

The Blue Guitar

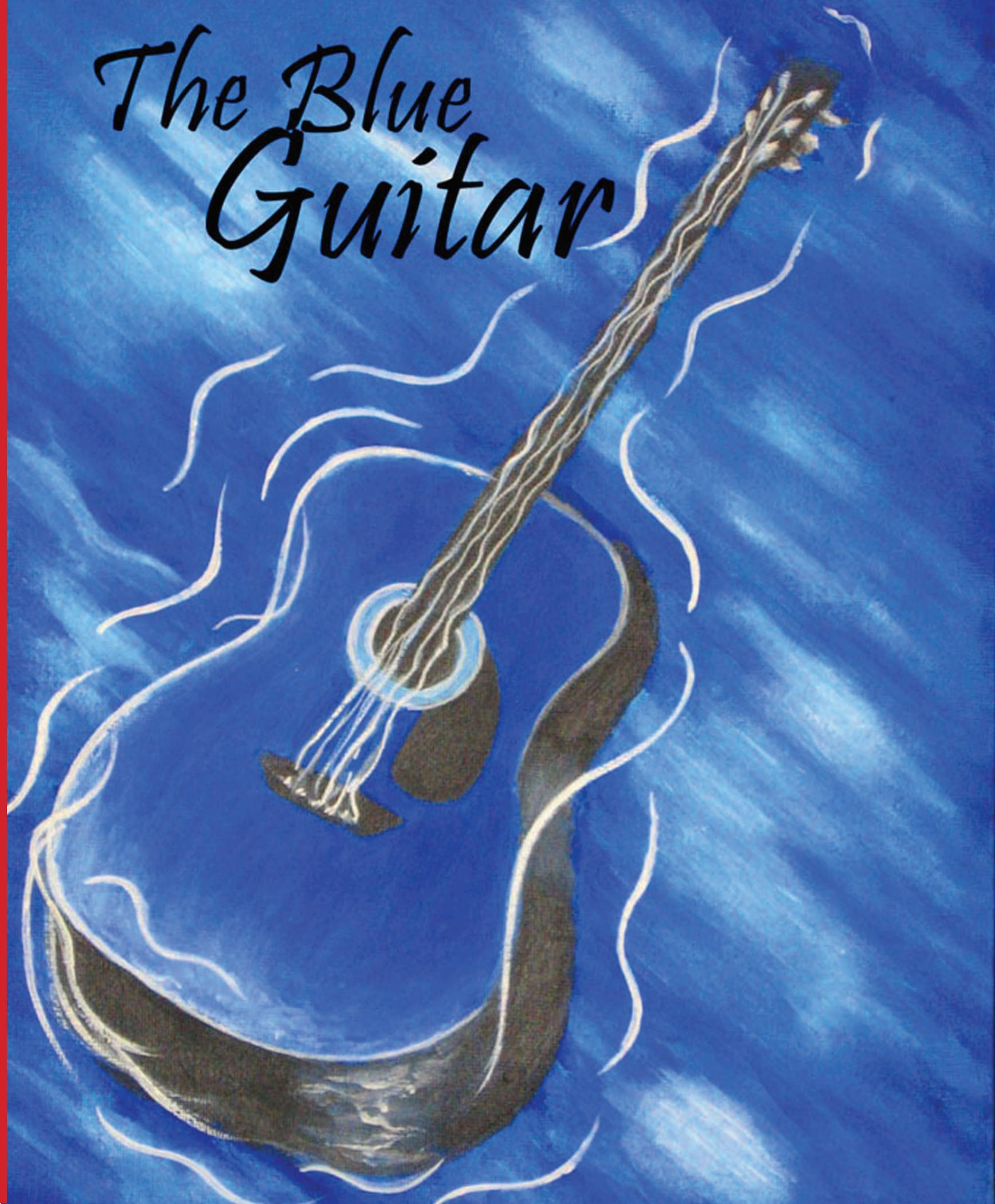


Table Of Contents

Fiction

- “Blue Venus” – Sandra Florence 3-5
“Try, Try Again” – Jonelle Farr 11-15
“A Misguided Commute” – Andrea Ervin 26-27
“Archers” – Wayne Schutsky 28-30
“The Cycle of Ramon” – Harvey Stanbrough 43-48
“Kenny G Can Blow Me” – Sara Dobie Bauer 53-54

Non-Fiction

- “Creativity and the Cello” – Laura Fellows 22
“Evolution of an Artist” – Joshua Vincent Louchheim 41-42
“Notes From the Poet” – Richard Fenton Sederstrom 65

Poetry

- “The Unbearable [White]ness of Being,” “Like This,” “There Was This Girl – (for J),” “Ten of the Fourteen Miracles” – Sandra Florence 6-10
“Cliff Dwellings, Near Sedona” – Dianne Staley 16
“Arizona Levels,” “Eddie, Stranger in a Cold Land,” “The Quail Feeder” – Tom Erdmann Jr. 23-25
“Absurd Absurdities,” “Honey Do” – Esther Schnur-Berlot 49
“Growing Up Too Fast,” “When No One’s Watching” – Hannah Richard 50
“Telluride,” “A Brisk Walk,” “Life in a Small Mining Town” – Mike Alvarez 51-52
“Penelope” – Richard Fenton Sederstrom 59-65
“Kiva,” “Last Night I Woke Up” – Karen B. Call 66-67
“Arms Unharmed, Such Stories They Would Tell,” “Pink and Laced With Strawberry,” “Summer” – Jesse McDowell Lungren 68-72

Art

- “Reclining Cello,” “Play Me,” “Mister Cello’s First Portrait,” “Touch Me,” “Waiting” – Laura Fellows 17-22
“A Place to Sit,” “Dinner and a Monsoon,” “Caboose,” “Elephants Searching Shadows of Spheres I,” “Elephants Searching Shadows of Spheres II,” “Elephants Searching Shadows of Spheres III,” “The Hands of Gaia,” “Primordial Child,” “The Greatest Performance Never Seen,” “True Temptation” – Joshua Vincent Louchheim 31-40
“3 & Some,” “In My mind,” “Blue Dreams” – Quetzally Hernandez Coronado 55-58

News

- Editor nominated for Arizona governor’s arts award 79
Art from the collection: Artizona.org 80

- In Memoriam: Charles (Chuck) E. Mallory 81
Call to writers for inaugural issue of Unstrung 82
All about The Arizona Consortium for the Arts 83
Open Mic: A celebration of the arts 83
Call to writers and artists for Fall 2012 84
The Blue Guitar magazine staff biographies 85
Sign up for consortium’s newsletter 85
A thank-you to friends, contributors, supporters 86
The consortium’s vision for a multicultural arts center 87

- The Blue Guitar Spring Festival of the Arts 72-78

Editor’s Note

Chuck Mallory, Dick Dyer, Whitney Houston, Davy Jones, Adrienne Rich. This eclectic and beautiful collection of souls all had one thing in common: the arts.

Whether writers, poets, playwrights, painters, sculptors, muralists, actors, directors, dancers, musicians, composers, performers, comedians – every artist – deserves our support.

Their sensitive spirits draw in everything from the world, the good and the bad, acting as crucibles to transform our human condition into something sensible, something hopeful and ultimately redeemable. The world’s burdens fall on them and they shoulder them – their gift to us. Sometimes, the act, the art, of creation can be too much, breaking you spiritually, emotionally, mentally, physically.

Dick Dyer – I had the privilege to call him Dad Dyer – died on the same day as Whitney Houston. He was a true friend and stalwart defender and supporter of the arts (including his son’s sculpture, my poetry, and the art and music of the rest of his family), as well as being a painter in his own right. With two moms and two dads – your own and your husband’s – to love, support, nurture and cherish you, you can accomplish anything!

I can see Dad Dyer gallantly opening the door to heaven for Whitney, who joins Chuck and Davy on stage, then Mom and Dad Dyer sitting in the front row with Adrienne applauding loudly for Whitney’s encore performance of “The Greatest Love of All” for the Almighty – applauding loudly for all of the arts. And the arts will always have the final say. They are the spark of divinity ignited in all of us.

With great respect, admiration and gratitude, this issue is lovingly dedicated to: Charles E. “Chuck” Mallory, Richard Hutchins “Dick” Dyer Sr., Whitney Elizabeth Houston, David Thomas “Davy” Jones, Adrienne Cecile Rich. The world is a lesser place without you, but a greater place because of you.

Rebecca “Becca” Dyer
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Rebecca
“Becca” Dyer

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

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Spring 2012

Blue Venus

By Sandra Florence

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Nora picked up O Magazine and found a seat as far away from the coughing man as possible. He hacked and spit into a wad of Kleenex and was silent for a few minutes before another round. She found herself across from a mother and her mentally-challenged adult son. The mother spoke on a cell phone alternating Spanish and English, while her son jerked and twitched at her side unable to be still. Nora tried not to stare, then remembered her magazine and flipped to an article entitled, “We Live in the House We All Build.”

She was relieved when the medical assistant called her name, “Nora...Nora Plum,” and she was lead into the exam room.

“And you are here to see the doctor for.....?”

“Pelvic exam,” she said tersely. She always felt rigid and shut-down whenever she went to the doctor. Nothing personal about this doctor, that’s just how it was.

After she had stripped out of her clothes, carefully stuffing her bra and panties under her outer wear, she climbed up on the table to wait. It was freezing in the room, and she noticed that the skin on her legs and feet looked pale and chicken-like. She thought about lying down on the table then noticed a small photograph of two children tucked at the edge of the doctor’s bulletin board, a girl about five and a boy, three, sitting on a sofa laughing. Joy Lin, the young Chinese doctor and her assistant hurried into the room exchanging hellos and other superficial chit chat.

“Your children are beautiful,” Nora said.

“Michael and Sophie. Yes...thanks.”

The exam went quickly with a sudden whirlwind of activity, feet in stirrups, cold smear of lubricant, even colder steel of the speculum, stinging swab in the interior.

“It’s probably nothing, ...really,” Dr. Lin said, “but just as I was about to look more closely you tensed, and I couldn’t see very well, but there was a blue venus area at the end of your cervix.”

Had she heard correctly? Nora envisioned the small blue planet of love resting on the tip of her cervix. Bright blue in her womb sky.

“No! not that kind of Venus.... I’m not being metaphysical,” Dr. Lin laughed, moving toward the trash can to deposit the lubricated tissues. They stuck to her sterile gloves, then fell on the floor and attached themselves to her right shoe. She didn’t notice as she walked back to the exam table. Nora noticed, smiled, but said nothing. Dr. Lin was at the computer now, ready to log in every word she said.

“Have you ever had any problems?” Dr. Lin asked, “an abnormal pap...or...”

Nora recounted her cervical history, the large erosion when she was sixteen that had to be cauterized. The doctor had been treating her for a yeast infection for weeks before the mushroom cloud cleared enough for him to see the wear and tear, a wound two-inches in diameter on the cervix.

“Whoa, this is fairly serious,” he mumbled with his head between her legs. “I’m going to have to have seal this. Don’t worry, you won’t feel anything; no nerve endings down there.”

She shut her eyes and tried to fend off the urge to slam her legs together, crushing the doctor’s head in her vice-like grip. He burned the edges of the lesion. She had felt something though. An ache. A contraction at the deep center of her. Mostly she remembered the smell of burning flesh. When the doctor left the room so she could get dressed, she turned on her side and wept onto the paper sheet.

Then there was the dysplasia twenty years later, and an almost continuous vaginal itching and stinging. A very specialized gynecologist cut away tiny pieces of her cervix and watched it under a microscope for three weeks. Nothing happened. Nothing grew. He did advise that she avoid wearing tight jeans and slacks, and if possible stop wearing underpants for a while, something she

Continued on page 4



Sandra Florence received her Master’s in Creative Writing/Poetry from San Francisco State University. She moved to Tucson, Arizona, where she has been teaching and writing for over 30 years. She taught at the University of Arizona for eighteen years, and a number of venues throughout the community working with refugees, the homeless, adolescent-parents, women in recovery, youth at risk. She has particular interests in writing and healing, community literacy, and writing as a tool for public dialogue. She currently teaches writing and literature at Pima Community College, Desert Vista Campus. Reach her at sflorence2000@aol.com.

