,  
with the common accord of our vision.

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## About The Arizona Consortium for the Arts

The Arizona Consortium for the Arts is a non-profit organization approved by the Arizona Corporation Commission in February 2008. We hold a 501c3 tax-exempt status.

We are all-volunteer. We are educators, artists, performers, writers and supporters of all artistic endeavors, and are proponents and supporters of the rich, vibrant and diverse community of the Greater Phoenix area as well as the entire state.

The Arizona Consortium seeks to create a multicultural, multidisciplinary arts center that will provide a home for our activities and foster artistic growth for people of all ages in conjunction with exhibiting artists, writers, actors, dancers

and musicians who will share their expertise in a gallery, theater setting.

Please visit [www.artizona.org](http://www.artizona.org) or [www.theblueguitarmagazine.org](http://www.theblueguitarmagazine.org) for more information about becoming a member, networking, donating, advertising, volunteering or submitting work to The Blue Guitar arts and literary magazine, Unstrung poetry magazine and The Blue Guitar Jr. literary and arts magazine for youth.

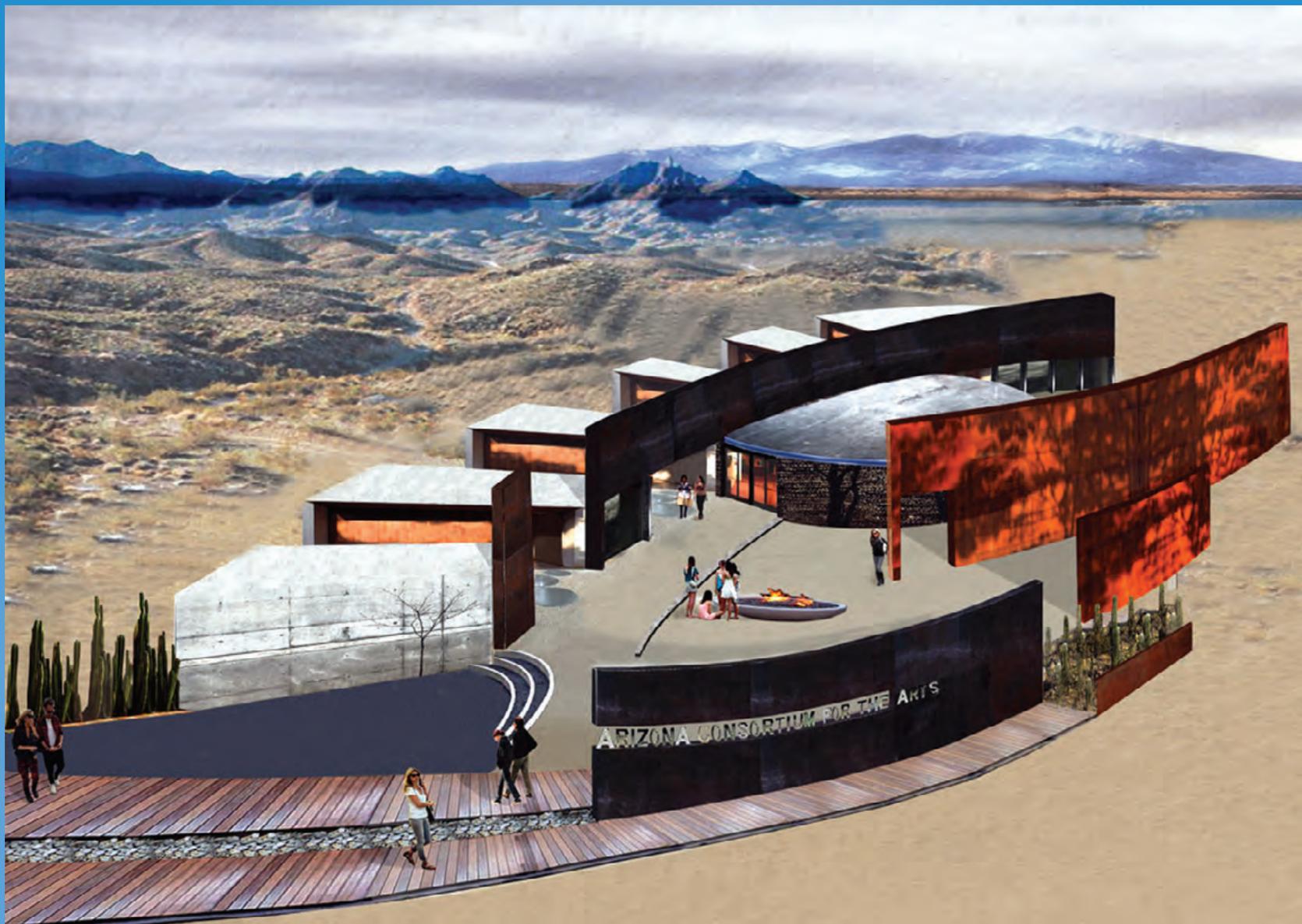
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A rendering of the consortium's dream multicultural arts center by Effie Bouras, building designer, Mechanik Design Office, LLC.