Continued from page 3

couldn't quite bring herself to do.

"Maybe it's scar tissue from the surgery," Nora suggested. That sounded reasonable.

"Um...scar tissue doesn't grow like that." Dr. Lin said trying to pluck the tissues off her shoe now that she'd noticed them. "What is this.....did I.....? she looked at Nora and giggled.

"It's probably nothing...but I want you to see a specialist." Dr. Lin gave Nora a referral to Dr. Martha Chan.

On her way out, the freckled and frantic receptionist grabbed her co-pay and shoved a yellow receipt into her hand. Nora tried not to take offense at the increasingly breathless pace with which all transactions were carried out, except, of course, for getting a timely appointment for a possibly life-threatening problem. It would be four months before Nora could see Dr. Chan. What would happen to her blue Venus in four months?

At home Nora went over the words on the referral blue lesion. Why lesion? She had to decode the language. She looked up the word lesion and found cut, graze, abrasion, laceration, gash. Each term indicated a slightly different type of wound. More importantly she realized each term indicated a different cause. One term couldn't simply stand in for another. She wanted an answer that was clear and clean, like a cut, quick and precise.

Not a graze.....a drive-by surface scrape, careless and superficial as many of her sexual encounters had been. She could honestly say in some cases, she and her lovers had simply scuffed each other. Abrasion, alluded to a deep graze of longer duration.

Nora studied the word laceration. Slit, rip, hack, slash. These terms implied a repetition of injury, a return to the passionate encounter no matter how destructive. Gash seemed too profound and enduring an injury to heal, an erosion...a wearing away.... which was the inadvertent long-term consequences of an untreated wound. But her wounds had been treated, attended, hadn't they? Nora dropped the referral and bent over holding her gut, envisioning her fleshy pink interior. She made it to the sofa and lay down. What would happen to her blue Venus? Rays, veins, water and sky. What was happening now? Was it changing color, shape, size? Was it wavering in its liquid sky, turning white, turning silver? She saw it spinning in her womb, a cerulean dream, a bird flitting across open space, moving on a cobalt breeze toward, always toward something.

When Nora woke, it was dusk, the front window was wide open and she could see trees washed in black and a faint blue behind them. She got up and closed the window.

She thought about the twins, Huntley studying Environmental Justice at UC Santa Cruz, and Brinkley at Stanford in Global Medicine. She felt her heart lift when she thought of the two of

them. Maybe she should call and keep them informed although that might just disrupt their studies in an unnecessary way. It was too early. Huntley would probably react with calmness. "Mom, meditation works wonders." Brinkley would begin interrogations regarding doctors and clinics, "what about UC San Francisco? I know a great doc there, Pascha Goldstein. You should come up here to Stanford." This would only serve to ratchet up her anxiety. She would rather call Huntley, but she couldn't call one without the other. Brinkley would find out and be upset. The girls kept in touch. She'd leave them alone for now. They were in good shape.

She tried to make light of it. As a silly office gift, she'd purchased a set of googily eyes that could be stuck on any object to give it a face. She had put them on the mailbox, a pair of office scissors, on her business partner Adriane's computer monitor. Nora laughed thinking about sticking them on her cervix. If her lesion was not the tiny planet of love, it would be the dot with googily eyes, and when Dr. Lin looked again she would see eyes looking back at her.

"Where'd ya get those goo goo googily eyes?"

Would Dr. Lin appreciate her sense of humor? Perhaps she would, after all she had laughed when she tried to throw away the tissue and it stuck to her shoe and she carried it back across the room. She had giggled at the suggestion that the spot was Venus the planet. But four months was too long to make light. She called Dr. Lin back and was referred to Dr. Bo Sung, another Chinese woman. The wait was two months.

"You don't need it," Lorie-Ann said. Lorie was Nora's and Adriane's third partner. The three of them had left prestigious jobs at the University Medical Center to begin their own non-profit recycling operation. Lorie-Ann was an expert on the removal of pointless parts having had a hysterectomy, a lumpectomy, and hip replacement. They were hanging out in the office after Nora had disclosed the recent findings.

"Why are there so many unnecessary internal parts in a woman," Nora wondered out loud.

"And too bad we can't find a way to reuse them." Lorie and Adriane laughed and Nora turned to the computer, went online and typed in cervical cancer. She knew it was highly curable. Cut it out. Take it away.

Adriane and Lorie-Ann commiserated on their numerous surgeries. Nora had put her hands on Lorie-Ann's bald head one day in the restroom during her chemo treatments. It felt warm and hard. They had emailed bald jokes back and forth for a while to keep spirits up. Nora's favorite was, "better a receding hairline than an advancing one." Adriane had undergone a double mastectomy about six months after Lorie-Ann had her lumpectomy.

"I made the decision to go ahead and have the tissue in both

Continued on page 5

Continued from page 4

breasts removed because I did not want to worry about it anymore. I watched my mother die of cancer at fifty-five and, well, I am already beyond that.”

Nora realized that if one in three women gets breast cancer and both of her partners had already experienced it, she should be free and clear, at least of breast cancer.

“Hey, that means between the three of us, we have three-and-a-half breasts,” Nora said over her shoulder. Adriane and Lorie burst out laughing.

“It’s really beautiful,” Nora said as the picture of the entire reproductive system floated on the screen looking like an exotic Orchid, with stems, petals and flowering center.

She meditated. She sent white light to her cervix. Bathing the little Venus in it.

She thought of it burning out into a cold star. She envisioned it shattering, turning into tiny white birds that flew out of her opening and fluttered away. Still two months was a long time to wait.

Was it absolutely necessary that she see a Chinese woman physician, Nora wondered. She knew about the ancient medical wisdom of bone-setting, acupuncture, the special curative powers of the Chinese herbalists, medicine men and women, as well as their richly layered spiritual history, but two months was too long.

Nora called doctor Lin the next morning. She was becoming more aggressive and demanding about her circumstances. “Proactive,” Lorie-Ann had said, encouraging her to push the doctor for more answers and a better exam date.

“I want to know now. I want specifics.”

“It doesn’t look like any variation I have seen before,” Dr. Lin said. “I know that’s not very specific and that’s why I am referring you to another doctor. I will say, however, that it doesn’t look like cervical cancer.”

“Then what would it be?” Nora prodded.

“Hum....uh....melanoma?” Dr. Lin said absentmindedly with a question mark.

Nora’s heart skipped a few beats. She thought of her years of rooftop sunbathing and the one time she’d fallen asleep. She woke to spiky tingling on the front of her. No amount of aspirin or slathering herself with Solarcaine helped. It was two weeks before the pain went away. She should have gone to a doctor, but she hadn’t.

“Melanoma? Nora repeated

“Well....that would be extremely unusual. It’s just that I have not seen this variation.”

Dr. Lin sent her everything, long detailed copies of her lab reports.

“...sonographic interrogations revealed.... trans this and endo that. An inguinal planet and its endometrial stars, centimeters of thickening, no focal mass.” Her discussion with Dr. Lin was unsettling.

“We’ll set up an earlier appointment for you. If you don’t hear

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from us within the next few days, call us. In fact, call us tomorrow if you want,” Dr. Lin said cheerfully and hung up.

Lin

Chan

Sung

Should she take an aggressive, zero tolerance approach? She declared war. She gathered the armies of the moon. It was easier to envision an army rolling over the little unilocular planet, an infinitesimal number of patriots in theater destroying the intruder with extreme prejudice. For a few moments this gave her a great sense of power.

But then, once the smoke of the battlefield cleared she could see nothing but death, ashes and dust.

Should she attempt a loving attitude? For some reason this was much harder, but she realized she must try. She sent more white light to her cervix, shooting beams of loving fluffy whiteness all along its surface, resurrecting the stars, even bringing to life the faithful patriots and sent them home to the moon to guard its luminous face. Then she freed the moonbeams and catapulted them through the tiny cervical opening and let them race up and down until they collapsed in exhausted joy at their freedom.

Dr. Lin’s assistant called her that afternoon to tell her the appointment with Dr. Sung had been moved up to the next day.

Dr. Sung was a slender young woman with shiny stalks of black hair that hung to her shoulders, and a pink smile. She examined Nora, searching fearlessly for the blue venous region, following Dr. Lin’s map of locality and zone.

“I see what Dr. Lin was saying, yes, I see a bluish area, however, I don’t see anything unusual or indicative of pathology. She must have been looking very closely.”

Nora heaved a sigh of relief. Did Dr. Lin have special instruments? Unusually penetrating vision? Perhaps special goggles, like night goggles only for pelvic exams, and instead of creating a green effect on the terrain, they left patches of blue.

“Thank you, Dr. Sung. I’m relieved.”

“Yes, everything looks normal to me. I’ll send the report to Dr. Lin,” and she left the room.

Nora sat on the sofa in the fading evening light. The sky was almost ink blue now.

The phone lying next to her made its close encounters noise and she picked it up.

“Hey mom. You’re home!”

“Hi, Huntley. What a nice surprise. I was just about to call you.”

“Really, what’s up?”

“I have a blue Venus sitting on my cervix.”

4 Poems By Sandra Florence

The Unbearable [White]ness of Being

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My whiteness is the rake and hoe
the blistered hands of a fifteen-year old girl,
chopping cotton to earn summer spending money,
it is the harsh voice and scowl
of the work crew foreman
her need to exercise the little power she has.
In the field at dawn,
I look down the long row into an eternity of cotton.
Blue sky will soon burst open.
Three Mexican women with short hoes
chop weeds in the row next to me never looking up
to look up is to lose time rhythm
each slice so precisely aimed
only a small puff of dust rises
they move quickly along the row
and soon I am looking at their bent backs.
They speak in Spanish
the continual hack hack of the hoe,
their synchronized movement forward,
their language create a border
I will not be able to cross.
My whiteness exposed to burning blue.....
Their brownness enveloped by earth..
Drink drink.....the water isn't enough to take away my thirst
my isolation
I drift.
At ten o'clock we leave the field.

The three women get into an old car
And the rest follow in the foreman's van.
The road unfolds like a bolt of cloth
all the way to the sky...a blue blindness.
Up ahead the old car turns
into a row of Quonset huts near the canal.
As we pass them, I pretend not to see the camp and its people,
but I have always known they were there –
at the edge of town, the edge of vision.
An old woman sits in a broken window,
the canal a trapped and foreign river.
At home, my mother examines my hands,
the skin so sore I can barely move them.
She rubs salve into my palms
spreads it over my fingers
tells me I've done enough, earned enough.
And in a few days
my hands will have healed,
but the dryness has cut deep
as memory....
I return to my real life
white girl reading the signs
of transiency and migration
in a small farm town in the San Joaquin Valley.
I steal a look from time to time
at the other part of the world,
and when I turn back,
I drift.

Like This

© 2012

It's like when your father held you in his arms at the train station.
You were two and he'd taken you to say goodbye to Leonard Illisinga,
a man with a musical name from a country called Ceylon.
He'd come to the U.S. to study agriculture and he and your father became good friends,
worked long hours,
 walked the fields,
 drove the levee.

The machines hummed all morning in the mist of irrigation.
Great green fields glistening wet.
The small town weighted by water and heavy air.
Farm workers moved gracefully through the fields,
their old cars lined the roads
 filled with sleeping children.

Your father walks the cotton fields. Leonard walks with him.
Bends down to examine the bulbs. Tufts of bloom on rough stems.
It's always like this when you think of them together,
One from America,
 a big wide-open country.
One from a small island country,
 jungle, heat,
 iguanas curling in sunset trees.

Your father and Leonard pass farm workers as they chop at weeds,
dig into the earth,
 stake out a territory for cotton.

*

Leonard steps onto the train platform.
In the photograph he is holding you in his arms,
a dark man in a gray suit and white shirt,
he is smiling at you.
Your father buys the ticket to Los Angeles
where Leonard will go to a convention.

You, your father and Leonard in the truck driving the levee across land.
Westlake, Boswell, Crockett and Gambogi,
corporate land,
 windmills and water towers,
 dry river beds and fields of cotton
where one day at a high school reunion a friend will tell you
they have the technology to grow colored cotton,
 blue pink brown.

Continued on page 8

But for now it is simple.
Your father telling Leonard about
John Deere and International Harvester,
Irrigation,
 pesticides,
 crop dusting.

The duster swoops over the truck as it totters
on the levee, kicking up dust,
your father waves to the pilot
as he narrowly misses the telephone wires,
trying to give you a scare.

But nothing can scare you now.
Only the loss of someone you love
which has not yet happened.
Now you are collecting,
 gathering your treasures,
 your people.
Their bright faces surround you,
mirror back what is real and important.

It is always like this when you think back or look at the photographs.

Leonard will stay for one year.
When he returns to Ceylon
he will write letters for the next twenty-five years
in a handwriting so small your father will use a magnifying glass to read them.

For now
when he comes to your house for dinner
he sits in your father's big chair,
your father takes the sofa.
Standing in front of him
in your white dress and sandals,
you are two ,
the brush in your hands is big
with large plastic bristles.
Your father bends his head down so you can reach him
and you reach up and begin brushing his hair.

There Was This Girl

(for J)

© 2012

There was this girl whose history was fairly golden in that she had everything she ever wanted up until the time she didn't.

What transpired was the girl borrowed her dad's car one foggy afternoon, put 50 cents worth of gas in it,

just enough to drive up and down main, and then she took a detour never thinking her father would guess she had driven for miles and gotten lost.

At the same time her brother lifted himself from sleep, and her mother and father were getting out of the car in another town to see the sights, to buy a lamp, to do something together that would take them away from their children but bring them closer to each other.

There was this girl who sat on the porch as it rained and the sky poured puddles of color into the streets, diamonds of light in the trees, and each time the girl was still and quiet, her brother yawned, a car sped by, her parents appeared as if they'd never been gone.

There was this place. A small square of light, high grass, an old abandoned car and this girl would sit there and smoke cigarettes at the same time across town her friend was being slapped or kicked by a brutal police chief father who knew little about the life of teenaged girls.

As she smoked her friend prepared for the blow and later the marks surfaced on the field of her body. Immeasurable, the losses there, a tiny piece of her friend broken, but other things were happening. Coincident longings. And the girl would smoke her cigarette never inhaling and wait for her friend who would always have an excuse for the marks on her body.

This girl would wait in the old car, while rain made pinging noises on the roof, and tractors

moved in adjacent fields and her friend would come with excuses, always late and this girl would take note, reach for another cigarette, touch the bruise. A tattoo of shame.

At the same time the earth wished them well.

It wished them stillness, joy, soft smoky wind, a place on the landscape to return to at the same time there were other versions of the story.

In another her friend's mother was a nurse with three other daughters. Nursing the wounds of her mistakes or this girl was herself asking questions no one would answer. About loss.

About love.

We can know things without asking, without knowing. How did this girl know some part of her friend would become lost, become irretrievable. There would always be excuses at the same time there were explanations piling up or interpretations or critical breaches of trust. The split in this girl, in her thinking one thing and doing another, for example, allowing herself to be violated while still believing in love or going along for the ride, taking chances with no chances left, risking it all.

There was this girl who had everything she wanted at the same time things slipped away. There was this girl and at the same time a brother who played basketball and excelled in math. There was this girl in her Sunny dress and her friend across town in A house filled with loneliness.

Two homes, mothers, fathers, sisters, and a brother, and these things were gathering into what they were and at the same time are, as this girl sees them and her friend sees them.

Different versions.

Ten of the Fourteen Miracles

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Miracle #1

The Virgin of Guadalupe squeezes with thumb and forefinger each plastic deer, the plastic elves, metal tulips, and blows a kiss in the direction of three dirt encrusted vans.

Miracle #2

Across the street, she jumps the chain link fence, to nap on a battered sofa wet from afternoon rain. A For Sale sign hides her smiling countenance.

Miracle #3

A black pit bull stands at the fence snarling as La Virgen Morena passes chanting a Nahuatl prayer.

Miracle #4

Playground, rubbery fake black top to absorb shock. A young Mexican woman squats at the bottom of a slide as the apparition passes dragging a train of sun, moon, stars behind her.

Miracle #5

The Woman of the Apocalypse lies face down in wet grass where she fell last night out of the boy's pocket, to be trampled, forgotten. Still she has her world of small creatures to serve.

Miracle #6

A black woman, head in a dirty grey turban, withers outside, begs, sees the chain, what's 'is, she says turning it over in her palm, finds the virgin in calm repose at the other end.

Miracle #7

Plasma Center and the virgin contemplating the needles of the agave and the line of men and women, their cigarette smoke, their long gray wait becomes a blue-green mantle stretching for blocks into the path of...

Miracle #8

The Yoga practitioners who arrive on bikes or by foot for the early morning Vinyasa session, feel the veil that both separates and joins them to the men and women across the street.

Miracle #9

The yoga girl accidentally slips through the veil the first time and finds a field of brown and white women exposing the dirt with shovels and rakes.

Miracle #10

The white yoga girl honors the color adjustment, the art of La Virgen Morena, and women, not more than four or five in a space, drawing ahead of the dark.

Try, Try Again

By Jonelle Farr

© 2012

It was dark in the backseat of that Saturn. I could have been scared; but when you're hiding, the dark becomes your best friend. Besides, the dark in the car was safer than the dark held in by the tall trees outside the window which was cracked just enough for the moon to peek in at me. Pine-scented air blew in and stayed; caught like a butterfly in a net. I waited, listening for the shuffle of pine needles; waited for the promise that we were leaving, that we wouldn't have to go back to that house.

I didn't like the smell of the car; it smelled like smoke, like him. I wound my fingers tighter into the big, hunter green sweatshirt and pressed my nose against it. I could never explain that smell; its comfort went beyond words because it smelled safe, like Allen, my brother.

I longed for sleep as one longs to wake up from a bad dream; but I couldn't sleep, not till Allen came back with the backpack. So I listened to the secrets the car was creaking and clicking, things I didn't know. I didn't know why she would hit us after he made her cry. I didn't know why, when he would come home late, Allen would grab my hand and pull me under the bed with him while the door knob shook like a small earthquake. Maybe the car knew the answers, but it spoke a language I didn't understand. Allen understood. He always knew what to do, and he would get us away from both of them . . .

I heard his voice coming out of the trees. He was angry. We were in trouble. I slowly lifted myself up to look out the window and saw The Chief stomping towards the car holding the backpack in one hand and pulling Allen out of the trees by the collar of his shirt with the other. He stopped, dropped the backpack and swung Allen's spindly frame around to face him, his tall broad form bent over, putting his face close to Allen's, as he yelled, "What were you thinking? Do you know what this could

do to me? Do you realize that my whole department is involved in a search for you because of your little stunt?!"

Allen, shoulders hunched where his collar was still clamped tightly in The Chief's fist, stubbornly stared up through his matted dark hair into his distorted face and said nothing.

"What's wrong with you boy? You all out of words?" He spouted in a condescending tone. "You got the guts to steal a car at your age, you better be ready to say something about it!" he said, smacking Allen on the face so hard it would have knocked him off his feet if The Chief hadn't had such a tight hold on his shirt. "Come on boy; hit me; toughen up!" he taunted, hitting Allen again, this time in the stomach with the butt of the metal flashlight that usually hung at the hip of his uniform. I heard Allen gasp for breath as he doubled over. I lay back down in the seat, closed my eyes and put my hands over my ears as The Chief started yelling what Allen called "mean words."

His heavy steps got closer to the car, so I pretended to be asleep. The door opened, he shoved Allen in the backseat beside me, then got in the front and started driving us back to that house. Allen buckled my seatbelt, then gathered me up close.

"You did a good job, Maggie," he whispered. His voice was shaky, but when I looked up, he tried to smile so I smiled back, even though there was blood on his teeth.

When we got back to the house it was one of those nights: The door to our room was locked, and Allen stayed very alert as he was on nights that were worse than usual. Our room was always dark. The light bulbs were broken, sharp, jagged points hanging from the fan. There was a bed and a mattress in the room and I could see where the paint on the door had worn away from the chest-of-drawers that Allen would move in front of it.

Continued on page 12



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Continued from page 11

I lay on the mattress against the wall behind the bed and listened to the yelling.

“How could you let them out?” he was saying. “What do you mean you didn’t see them? He took the car, Jen, how could you not know that? And then you were stupid enough to file a report! Now I have a runt son who’s always sick and labeled a troubled teen thanks to you. What will that do to my job, huh?!” She didn’t answer. “You weren’t even here were you?” he continued. “You were off spending money in some bar being a slut.”

“What do you know?” she yelled back. She ranted on about everything she had to do on her own. She deserved a break. So what if she had gone to a bar? “If you can go get drunk with your second-rate squad and come home at all hours of the night like a slob, then I can go have a drink with friends and come home like a slut.” He must have hit her because she stopped talking and slammed the door on her way out.

It scared me when she left, ’cause it made The Chief angry. He would get quiet, and I would periodically hear an empty glass shatter against the wall like a clock keeping time. Then he would come down the hall, try to get in our room and yell that it was our fault. It was hard to understand much because his words didn’t come out clearly and he mixed everything up. He did it again tonight. As he stood outside hollering, Allen climbed down on the mattress with me and hugged me against his chest.

“It’s okay Maggie,” he said in my ear. “One day we’ll get out of here. We’ll live in a nice, clean, quiet house with two refrigerators full of food and eat turkey sandwiches every day.”

“Will there be a swing?” I asked.

He looked down and smiled. He liked it when I talked. I could talk, but there was never much of a reason to. I had learned it was better to be quiet and know what to do without asking. That way, Allen never had to remind me to be as quiet as I could.

I remember a time before I knew how to be quiet. He had hit her and she was crying. I went over and asked if she was okay. She had looked up at me and reached out her hand. For a moment I thought that she was going to wipe my own tears away; but when her fingers made contact with my cheek, it had stung and felt hot.

“Mind your own business!” she had yelled.

I had looked up at her round eyes, her black hair curly like mine wildly framing her face. The smeared mascara and blush she had put on the night before were blending with the bruise forming on her cheekbone. I guess she wanted us to match.

“The best swing in the world.” Allen was saying. “And whenever you want, I’ll give you a push so you can fly.”

Closing my eyes I smiled as I imagined Allen laughing as he

pushed me on a swing. I went up and down, every time being caught in his safe arms. I fell asleep listening to his heartbeat.

Allen wasn’t allowed to go to school again the next day. His eye was purple, and his lip was swollen. She called the school and told them that he was sick and that they would try again tomorrow. She even stayed home to make sure we didn’t leave the house. She wouldn’t even let us leave the room.

Allen sat on the bed with a piece of paper in his hand, and I wandered over to sit next to him.

“We can do this Maggie,” he said, and I knew that we were going to try to leave again soon. He said we would have to walk a lot but that he would carry me when I got tired, that way The Chief’s police wouldn’t catch us this time. My brother smiled the special smile he got when we talked about our dreams, like swings. That smile could do magic.

It took a week or so till she started going out again and stopped watching us. We waited till he was called out of town to work for a few days, then Allen took the sheet off the bed and wrapped up a couple of blankets and some clothes in it then tied off the end. We went to the kitchen to see if there was any food and money around. There was a five dollar bill in a drawer but not anything we could eat. Allen bundled me up first and then himself, and we walked out into the mid-autumn morning.

The air was cold and as sharp as the broken bottle shards that littered the floor of the house. I remember walking, just walking. The trees all looked the same, and I wondered how Allen knew where we were going. I got tired quickly. Allen would notice and pick me up and carry me so we could keep going. I had never walked so long in my life, and half the time, I wasn’t even walking.

We ended up at a playground at an elementary school. It was so dark, we wouldn’t have known it was there if the moon hadn’t reflected off the metal slide. We slept in a tube tunnel like a couple of burrowing rabbits wrapped closely together in the blankets.