# The consortium's vision for a multicultural arts center

The rendering of The Arizona Consortium for the Arts' dream multicultural arts center by Effie Bouras, Building Designer, Mechanik Design Office, LLC.

The Center will be a source and a destination for creativity and inspiration. It will be a home for many wonderful community organizations, creative and innovative multicultural and multidisciplinary activities, classes and projects representing and celebrating our diverse community.

The Center will be a cultural icon in the Phoenix area.

The Center will be an inimitable foundation for a unique experience, one that you'll want to share with family, friends and community.

Designed by Effie Bouras, the Center will feature numerous spaces for the arts in all genres, performances and presentations. A flexible and variable seating performance theater for rehearsals, concerts, theatrical presentations, video art and films, lectures, meetings and recordings will be available free-of-charge or at a minimum cost.

# Meet the staff of The Blue Guitar magazine



**Elena Thornton, publisher:** Founder and president of The Arizona Consortium for the Arts, Elena is an educator, artist and poet and lives in Phoenix. Reach her at [info@artizona.org](mailto:info@artizona.org).

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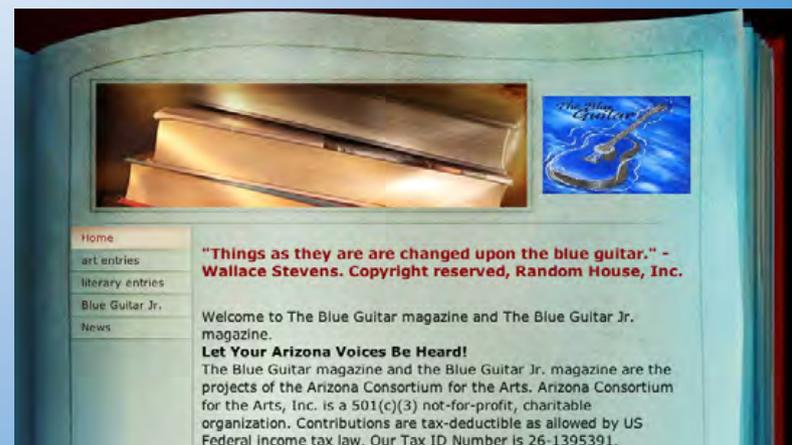


**Richard H. Dyer Jr., co-editor:** Richard (married to Rebecca, above) is the news editor of two monthly newspapers with websites in the East Valley, a photographer and a welded-steel sculptor. Reach him at [richarddyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org](mailto:richarddyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org).

**Marjory Boyer, cover design artist for The Blue Guitar:** Marjory, of Scottsdale, is an award-winning artist, muralist and an acrylic-painting instructor. Her biography and contact information are available at [mboyerart.com](http://mboyerart.com).