Next thing I knew, Allen was frantically shaking me awake. I groggily opened my eyes and looked up at him dazed. When he saw my eyes open, he hugged me tightly and just sat there for a moment. I looked out of the tunnel. It was like looking through a large telescope. The ground outside was white. Snow had fallen in the night and blown into the tunnel, and part of the blanket was wet. Allen pushed some of the snow away from the tunnel entrance and stepped out. I followed him, a blanket still draped around my shoulders. The playground was hidden under mounds of snow. The tree branches were so sheathed in ice that some were breaking off with loud resounding cracks of thunder.

Allen looked around lifting his eyes to the sky. I think he was searching for the hope that we had heard rested on the horizon waiting to blow in for those who need it. But, all that

Continued on page 13

Spring 2012

Continued from page 12

was blowing in were more gray clouds. I looked up at him as he looked down at me—cold, weak and chilled. He looked at me as he would a fallen sparrow. His eyes were sad. “We have to turn around Maggie, we have to go back,” he said very slowly.

“No,” I said, shaking my head, trying to sound determined and brave, but I knew Allen meant what he said.

Allen closed his mouth, and his face got strong. He took the two steps back to me, picked me up, and began carrying me back the way we had come the night before, away from the clouds, the park, and the swings. With every step he took, I could hear the tree branches crashing down into the snow. I looked back at the swings, but he never did.

It didn’t matter who saw us now, so once we were back into town, Allen took me into the one-roomed general store to get something to eat with the money we had taken from the house. It was warm in there, and there weren’t many people. I winced when I saw a policeman standing there reading the label of a soup can. Then I noticed I had never seen him before, and he wasn’t as old as the other cops that The Chief hung around. The Rookie caught me peeking at him from behind Allen. He smiled at me, but when he looked into my eyes, his filled with concern so I looked away.

Allen picked up a couple of packages of beef jerky and we got in line. The man at the register looked at Allen and frowned. “You’ll have to go somewhere else to get service,” he said.

Allen looked at the man in disbelief.

“Hear you’re going down the drain, kid.” He continued, “Last thing I need is for your old man to come down here saying you paid me in stolen cash or something.”

Allen’s face hardened and grew red. He left the food on the counter, took my hand and we walked out of the store. I glanced over my shoulder at The Rookie. His eyes followed us out.

A minute later The Rookie came out of the store and hollered after us.

“Hey, you two; stop!”

We stopped on the sidewalk and looked back at him. Allen was tense, scared, so I stepped behind his legs. The Rookie quickly closed the gap between us and handed Allen a bag full of beef jerky and soup.

“Looks like you two have had a hard day,” he said as he opened a package of jerky he had kept for himself and started chewing on a piece.

He talked normal, like everyone else in Massachusetts. I wondered where he had come from and why he was here. I liked him.

I leaned around Allen’s legs for a better look, and we hungrily stared at that bag of food. For some reason, looking at that food made me want to cry even though I wasn’t sad. Allen was stand-

ing on the pavement with his mouth hanging open—speechless.

As the smell of jerky found me, I shifted my gaze from the bag to The Rookie. He pulled out another piece of jerky, squatted down and held it out to me. At that moment, I was sure he was an angel.

“What’s your name?” he asked, looking up at Allen then looking back at me.

“My name is Allen McNeill,” Allen finally responded.

Without thinking, I walked out from behind Allen and took the food from his hand. That shocked Allen even more.

“And this is Maggie,” Allen said as I walked back behind his legs. I tore off a bite of the meat. The taste filled me from my mouth all the way to my stomach. I tried to hand some of it to Allen, but he told me to eat it.

“Nice to meet you both,” The Rookie said.

Without another word he turned around and walked toward the parking lot, and we went back to the house.

We hoped no one was home, but entered through the back door just in case. We bolted to our room and locked the door. Allen opened a package of jerky. He handed some to me and then started eating some himself. It was hard to stop eating, but Allen said we had to. We hid the rest of the food on the top shelf of our closet. Only then did Allen unlock the door.

“I’ve had enough of your games!” she screamed, bursting into the room.

She quickly grabbed Allen’s arm then mine. She hauled us to the bathroom and threw us in. She handed each of us a rag then drenched them with strong cleaning liquid, sloshing the liquid on our hands and clothes. She poured more of the harsh liquid into the tub.

“Clean that tub, and then we’ll see if you’re feeling so spirited,” she said. “You’ll stay in here until it’s done.” She slammed the door behind her.

I stood there trying to breathe over the sharpness of the cleaning solution. Allen threw his rag in the tub, took mine out of my hand and tried to turn the faucet on. It didn’t work.

“She’s turned the water off,” he said looking concerned. Allen took off his shirt and wrapped it around my face, covering my mouth and nose and tucking the rest into my shirt to help hold it in place.

“Go sit over there,” he said, sounding a bit panicked.

I ran to the farthest corner of the bathroom and sat down, pulling my knees to my chest, and breathed in Allen’s scent. I watched in the orange light as Allen started scrubbing the tub as fast and hard as he could. After a little while he was coughing and wheezing. It took a long time to get all the grime out of the tub. By the time he was finished, Allen was kneeling over the toilet throwing up. The odor had, by this time, seeped

Continued on page 14

Continued from page 13

through the shirt, taking over the safety Allen had provided, and I couldn't breathe very well anymore either.

She finally came back and opened the door. She was dressed in a tight red dress, hair and makeup done—there was no sign left of the bruises. She told us to get up. She grabbed my arm and dragged me to her. Her fake fingernails pierced my skin, and I wondered if she could feel them cutting me. When I winced and tried to get away, she gripped harder and pulled me out of the room with her. It was hard for Allen to follow, and she was getting impatient.

“I said get up! You're going to make me late.” Allen still struggled. “If you would rather spend the night in there just say so.”

Allen finally managed to climb to his feet and get out of the foul-smelling room. She closed the bathroom door behind him, and hauled me behind her brisk steps to the garage and shoved me in. She continued to hold the door open, and Allen followed me out. She closed the door. We heard it lock from the other side.

The mattress from our bedroom had been moved into the cold, cement garage. Allen made his way toward it, collapsed, and had to drag himself onto it. He was still coughing and wheezing. We heard her heels clicking across the cement on the other side of the garage door and heard her lock that too. I took the shirt from around my face and threw it away from us. I looked for anything that would help Allen. I went to a vent in the wall near the ground and tried to pull it out of the wall, but it wouldn't move. Snow had found its way in through the vent forming a small mound. I sat down and took off my shoes and socks and piled cold snow inside one of the socks to put on Allen's red, swollen eyes. I put more of the frozen water in my other sock and squeezed it till water trickled out into his mouth. After it was gone, I sat down next to him. I wanted to hold his hand but it was red and burnt. He was still coughing.

It was cold and she hadn't put any blankets out with the mattress. I didn't know what else to do for Allen. After a while he slept, and I rocked back and forth wondering if he was going to die. I looked around for a way out or anything useful, but all I could see was the piled-up trash that we had somehow become a part of.

It was getting late; the crickets and cockroaches were coming out. I wondered when she was going to come back to let us into the house. Allen tossed in his sleep. I started coughing before I fell asleep next to Allen.

The next morning, Allen was more aware. He drank more of the snow water and told me he was okay, then asked me to look for a way out. I told him the doors were locked, and that there was a vent but that it wouldn't come off. Allen said he was sorry, that he wished he could help get us out of this one.

We had used all the snow that was near the vent, so I dug through the trash and found an old, wooden-handled hammer. While Allen slept, I went over to the vent and started hitting it, then pulling with the hammer wedged between the vent panels. Slivers of wood found their way into my hands, but I couldn't even move the vent slats enough to make a hole I could stick my arm through to scrape at the snow I saw on the other side. When Allen woke, he was able to sit up. His eyes still looked red but weren't swollen.

I don't remember how long we were there, maybe another day or so. I was at the vent again, and it was slowly bending. Allen said he knew it hurt, but if I kept trying a little longer we would be able to reach the snow. I pulled down on the handle as hard as I could, the vent started moving; it was moving a lot.

“That's a girl, Maggie,” I heard Allen say. Then we heard a car door close, and I wondered if I should stop, but I didn't; I kept pulling. Soon there was movement at the other side of the door, but when it opened, it wasn't her—it was him.

“Where is she!” he bellowed. I dropped the hammer and ran behind Allen who sat up a little straighter. He looked at us and then at the hammer lying near the vent. He again looked at Allen and then to me. He looked at me weird for a couple minutes and that scared me.

“You. What do you think you're doing? Get in the house,” he said, pointing a finger at me.

I didn't move. I couldn't leave Allen. I wouldn't.

“Did you hear me?” he said, walking toward me. “Or are you as stupid as your mother? I said get in the house.”

“No,” the word found its way out of my mouth.

Allen clumsily stood up, blocking his way, as The Chief started walking toward us. He shoved Allen to the ground and grabbed my hurt wrist. I squirmed and pulled, but his whole hand fitting around my wrist made it impossible to get my hand free. When I pulled all my weight down, he started dragging me. I closed my eyes. I remember hearing a high-pitched scream. All of a sudden, I heard someone running and looked up in time to see Allen hit him with a closed fist in the ear. He let go of me in shock and stupor. I knew to move, and I ran and sat by a shelf near the door leading into the house. Allen then hit him in the nose and blood started to color the floor. The Chief knocked Allen down and started kicking him really hard.

I ran through the door into the house. I had to find help. I ran out the back door. I looked around, and I saw him: The Angel Rookie sitting in The Chief's police car parked near the curb. His head was leaned back, eyes closed as he listened to gruff voices sounding over the radio. I ran to the car and yanked the door open with both hands. He opened his eyes at the sound and looked at me; the startled look quickly changed to the same concerned one as when he had looked in my eyes that other day.

Continued on page 15

“What’s wrong?” he asked as I grabbed his hand and pulled on it as hard as I could to get him moving.

“Allen,” I said.

He let me pull him as far as the entrance of the house, but then the sounds of The Chief’s yelling must have caught his attention because he ran ahead, leaving me to follow behind. I made it to the shelves by the door in time to see The Rookie throw himself into The Chief, making them both fall to the floor. Even The Rookie looked small compared to The Chief’s bear-like stature. He threw The Rookie off and stood back up, drawing his gun. The Rookie twisted around and fired two blasts from his own gun into The Chief, who fell on top of Allen. The Rookie ran over and hauled him off of my brother, and then touched Allen’s shoulder asking Allen if he could hear him. Allen nodded. He was covered in blood and I didn’t recognize him. The Rookie told him to lie still, but he didn’t. Allen sat up and looked for me while the Rookie radioed in for an ambulance with a hand bloodied from touching my brother.

I couldn’t move. I wanted to know that Allen was okay, but I couldn’t go over to him while he looked like that. My hands were still pressed against my ears when men in blue with gloves and bags started coming in. Some went over to Allen; others went over to The Chief and laid a blanket over him. The Rookie came over and knelt down in front of me.

“It’s going to be okay now, Maggie,” he said brushing tangled black curls from my face. “Look, Allen is okay, and you will both be fine now. I need you to look at me, Sweetie, can you do that?” he asked. I looked into his blue eyes with my brown ones. They still looked concerned, but relieved, too.

I let him pick me up and carry me outside behind the paramedics who had Allen on a stretcher. There were more police and flashing lights, and as we came out, they went in.

Allen was placed in the back of an ambulance. The Rookie put me down but held my hand as he talked with another officer then took me over to the ambulance and spoke to the paramedic. They argued for a minute before he lifted me up to put me in, too.

As he was placing me in the ambulance, the Saturn pulled up and she rushed out. When she saw me, she ran towards the ambulance in a panic. The Rookie finished lifting me in and stood between her and me.

“No!” she was screaming. “What are you doing?! Don’t take them!”

He held her back from us.

“You’re lucky they’re still alive,” he said to her. “You’re under arrest.” He waved an officer over who led her away. The Rookie climbed into the back of the ambulance with us and the doors closed to the scene outside. As we started driving away, I looked down at Allen who looked up at me. I took his hand wrapped with white fabric in mine, and he smiled faintly at me. I smiled back. His smile got bigger and made his eyes shine; it was the smile he used when we talked of swings and turkey sandwiches; so maybe now we were safe.

A Poem By Dianne Staley

Cliff Dwellings, Near Sedona

© 2012

Other mothers sat where I sit today
Grinding their corn
Or cooking it
They watched as their young ones climbed
Or careened along the cliff edge.
Did any ever fall?

She is certain of her immortality.
Would that I were.
The martins call and echo one another
The bowl of this home rings with their voices
And mine
And others, long dead.

Watch now, how she slides in ancient dust
Laughing at my fears
I wipe the dust from my face, leaving tracks
Open my canteen and share my precious water
Which other mothers hauled from the creek below.
Did it ever run dry?

The tomatillos are ripe
We ate the tiny berries as we hiked here
Freeing snags from our shorts and shirts.
Small dent those tiny fruits
Would make in a hungry tummy.
Her sturdy legs danced doggedly on
Down the trail of independence.

Other mothers fed their young those tomatillos
Once, long past.
The creek is nearly dry from the long summer
But the breeze is cool
Promising cold to come
What's to eat then?

I hold my child in a brief stillness
Listen, listen I say
Do you hear the children of old?
Their cries calling from wall to wall?
Only the wind, she says
Silly mother, only the wind.



Dianne Staley is a freelancer and a lifelong resident of Tucson, Arizona. She has published numerous articles, poems, short stories, and children's stories. Dianne is currently writing primarily poetry. She is also a freelance editor. She has a BA in English from the U of A. You can e-mail her at dianne.staley@gmail.com.

Laura Fellows

Sedona Artist



“Reclining Cello”
Watercolor – eighth sheet
October 2011

Laura Fellows was born in West Virginia into a family of artists, writers, and musicians. Her family lived in several states on the East Coast. She moved to Arizona as a young adult, living in Flagstaff, Tucson, and eventually Sedona. She has four degrees unrelated to art or music, and has worked as a school psychologist, a clinical social worker, and a musician. Since her youth, Laura has been an avid outdoor enthusiast, and has been involved in rafting, canoeing, skiing, hiking, and cycling in Arizona. She has studied art and music in a variety of settings and plays classical guitar, violin, mandolin, ukulele, recorder, and harmonica. After experimenting with other mediums, she settled on watercolors as a medium. She paints with bold colors on quarter sheets of 140# or 300# Arches paper, and is particularly enamored with filbert brushes. She paints almost exclusively from life, and uses photographs only occasionally to add missing details. She can be contacted at laurafellows@msn.com.



Laura Fellows

Sedona Artist



"Play Me"

Watercolor — quarter sheet
September 2011

Laura Fellows

Sedona Artist



"Mister Cello's First Portrait"
Watercolor – quarter sheet
September 2011

Laura Fellows

Sedona Artist



"Touch Me"
Watercolor – quarter sheet
October 2011

Laura Fellows

Sedona Artist



“Waiting”

Watercolor – eighth sheet

Spring 2011

Laura Fellows

Sedona Artist

Creativity and the Cello

Creativity is an enormous component of who I am and how I experience the world. Everything I process is filtered through the lens that has been formed and refined through a lifetime of existence and training as a visual artist, writer, and musician. I don't think this is unique or even unusual. To me it seems that art and creativity are at the core of what makes us human; artists are simply better able to articulately express the phenomena of the creative and artistic realm because of their training.

I believe that art (of all forms, including music) is the most powerful, uplifting, and comforting aspect of the human condition. The creation of inspiring images and effects is not exclusive to humans; much of the greatest beauty in the world is naturally made. Nevertheless, the interpretation of these elements is a uniquely human phenomenon. A lion may bask in the sunlight as the sun sets and a bear or a monkey may be taught to beat rhythms on a drum, but no evidence definitively demonstrates that the lion is experiencing beauty or that the bear or monkey experiences rhythm in the way that humans experience music.

The cello seems to be an especially human instrument, and the cello elicits a strong emotional response from many people. My cello very often accompanies me in my daily life, and to the most mundane places I know. Its presence is continually commented upon, such as, "Ooh, is that a cello? I LOVE the cello!" I have carried a lot of instruments a lot of places and never seen the level of enthusiasm that the cello inspires.

Theories abound as to what makes the cello so human – the size, the playing position, the similarity of the voice to that of the human, and so on. Cellists typically name their instrument and seem to have a relationship with it – even more so than other instruments. Additionally, people seem deeply inspired by the beauty and eloquence that can be coaxed from a cello. And yet, there seems to be something else that is even more profound and essential about the human nature of the cello...I am not sure what it is, but I am exploring this elusive relationship between the human and the cello through my painting.

I feel graced and inspired by the presence of a cello in my life, and am thrilled to be able to play the cello, but I believe that the existence of the cello, musical instruments and music itself is essential to humanity. It seems to me that the emotions inspired by music and the instruments that symbolize music are universal. It is my hope that this connection, especially with the cello, will touch and inspire the viewer. Just like I take "Mister Cello" with me on my daily routes, encouraging people to look at, touch, and even try playing him, I would like to share my musical images.

– Laura Fellows

3 Poems By Tom Erdmann Jr.

Arizona Levels

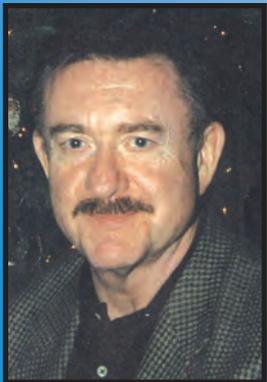
© 2012

In Seattle when we expected rain, we got rain.
When we expected sun, got rain.
If we expected snow, well, you know.
In Prescott we all think rain, pray rain
but we have no expectations.

At Willow Lake the water level
has fallen so far that a dozen feet
of discolored gray rock glares at us.
Soon the trout must learn a new way to breathe.
Perhaps our scientists will develop the sand trout
for which so many greenhorns have searched.

I see a time when those of us who survive
will have learned from the Yavapai tribe
which plants store potable water.
In our outback dry campers will die
searching for the aboriginal ostrich eggs
of their hallucinations.

We stand by, watch clouds carefully,
listen for the thunder—perhaps tonight,
perhaps tomorrow. Knock wood,
touch rock, embrace sky. Never
believe a government forecast.



Tom Erdmann co-founded the Washington Poets Association in 1971. After 30 years as a member of the WPA board, 25 of them as Contest Chairperson, he moved to Arizona with his new wife, Dyan, in 2001. During his 33-year Seattle teaching career, his high-school students won over 300 local, state and national writing awards. Tom won awards from the poetry associations of Arizona, Florida, Oregon and Washington, the most significant being the Ben Hur Lampman Award given by the Oregon State Poetry Association and judged by William Stafford. Tom's work is published in many journals and ezines, including *Seattle Review*, *Assay*, *Bellingham Review* and *Poetz*. He has four chapbooks. Tom was an All-American in football and was second in Oregon State in wrestling for Marshfield H.S. in Coos Bay, Oregon. He played both sports, without distinction, for the University of Washington where he received his BA and M Ed. His three sons, their wives and four grandchildren live in the Seattle area. Tom won The Professional Writers of Prescott national poetry award in 2010 and again in 2011.

Eddie, Stranger In A Cold Land

© 2012

“Eddie,” I said, “como se dise, ‘The best eggs in town?’”

“Las mohores hueves en la ciudad.” He smiled.

Short, stocky, brown, he wore a yellow Yankees cap,
(Yellow?) and a black and white striped Yankees shirt.

The Yankees logo was mostly hidden behind
a cook’s apron which hung to his ankles.

The ensemble was completed with white socks
and black, high top Keds. I said,

“Do you cook like this for your family?”

Eddie, just kept smiling, placed my plate
In front of me and walked back to the kitchen.

Does he have a family?

Are they here in Prescott?

Does he send them money in Mexico?

Will I ever learn to shut up?

I hadn’t used my HS Spanish since Acapulco ’66.

For three days I was three doors down the hall
from the nearest bathroom in a three dollar hotel,
running back and forth celebrating Moctezuma’s revenge.

When I was well enough to visit a pharmacist,

I pointed at my belly and tried to say,

“pain in my stomach,” in Spanish.

The tall, distinguished druggist said, in English,

“I do not sell the watermelons here.”

If he had more money, more education,

Eddie, the cook, could be Eduardo, the chef.

Maybe he really is Eduardo the chef

But slinging hash will not get him in Club Cordon Blue.

This morning, Eddie wasn’t in his usual spot.

The manager told me that when the police

Stopped him for no brake lights

They found that he had no green card.

Derek told me also that his wife and kids are legal

So he was sent back to Mexico alone.

A doctor of philosophy was in the crew
that repaired my drip system.

My nephew’s nanny is a college grad.

Don’t believe that old adage.

The meek will inherit nothing.

The Quail Feeder

© 2012

We put out so much grain the quail grew chubby.
On Thanksgiving, twenty-two crowded
our hanging feeder with ravenous enthusiasm.
A few days later a new neighbor moved in. Now
above these gnarly acres of Arizona,
motionless in a dead cottonwood,
desire glares from the eyes
of an enormous Cooper's Hawk.
We set her table
and she's taking our boarders into her need.

Absently watching the feeding quail
as I washed breakfast dishes,
I witness the soundless, blitzkrieg plunge.
The dozen, gray blurs screaming in as many directions.
The chosen—too slow out of the rocking feeder.
The explosion of feathers.
The wing whipping on its broken hinge.
The jerky spiral to the ground. The gyrating chase.
The hawk's embrace; its tearing kiss.
The Cooper's wings shrouded her meal.
The survivors cowered under a tangle
of scrub-oak and manzanita.

The quail are more jumpy now.
If I lift my cup in the kitchen window,
the movement sends them off in frenzy. Yesterday,
the Cooper struck as we watched
from our barbecue on the far porch.
Ours, was a quiet meal. The quail seem thinner;
they scabble discreetly to the feeder by
quick twos and fours.
Always there is one high in our giant juniper, watching,
watching.

A Misguided Commute

By Andrea Ervin

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The sky opened wide and wept tears of loneliness upon this city. Today is April 9th and the city is Seattle. A spring day in Seattle means rain – steady, heartbreaking rain. Today is Monday and as always I’m waiting for the 7:07 morning bus to downtown. I forgot my umbrella, so I hide under the awning of an antique store until the bus arrives – it’s late. At 7:14, the bus’ brakes scream to a stop and let out a heavy sigh just shy of the awning. As I dash to the open door, I worry about being late, worry about my 8 a.m. appointment and worry about my hair.

To find a spot among the morning commuters, I’m forced to walk past the seat the Bag Lady occupies and curse to find the only open one is directly behind her. I hold my breath to prevent inhalation of the stale urine and mildew odor seeping from her. Daily she takes advantage of Seattle’s free inner-city rides. Daily I have to endure her repulsive hygiene. How can anyone live like that?

It’s a quiet ride as I sit holding my breath, looking at the window reflection of the disgusting woman slumped in her seat. After 10 minutes of wondering if she’s still alive, she stirs and meets my gaze in the reflection. Like in a horror movie, she’s suddenly facing me with her hands on the back of the seat. She looks me dead in the eyes and begins to speak. Her eyes are grey and somber with yellow, crusted flakes caked to what’s left of her eyelashes, her deep wrinkles bunch and relax as she widens her eyes with each word.

“I know the churches, I know all the churches, ask me about the churches, I know all the churches,” she says as one claw-like hand grabs my arm before I have a chance to recoil. Her nails are yellow and shredded with dirt caked underneath as if she had clawed her way out of a coffin.

Bile rises in my throat and my vision blurs as my world

begins to darken. I reach up and pull the stop request lever even though it’s not my stop for three more blocks. I’d rather walk in the rain than sit here with this hag.

Gently, I remove her claw from my arm. “My stop,” I say timidly, remembering the bottle of strawberry hand sanitizer stored in the pocket of my bag, thank god!