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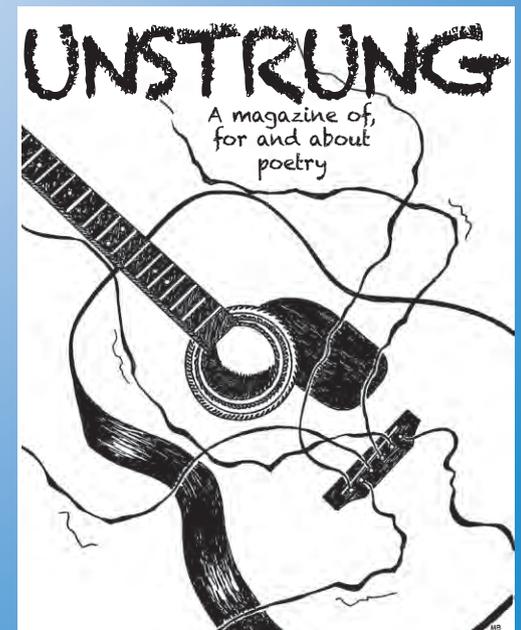
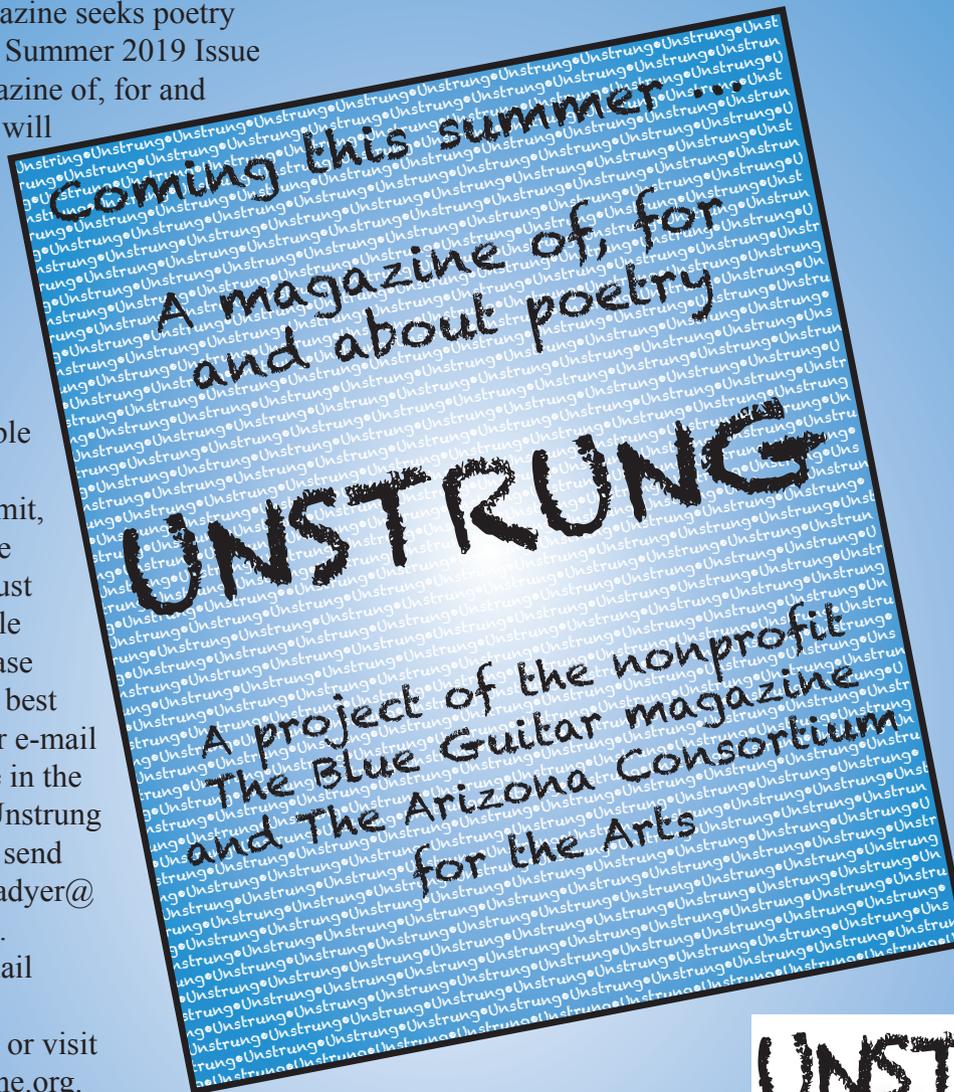
Fall 2018

# A Call to Poets for the 2019 Issue of Unstrung

The Blue Guitar magazine seeks poetry submissions for the Summer 2019 Issue of Unstrung, a magazine of, for and about poetry. Submissions will

be accepted from June 1 through July 4. Poets must submit original work and must have a tie to Arizona. Simultaneous submissions will be accepted, but the poet must notify the magazine as soon as possible if the work is accepted elsewhere. It is free to submit, and multiple poems may be submitted. Submissions must be in the best shape possible and publication-ready. Please include your name and the best way to contact you on your e-mail submission. Please include in the e-mail subject line: Attn. Unstrung — Poetry submission, and send to Rebecca Dyer at [rebeccadyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org](mailto:rebeccadyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org). For more information, e-mail Rebecca at [rebeccadyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org](mailto:rebeccadyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org) or visit [www.theblueguitarmagazine.org](http://www.theblueguitarmagazine.org).

Unstrung, a magazine of, for and about poetry, is a nonprofit project of The Blue Guitar magazine and the nonprofit The Arizona Consortium for the Arts. The Arizona Consortium for the Arts is a startup, nonprofit group dedicated to supporting and fostering artists and the arts in Arizona, including the literary, visual and performing arts. For more information about Unstrung magazine, The Blue Guitar magazine and The Arizona Consortium for the Arts, visit our websites: [www.theblueguitarmagazine.org](http://www.theblueguitarmagazine.org) and [www.artizona.org](http://www.artizona.org).