“I know the churches. All the churches,” she says as she looks out the window and pulls a plastic garbage bag tighter around her shoulders. “When you get tired of chasing demons, ask me about the churches.”

I exit the bus as quickly as possible while trying to appear nonchalant. Once on the sidewalk, I straighten my skirt, smooth my hair and look back up at the bus window. The hag is staring at me, and for a brief moment I feel an inexplicable panic emerge from deep inside my chest. My heart contracts and I struggle to breathe. Breathe, breathe, breathe, inhale, exhale. I coax myself calm as the bus pulls away. With heels click-click-clicking on the sidewalk, I make my way down Fifth Avenue and try to avoid rainwater runoff by darting from eave to eave. I barely avoid ruining my hair.

Today is April 10th and it’s still raining. Today I remember my umbrella and my bus arrives on time at 7:07. She’s there on the bus, nestled up against the window with her eyes closed. I tiptoe by on my way to an empty seat. My heart twitches when she opens one grey eye and focuses on me. It takes a few beats to regain its composure, and I make my way a few seats back to avoid contact. Safely seated behind a man in a blue suit, I have the time to muse over my client list, fret about my appointments and worry about my hair. I couldn’t sleep last night. I never sleep. I lay awake every night

Continued on page 27



Andrea was born and raised in Snohomish, Wash., but moved to Arizona in 1998 to pursue a job as an airline flight attendant. In 2007 she began attending Arizona State University where she has since received a B.A. in journalism. Andrea still works in the airline industry, but now keeps her feet on the ground. She is also an editor for a local online holistic news Web site. Her passions include writing, travelling and reading and dreams of someday becoming a travel writer. Contact her at andreaervin7@gmail.com.

Continued from page 26

worrying about tomorrow and replaying the events of the day.

When we reach my stop, I stand up behind the man in the blue suit and a few other productive members of society and follow them off the bus. I walk past the hag without looking twice. Taking a second to adjust my umbrella, I step onto the bustling street. There is an intense banging on the window as soon as my heel hits the pavement. The hag mouths inaudible words as she hits the glass with the palm of one hand and points at me with the other. My heart misses a beat and then struggles to catch up, only to miss another. By the time the bus pulls off the curb, my heart is in spasm so hard I have to grip the bus stop pole to stay on my feet. It takes a few frightening minutes to regain my composure. I let go of the filthy pole and look at it in disgust. As I pull out my hand sanitizer, I notice the time on my cell and realize I'm late again. I hurry off to the office.

Today is April 11th and I grab my umbrella as I head out the door because, of course, it's raining. I nearly miss my bus this morning but manage to squeeze on just as the door closes. As always, the front of the bus is full, so I move to the rear and am once again forced to pass the hag, who thankfully fails to notice me. For the next few minutes, I amuse myself by staring at the back of her frizzled grey head rested against the window and notice with revulsion a greasy head print smeared on the glass.

I'm finally able to relax, and weariness overtakes me as my eyes begin to feel heavy. I attempt to blink away the fog and avoid the embarrassment of sleeping on a bus. As I struggle with exhaustion, I notice through a haze that the hag has turned and is staring at me. It's as she purses her lips to speak that my heart explodes. With the acrid taste of blood in my mouth, I rise and stumble toward the door. "Stop the bus," I gasp, "please stop the bus!" Am I speaking aloud? Nobody is turning, nobody notices me ... except her. I could be dead in minutes! I could be dead right now! The only witness being a crazy old hag who smells like piss and mildew. Someone else pulls the stop cord, and the driver eases the bus to the curb. As it slows, I throw my body against the door, still clutching my bleeding heart. I take one last look behind me as I exit – she's still staring at me. Her eyes are blank and her mouth gaping.

I stumble backward into a brick building, slipping on a puddle, breaking a heel and tearing my nylons. My heart is pounding, wildly pumping out blood as it fills my every limb. Is blood oozing from my eyes and ears? Wildly, I feel for the warm, sticky liquid on my face but find nothing. Nobody can see me as I scream from fear. Unable to form a rational thought, I turn and run down the street away from the bus and evil witch inside.

I awkwardly run on one broken heel, past a coffee shop

where a girl hovers over an abnormally large white dog. She looks at me and has no face. She points and the dog barks. I run on.

I run on and on, not stopping until I'm in the shadow of the Space Needle and the quiet carnival that lies beneath. An empty Ferris wheel looms above, dwarfed by the Needle. The place is deserted ... at least at first glance. Looking again, I notice a man in black. "Help!" I call desperately, but by now I'm sure I must be dead already. He turns toward me, his face covered with a white porcelain mask. It is has no eyes or mouth. It's just a smooth, flawless surface pulled over a black head of hair. Eyeless and mouth-less, he holds his arms outstretched like a man plunging to his death.

I worry about how I look. My hair hangs wet and limp in my face, my mascara streaks down my cheeks, my suit is soiled, my nylons are torn and I'm missing half a shoe. I stand lopsided facing this freak. "Are you a mime?" I ask slowly.

"No, you are mine," he answers, pointing at my chest.

My heart explodes again. As I turn in circles, the world is a blur, and my mouth begins to fill with blood. To my left is the Ferris wheel and to my right is the ticket stand. In front of me is the man in black, and behind me is the witch. I spin and sputter, spit blood and try to scream. As I fall to the ground, I pull my knees up to my chest with my head cradled in my hands, trembling and sobbing. Then I fade into darkness.

My head falls forward as I jerk back into consciousness. Everything snaps into place. I'm on the bus staring at the back of that grey-frizzled head, and my heart is pounding uncontrollably. After a few deep breaths, it slows to a normal beat. I ponder the things I saw, the man in black and my demons.

I take a deep breath and approach the hag from behind. With every step, the smell of urine burns deeper into my nostrils. I tap her on the shoulder softly and gently coax her awake.

She looks at me through eyes clouded from sleep and sadness. "I found my demon," I say, "so will you tell me about the churches?"

She burps loudly and then yawns. I gag at the putrid smell emitting from her open mouth. She looks me in the eyes, hers cold and lonely, and says, "I know all the bakeries, ask me about the bakeries, I know the bakeries, when you're finished chasing after donuts, ask me about the bakeries."

I study the lines of her face and feel something that resembles pity. Quickly shaking it off, I reach up and pull the stop cord. "Crazy old bitch," I say and turn away laughing half-heartedly as the bus slows to a stop. The door opens and I gracefully exit, daintily opening my umbrella before stepping onto the curb. I take a deep breath, my heart now beating soundly and evenly as I strut down the street away from the bus.

Archers

By Wayne Schutsky

© 2012

Crack.
The sound immediately precedes the slow drizzle of smoke upwards into the dark and star-filled sky from the tip of the black handgun.

The young officer's arm, clothed in rain-soaked khaki, remains rigid and slightly bent at the elbow in the direction of the air the fallen man occupied seconds before. The arm remains pointed and motionless for a few seconds before it drops to his side.

The arm dangles, lifeless. The squared handgun sits nestled in the man's hand and his pointer finger remains on top of the trigger.

The officer moves back and forth on the heels of his feet, his boots sinking into the soft, sandy mud. He looks around the boarded-up gas station and moves his head from side to side in an attempt to shake the piercing ringing out of his head. His tunnel vision, that had narrowed in on the man before the shot and remained focused on the space where he had once stood, begins to widen and include the rest of the landscape.

The headlights from the truck parked behind him light a portion of the landscape in front of him. To his right, he can see the other man standing straight and rigid with his hands folded across his chest. The man's face is an angular blur in the officer's periphery. Behind the living man he can faintly make out a gas pump and the front door of the old convenient store.

The ringing fades into a beige lull in the back of the officer's mind.

He wipes the rain off of his forehead with his left hand and looks downward towards the soaked dirt ground a few yards ahead of him and then at the crumpled and stoic body lying in a growing pink pool of blood and rainwater.

The body is lying on its back with its legs bent underneath it. The wide open eyes look colorless to the officer and stare towards the mountains opposite the station, the head arched as

far back as possible and tilted to the left.

The rain continues to fall in steady, small drops. The water collects in increasingly larger pools in the pockmarked lot. The incessant metallic pitter-patter of the drops on the tin store roof mingles with the chaotic sound of chirping coyotes on the mountainside, but the pinging lull in the officer's head all but blocks out the noise.

The living man reaches into the pocket of his dripping black suit and pulls a cigarette out of his pocket. He hunches forward, his slicked-back black hair falling forward in his face, and pulls out a lighter with his other hand. He places the cigarette on the edge of his lip and cups his hands around his mouth. He slides the lighter in between his fingers up to his thumb and clicks it on.

The flame shoots out and wavers for a moment before lighting the edge of the cigarette. The man shoots up and straightens his back, leaving his right hand on the cigarette and dropping the lighter into his pants' pocket with his left. The burning red edge of the cigarette lights up the top half of the man's face, illuminating thin green eyes and a narrow nose.

Smoke slowly swirls upward into the dark, star-filled sky.

The lull remains.

The officer's chest heaves in and out and white fog flows out of his mouth, lifting itself in swirling motions into the black sky. He shakes his head again, faster this time, and slides his pointer finger off of the trigger of the gun and onto its flat bridge. He lifts his arm at the elbow and slides the gun into the holster on his hip.

He turns around on his heel towards the truck and the mud squishes underneath the heel of his boot. His head follows his body and the light from the truck floods his vision and blinds the officer for a second. He closes his eyes before turning his head back towards the gas station and opening them again.

Continued on page 29



Wayne Schutsky is an Arizona native who has spent the majority of his life in the desert. He is currently a senior at Arizona State University pursuing separate bachelor's degrees in English and History. Wayne works as a reporter for the Arcadia News in Phoenix. He also writes articles, essays, and fiction for Modern Times Magazine in Mesa. You can contact Wayne at wschutsky@gmail.com.

Continued from page 28

The living man is still standing a few yards in front of the lone, non-working gas pump smoking his cigarette. The three-buttons on the front of his black suit fasten the jacket closed and conceal a wiry frame. Rain pelts the man's hair and soaks the suit, but his cigarette remains lit and the smoke swirls into the air.

The officer's back slouches over. He wipes his face with his hands, which are also wet, and then wipes his hands across the front of his shirt. He feels the smooth, wet cotton underneath his palms and the sharp pointed edges of the star-shaped badge on his chest. He looks into the man's green eyes.

The officer remembers sitting in the small reception area of the police department on the other edge of town two hours ago with the older officer. He remembers feeling bored and regretting his move from the big city. He remembers feeling resentful, though he did not consciously know who he directed that particular feeling at back then. He thought he resented the small town he now lived in because he soon grew weary of its quaint size and quaint problems.

He missed the roar and size and anonymity of the city to the south. The city – all lights, violence, disorder – never felt quaint. In all of his life, the officer never wanted to move away from it because it was all he had ever known. It felt real.

But real became foreign for the officer in the small town. And a quiet settled over his life.

All of those feelings were suppressed, new, abnormal at the time. But they seem normal compared to the last two hours, the officer thinks to himself. They seem normal compared to the violence and the chaos of the last few minutes. They seem normal compared to the confusion flooding the inside of his head and his inability to move or act or think with conviction, he thinks to himself.

They seem normal compared to the rain currently soaking the desert valley town. A rain that falls rarely and sporadically over the summer months like an ironic plot device used to accentuate the barrenness of the place.

The officer turns his head back towards the truck and rests his forearms on the hood and his head falls into his arms. His back lifts up and down as he draws in heavy, cold breaths.

The living man drops the cigarette into the dirt and stamps it out with the pointed toe of his leather shoe. He walks to within a few feet of the officer curled over on the truck.

This is all okay. You know that don't you, the living man asks. His voice is an airy whisper and contains little inflection.

The officer's head remains pushed into his arms. Swollen rain-drops roll into the cracks in between his forearms and his face.

What do you know about it? I pulled the trigger didn't I, the officer asks. And he's dead and we're just here and I don't know what to make of that.

Well, you could continue to pout about it, the living man says. Or, you could accept that it happened and realize that it was the right decision because you made it for yourself without anyone else's help.

The officer thrusts his upper body up and off of the truck and turns around to face the man. He takes in huge, gaping swaths of air and his arms stick straight down by his sides, his muscles clenched.

What do you know about it? Shut your fucking mouth. Shut your fucking mouth, the officer yells. Without anyone else's help? What about you? Just standing there. Telling me everything would be okay. Telling me he was lying. Telling me he was leading me astray.

Rain pelts his face.

We were both here. We both know what happened. The older officer, back at the station I assume, will be radioing soon to find out where you are. We'd better get our stories straight. I know why you did it and I don't blame you. Hell, I commend you. But the world is never ready for things like this, so we have to get our stories straight, the man says.

The officer lunges at the tall thin man and grabs him with both fists by the collar of his shirt. The living man does not resist the attack and hangs like a corpse in the officer's grip, rain running down his face.

The officer turns at the waist and then tosses the man towards the truck. The man's shoes stick into the muddy sandy gravel and he stumbles around before falling, back first, into the truck. He leans against the humming green truck with his arms spread wide across the hood. The heat from the engine warms his wet cold palms and his hands tense upwards until only his fingertips are touching the metal.

The officer turns the rest of his body and falls on top of the man. He grabs the disheveled black collar again and lifts the man's face to his own. He can see the light green dancing in the man's eyes and smell the bitterness of tobacco on his breath and it reminds him of the smells of his childhood when his mother would sneak cigarettes in the backyard after dinner.

Why are you doing this to me, the officer growls.

The man brings his arms in close and lifts his hands in the air next to his face. He squirms his back against the hot truck but cannot move because of the officer's grip.

I haven't done anything to you. You agreed with me. It was your choice. You, for whatever reason, stumbled into our disagreement, one that until that point, had very little to do with you. And you made yourself a concerned party. You could have just passed on by like everyone else, but you had to become involved. You did this to yourself, he says.

The officer slackens his grip and the man feels his weight fall more squarely on the hood of the truck. The man drops his hands to his sides.

Turning his head to the side, the officer lets out a sigh and drops his head downwards.

It's my job. Someone called it in. I am supposed to check on this kind of stuff, the officer says.

The man cracks his neck from side to side in the loosened grip and raises his hand past the officer's to wipe the rain from his

Continued on page 30

Spring 2012

Continued from page 29

face. The man lets out a slight, faint giggle.

Well, it's always someone's job, isn't it, the man asks.

You see, you stepped into the middle of something much larger than yourself. Something that has been going on for thousands of years. You did alright, actually. Some people really lose their cool.

A peachy color returned to the knuckles on the officer's hands as he let go of the collar of the man's shirt. The officer turned his body over to the left until he was resting with his back against the truck.

But I was right, the officer asks. Tell me that I was right.

The officer feels hot and heavy tears roll down his face and mix with the cold dark rain.

Tell me I was right. Goddammit. Tell me I was right. You were both shouting and talking fast when I got here. And I don't know. Tell me I was fucking right.

The living man arches his body off of the truck and straightens up. He smooths out his coat with both hands before placing his right hand on the officer's slumped shoulder.

Look at me, the man says.

He uses his other hand to lift the officer's slumping chin. The two men look each other in the eyes.

You did this because you had to, the man says. It was the right decision because it was the decision you made. It is that simple. You people always over think this stuff. Always trying to find out what was right instead of what simply is.

The officer pulls his shoulder away from the man and wipes his own face.

Then why do I feel like I've done something terrible, the officer asks. Why do I feel like I've made a mistake? I think I fucked up. Oh my God, tell me that I was right.

The man steps away from the truck and stands behind the officer in the muddy lot. The officer turns around to face him and takes a few steps forward. The light from the truck silhouettes the man's impression against the façade of the decaying storefront in the distance.

Raindrops dance on the tin roof of the store and coyotes sing in the distance.

Well, why did you do it, the man asks. Why did you shoot him and not me, huh? Was it anger? Was it indifference? Was it divine fucking intervention?

The officer stumbles back a few steps, his feet grinding into the sandy mud.

He told me my wife was going to die, the officer says. You heard him say it. He said that the move we made didn't make a spit of difference for her and she is going to die. He said she is going to die and that I resent her. He said that I resent her and she is going to die. So I shot him. Because what kind of God would say that to a man in my situation? What kind of God would tell me, tell someone, tell them ...

The truth, the man says. A light and sweet ring replaces the heavy staleness in the man's voice when he says the word "truth." He looks down at the ground and pulls out another cigarette. He places it on his lips, removes the lighter from his pocket, and lights the cigarette. The corners of his mouth turn upwards as he looks towards the ground.

The bottom half of the officer's mouth hangs open. The skin in his cheeks sags downwards and his Adam's apple jumps up and down in his throat.

Was that, was that a question or an answer, the officer stammers. You said everything was going to be alright. You said that. You said my wife was going to be alright as long as I chose you. You said I don't resent her. You said I love her and love feels that way sometimes. That is why I chose you. That is why I believed you.

The man removes the cigarette from his mouth with the pinkie and ring finger of his left hand and turns his head towards the sky. He opens his mouth and a swirling, vibrant cloud of smoke rises upwards. He chuckles and the smoke comes out in interrupted intervals.

The man looks back at the officer. His green eyes open wide.

That is why I said it, he says.

The officer falls to his knees. Water runs down his face. He moves his head from side to side and continually opens and closes his mouth with no words coming out. He raises his hands upwards and runs them through his hair.

Why would you do that, the officer asks. Why would you do that? I thought you said everything would be okay. Why would you lie to me?

The man lifts the cigarette to his mouth and takes one long drag. He inhales and his chest expands and then he releases the smoke in the direction of the man. The rain and the smoke and the sadness cloud the officer's vision of the man and all he can see is the vibrant green of his eyes.

The smoke rises upwards into the dark and star-filled sky and the image of the man becomes clearer. He drops the cigarette to the ground and stamps it out with the toe of his shoe.

He takes short, deliberate steps towards the officer. The movements of the living man send the officer shuffling backwards in the mud. The officer leans back against the grill of the vehicle, still on his knees. The living man leans down at him. Their faces are inches apart. The officer's face cowers away.

The officer can hear the crackling of the radio inside of the car. The older officer's voice is muffled and the officer can make out words like status and taking so long and backup. The stale smell of tobacco clouds his judgment and his insides feel hot and ready to scream out of him, but his mouth remains closed and his voice silent.

The living man opens his mouth.

Because what kind of God would say that to a man in your situation, he says. What kind of God would tell you something like that? What kind of God would tell you the truth?

Joshua Vincent Louchheim

Scottsdale Artist



“A Place to Sit”
Oil on 12” x 24” panel
2011



I was born in Granite City, Illinois, on August 19, 1982. I moved to Arizona two years later and have been here for the majority of my life. I started my artistic endeavors five years ago by teaching myself how to sing and write lyrics while putting together a band. Once the band was complete and we had written enough songs, we began performing in the local clubs. While playing music, I had my first experience with filmmaking, where I co-wrote and acted in a short film for a 48-hour film challenge. The short was screened at Harkins Centerpoint 11 and went on to win a couple of awards, including best use of the prop and third place overall. After performing for a couple of years, the band I was in broke up, due to musical differences, and I decided I needed to focus on an aspect of art that I could do virtually alone. This is when I decided to try my hand at oil painting and I instantly fell in love with it; I find it to be the most peaceful facet of art. So for the past three years, I have been experimenting with oils, working on my technique and composition and trying to grow as an artist and person. During the first year of teaching myself how to paint, I decided I wanted to go back to school and study journalism. So I enrolled at Scottsdale Community College for the third time in my life and began reporting/writing for the Scottsdale Chronicle, SCC's newspaper. During that time, I also had some of my poetry and song lyrics published in The Blue Guitar Magazine and worked on my third short film for another 48-hour challenge, which screened at the Harkins Scottsdale 101 theater. After two semesters, I decided I wanted to focus all of my energy towards my art and I have been doing just that ever since. Contact the artist at jl-vincent@hotmail.com.

Joshua Vincent Louchheim

Scottsdale Artist



**“Dinner and a Monsoon”
Oil on 24” x 36” canvas
2012**

Producing what is inside of me is the only thing I truly love to do. My paintings are a combination of the natural world and the world within my head. Essentially I am a landscapist, and when I begin a piece the first thing I paint is the sky. The sky is what sets the tone for the story that each painting tells. I then block in the lay of the land, adding mountains, trees and anything else I feel the landscape needs. Next I begin to add the figures, whether they are animals or people, and the objects they are manipulating. Though each painting tells a story, the story I envision may not be the same as the viewer’s. Therefore I give each one a title that acts as a guideline for its true meaning.

— Joshua Vincent Louchheim

Joshua Vincent Louchheim

Scottsdale Artist



“Caboose”

Oil on 20” x 16” panel

2011

Joshua Vincent Louchheim

Scottsdale Artist



“Elephants Searching Shadows of Spheres I”

Oil on 30” x 40” canvas

2012

Joshua Vincent Louchheim

Scottsdale Artist



“Elephants Searching Shadows of Spheres II”

Oil on 35.5” x 21.25” panel

2012

Joshua Vincent Louchheim

Scottsdale Artist



“Elephants Searching Shadows of Spheres III”
Oil on 35.5” x 21.25” panel
2012

Joshua Vincent Louchheim

Scottsdale Artist



"The Hands of Gaia"
Oil on 8" x 10" canvas
2009

Joshua Vincent Louchheim

Scottsdale Artist



"Primordial Child"
Oil on 36" x 12" canvas
2010

Joshua Vincent Louchheim

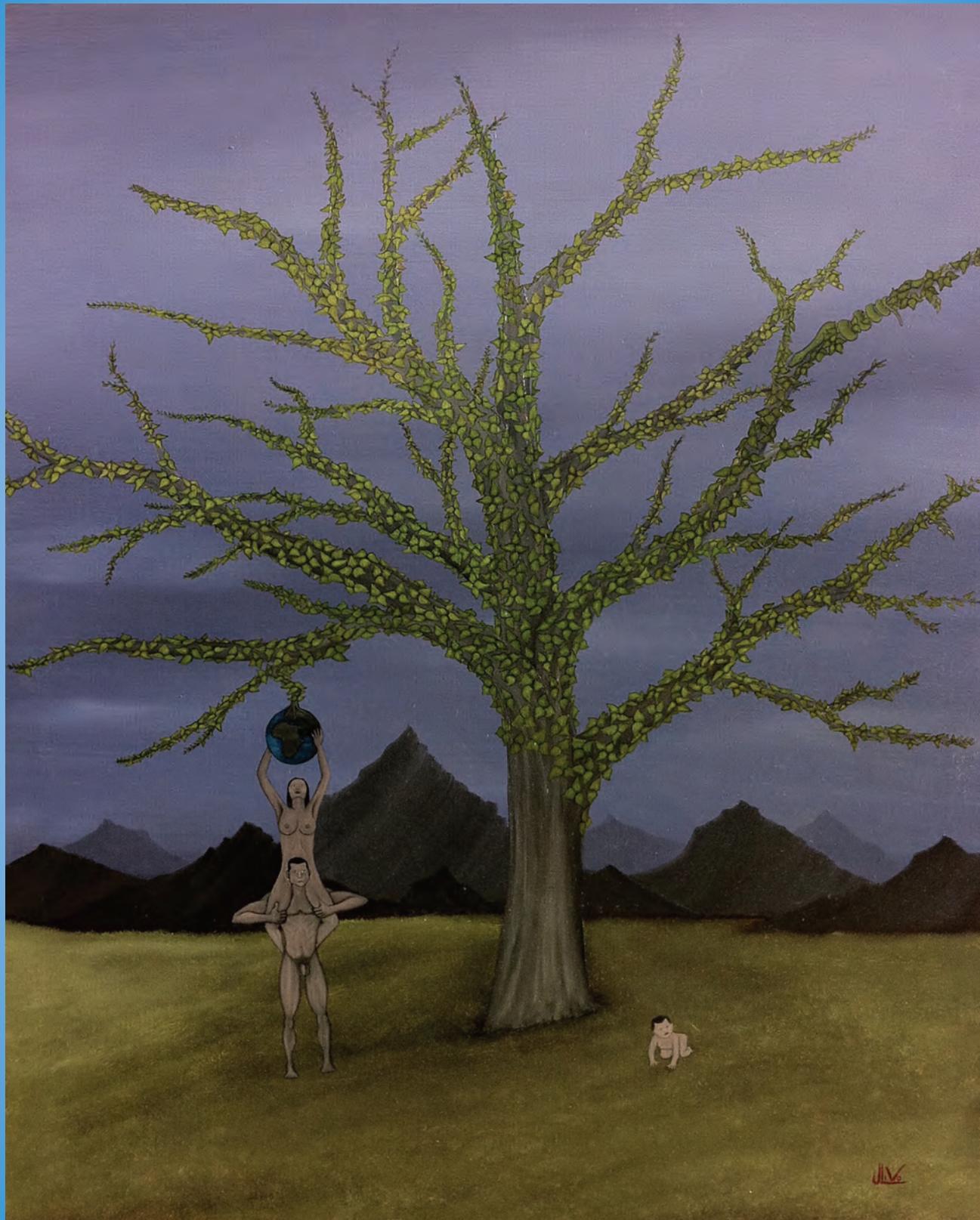
Scottsdale Artist



“The Greatest Performance Never Seen”
Oil on 25” x 42.5” panel
2012

Joshua Vincent Louchheim

Scottsdale Artist



"True Temptation"
Oil on 30" x 24" canvas
2010

Evolution of an Artist

By Joshua Vincent Louchheim

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My evolution as an artist started when I began to play music. I had a vision and took the actions necessary to turn it into a reality. The same goes for painting.