# A Call to Writers for The Blue Guitar Jr.

Open to children and teens who write  
and to adults who write  
for children and teens

**T**he Blue Guitar Jr. magazine seeks literary submissions for its next annual issue for children and teens. Submissions from children and teens and adults who write for children and teens are sought by Oct. 1, 2019, in all genres — fiction, poetry, plays, creative nonfiction — all geared to appeal to youthful audiences. Writers must submit original work and must live in Arizona. Simultaneous submissions will be accepted, but the writer must notify the magazine as soon as possible if the work is accepted elsewhere. It is free to submit, and submissions may be made in multiple genres. Please include your name and the best way to contact you on your submission. To submit or for further information, e-mail Editor Rebecca Dyer at [rebeccadyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org](mailto:rebeccadyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org). For additional information, visit [www.theblueguitarmagazine.org](http://www.theblueguitarmagazine.org).

The Blue Guitar Jr. magazine is a project of the nonprofit The Blue Guitar literary and arts magazine and The Arizona Consortium for the Arts. The Arizona Consortium for the Arts is a startup, nonprofit group dedicated to supporting and fostering artists and the arts in Arizona, including the literary, visual and performing arts. For more information about The Blue Guitar and The Blue Guitar Jr. magazines and The Arizona Consortium for the Arts, visit our websites:  
[www.theblueguitarmagazine.org](http://www.theblueguitarmagazine.org) and [www.artizona.org](http://www.artizona.org).

# A Call to Artists for The Blue Guitar Jr.

Open to children and teens who create art  
and to adults who create art  
for children and teens

**T**he Blue Guitar Jr. magazine seeks art submissions for its next annual issue for children and teens. Submissions from children and teens and adults who create art for children and teens are sought by Oct. 1, 2019, in all media geared to appeal to youthful audiences. Artists must submit original work and must live in Arizona. Simultaneous submissions will be accepted, but the artist must notify the magazine as soon as possible if the work is accepted elsewhere. It is free to submit, and submissions may be made in multiple mediums; up to 5 images can be submitted. Artists are encouraged to submit images of work by e-mail; please provide high-resolution JPEGs of 300 dpi. Images must be identified in the e-mail with the artist's name, contact information, titles of works, dates and mediums. Please include your name and the best way to contact you. To submit or for more information, e-mail Editor Richard Dyer at [richarddyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org](mailto:richarddyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org). For additional information, visit [www.theblueguitarmagazine.org](http://www.theblueguitarmagazine.org).

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[www.theblueguitarmagazine.org](http://www.theblueguitarmagazine.org) and [www.artizona.org](http://www.artizona.org).



# A Call to Writers for Spring 2019

**T**he Blue Guitar magazine seeks literary submissions for the Spring 2019 Edition from Feb. 1 through March 4. Submissions are sought in all genres — fiction, poetry, plays, creative nonfiction. Writers must submit original work and must live part- or full-time in Arizona. Simultaneous submissions will be accepted, but the writer must notify the magazine as soon as possible if the work is accepted elsewhere. It is free to submit, and submissions may be made in multiple genres. Please include your name and the best way to contact you on your submission. Submissions must be in the best shape possible and publication-ready. To submit or for further information, e-mail Editor Rebecca Dyer at [rebeccadyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org](mailto:rebeccadyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org). For more information, visit [www.theblueguitarmagazine.org](http://www.theblueguitarmagazine.org).

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# A Call to Artists for Spring 2019

**T**he Blue Guitar magazine seeks art submissions in all mediums for the Spring 2019 Edition from Feb. 1 through March 4. Any artists who work in any visual art media, are 18 years or older and are part- or full-time Arizona residents can submit. It is free to submit and up to 5 images can be submitted. Artists are encouraged to submit images of work by e-mail; please provide high-resolution JPEGs of 300 dpi. Images must be identified in the e-mail with the artist's name and contact information, titles of works, dates and mediums. Submissions must be in the best shape possible and publication-ready. To submit or for further information, e-mail Editor Richard Dyer at [richarddyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org](mailto:richarddyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org). For more information, visit [www.theblueguitarmagazine.org](http://www.theblueguitarmagazine.org).



The Blue Guitar magazine is a nonprofit project of the nonprofit The Arizona Consortium for the Arts. The Arizona Consortium for the Arts is a startup, nonprofit group dedicated to supporting and fostering artists and the arts in Arizona, including the literary, visual and performing arts. For more information about The Blue Guitar magazine and The Arizona Consortium for the Arts, visit our websites: [www.theblueguitarmagazine.org](http://www.theblueguitarmagazine.org) and [www.artizona.org](http://www.artizona.org).

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“Things as they are are changed upon the blue guitar.”  
— Excerpt from Wallace Stevens’ 1937 poem “The Man With the Blue Guitar.”  
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Volume 10,  
Number 2  
Fall Issue  
**FREE!**

*“Things  
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