I had always wanted to try my hand at oil painting since I was a child, but never got around to it for many reasons. After the band I was in broke up, I spent about a year doing nothing but working with no real creative outlet. And after having that two-year period with band practice four days a week and shows on the weekends, I started to feel bottled up and a bit crazy.

One evening, I was sitting in front of the computer at work and I decided it was time to paint. Right when my shift ended, I drove straight to Michaels craft store to pick up some supplies. I left there with two canvases, a variety pack of very cheap oil paints and brushes, and a few tubes of acrylic. I then drove home, went into my room, turned on some music, sat on the floor with my back against my bed and the canvas on the ground and began.

I opened one of the acrylic tubes and spread a color called Red Oxide over the vast whiteness of the canvas. I followed that by opening the oils to begin painting a tree over the already dry acrylic; and it was right after my first few strokes that I realized I didn't have the slightest idea what I was doing. The oil was so foreign and I knew nothing about it other than it was the medium that all the painters I had admired as a child used. I continued to attempt to create this tree, brushing paint on and then wiping it off and then brushing it back on again, working myself into a furious frustration and decided it best to call it quits for the night.

The next day at work I was consumed by it, it was all I thought about and I couldn't wait to get home and give the tree another go. But to my surprise, the oil was still wet and I didn't know what to do with the partially dry paint, so I decided to paint an owl instead. This was just as difficult as the tree, and I worked myself into another rage and again went to sleep.

And so it continued, going back and forth on the same canvas between the owl and the tree again and again, for over a week, and the rage and frustration eventually turned into a determination to master the art of oil painting. I had already started on the other canvas by playing with the oil, caking it on and seeing how I could manipulate it with the brush, still knowing nothing about it; it was my scratch canvas that I eventually threw away.

During this time, I had made several trips back to the craft store to buy some more canvases, a couple of small detail-oriented brushes and tubes of better quality oil paint. I started on a handful of new paintings with no real focus on a finished product. For me it was all about diving into them in order to figure out my technique. I had also carved myself out a little space in the garage where I had all my newly acquired materials positioned on and

around a desk. And it was then I started to really grow.

Shortly after setting up my little studio, I had booked a plane ticket to St. Louis to surprise my grandfather for his 90th birthday; and I decided it was time to complete a painting with the intention to give it to him as a present. I had about two weeks to do so and picked one out that I thought he would enjoy; dedicating the next two weeks to finishing it, signature and all. I worked on it every night I could, including the night before my flight departed. It was still wet when I boarded the airplane and I convinced the flight attendant into letting me have an overhead compartment, in the back of the plane, all to myself for my painting to travel safely.

I gave it to my grandfather and he enjoyed it for the last few months of his life and it still hangs in my grandmother's home today; it is titled "Extol to the Universal Mind." During my trip I was given many compliments about my painting by other passengers on the plane and from strangers as I walked through the airport. It was also received very well by my family, and the day I was scheduled to depart one of my uncles asked me if I could paint one for him. Which I agreed to, and he now has my fourth completed painting, titled "Fall Over the River." This was when I realized that my secret dream of becoming a professional fine artist, even though I had only been painting for a few months, wasn't completely out of reach.

Forcing myself to finish "Extol to the Universal Mind" was a huge step for me. It made me more driven to finish the others I was working on, including the very first one I had started; and I began to do just that.

As a kid I had always liked to draw and I loved art class but I never really finished anything. What I produced back then were more along the lines of glorified doodles with no real composition. I began to paint at least four nights a week trying to improve on my technique and composition; a lot of the times painting until the sun came up. I had a goal even though I didn't voice it to anyone and I was determined to finish what I had started.

Some of the paintings ended up in the trash with a hole kicked through them, and others were painted over entirely. If I didn't like to look at it, I didn't think it was worth continuing so I destroyed it.

I only finished a handful of paintings during my first year, which began around September of 2008, and all of them were finished in 2009. Shortly after I had finished all five of these paintings, I felt I needed to show them to someone to see if I could actually do anything in the art world with them.

So I took the four that I had (I hadn't given my uncle his paint-

Continued on page 42

ing yet, it took me almost a year to hand it over to him) to the Cattle Track Art Compound and showed them to a local artist named Mark McDowell, who is a friend of my grandma's.

He gave me a nudge in the right direction and also opened up my eyes to a medium known as Liquin, used to thin out the paint and speed drying. Up to that date, I was using oil straight out of the tube and if I needed it thinned I used turpentine. I had no idea about any of the many mediums there are to manipulate the paint.

After showing Mark my work, I took a look at some of his and he encouraged me to start going to galleries and studying other artists who I admired. He also pointed me towards Kraig Foote, the owner of Art One Gallery in Scottsdale.

Directly after leaving the compound, I headed to Art One. I talked to Kraig briefly and we scheduled an appointment for me to bring in my work a week later. I did and he was impressed enough to give me a shot and gave me the rundown on how to put together a portfolio.

I just needed to photograph my paintings, put the images on a CD with an artist bio and statement and he would be happy to show them in his gallery. The hardest part for me was when he asked me to describe my work. I had been so focused on teaching myself how to paint that I hadn't even thought about how I would describe the image to another person. And still being very uncomfortable with the oils and not really understanding how I had produced the image, I shied away from any type of explanation.

I went home and gave a lot of thought to showing them, and it came down to me not being ready. I needed to understand what I was doing with the paint and what the images' true meanings were in order to learn how to discuss them.

I continued to paint, working on some new pieces, and finished a couple which were very small and lacking in interest. That's when I started to lose my steam and focus; only painting occasionally for the next year with not much direction.

I spent a lot of time staring at my finished paintings, focusing on their flaws and thinking of how I could make them better. And it dawned on me that I would never grow if I focused on my old work. I had to dedicate myself to the new because nothing would come from dwelling on my past mistakes. And in order to do this I had to part with my first wave of paintings.

So I put together the portfolio, submitted it to the gallery and my paintings were priced and hung. I got my drive back and I continued to paint, thinking that I would get better by countless hours of practice and sheer willpower.

I produced another few paintings and brought them in to display about six months later. This batch consisted of slightly larger paintings than my first with a little more detail and deeper meanings; but I felt that they were still lacking in their composition, mainly because I still didn't understand the paint and was timid to attempt to create it exactly how I had envisioned.

A majority of the time at my easel was spent going back and touching things up that I felt could be better and should be. The

most recent one of those paintings ("Guardians") was on a birch panel, which took the paint so much differently than canvas. With canvas, I always felt like I had to apply too much pressure, which left me with the sensation that I was dragging the bristles across it in order to leave paint in its wake.

The wood was a different arena entirely, each stroke felt more graceful and controlled. The bristles felt like they were gliding over the support, which gave me better control over the paint. And I knew then that I had found something I needed to hold on to. Shortly after this is when I began to really dive into learning. I felt like I had taken myself as far as I could go with experimentation, I was having hang-ups with colors and my composition and technique still felt weak.

I decided to start going into galleries like Mark had suggested and studied the work of other artists. I also spent a majority of time in the library (and still do) checking out books and documentaries on artists and different art movements. I read everything I could get my hands on that I thought would help me mature. I checked out books on color mixing as well as artists' handbooks that gave me insight on all the materials there are for oil painting, from the different types of hairs that brushes are constructed of to the different oils and alkyds that can be mixed with paint in order to change its consistency and drying rate.

I read about underpainting and how to properly build up layers on the support as well as different blending and glazing techniques that can be applied. All of this information was entirely alien to me and it really opened up the door for me to no longer feel like I was experimenting.

It gave me a solid knowledge of what it was I was doing right and what I was doing wrong and I took all this information and began applying it to my work while attempting to improve my composition by studying the compositions of artists I admired.

I now try to challenge myself with every painting. I want it to be harder than the last, whether it is to make something larger or adding more detail to it.

The hardest part now is making the painting look like I envision it in my head. I still can't produce the image exactly like it is in my mind and it's frustrating, but it's also something to look forward to and strive for.

I have some paintings like "Dinner and a Monsoon" that I put aside for over a year before I even attempted to finish it; just because I didn't have the skill to produce what I really wanted to put in the painting.

It started off with the rolling clouds and a barren landscape with very little detail other than a few mountains in the distance. And that's how it remained for about 16-20 months until I had the confidence to finish it; where I didn't feel like I would ruin something that I thought could potentially be great.

It all boils down to patience. And since I am a bit impatient, I push myself as hard as I can in order to grow rapidly. And I feel that with every painting I start and finish, I grow as an artist. And they are getting closer to resembling what I dream up within my mind.

The Cycle of Ramon

By Harvey Stanbrough

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The world had been sad for three days. The sky wept steadily, softly, the water drip, drip, dripping from limbs and leaves of trees and eaves of houses, trickling into rivulets and streams that whispered their way east, to the ocean. There was only the overcast and mist and rain, but no thunder. Only the gentle pattering of drops that seemed almost to hush each other as they washed houses and fences and gardens and roads and paths. Only the cool, mute darkness. The normally flashy lightning dared not rend the sky with so much as a single appearance, and in those few rare moments when a break appeared in the clouds, the stars dimmed themselves rather than risk interrupting the young widow's mourning.

Maria Elena leaned over the dining room table, which took up one whole end of the roomy kitchen, and gently stroked her husband's black, wavy hair. "Ramon... mi Ramon," she whispered, her voice barely disturbing the air. "Tu eres mi corazón. You are my heart." As she had the past two nights, she dipped a soft linen cloth in a pan of hot water, squeezed it with one hand, then washed gently over his forehead. A matched pair of tears slipped from her cheeks and fell next to his nose. She creased the cloth to bring a fresh fold to bear, then smoothed his eyebrows from the center out, but was careful not to allow the linen to touch the tears, which had settled into the corners of his eyes and were no doubt seeping between his eyelids. "Te amo, Ramon... mi corazón."

She carefully creased the cloth again and washed each temple, brushing his hair over his ear on either side. As another tear slipped from her cheek to his, she dipped the cloth in the water again, squeezed it, then gently washed his cheeks, creased the cloth and washed both jaws, his neck and throat and chin. Finally she dropped the linen cloth into the bowl and sighed. "Le perderé para siempre, mi amor. I will miss you for a very long

time." She straightened, picked up the bowl of tepid water and looked upon her husband, who seemed to have faded a great deal since yesterday, then shook her head and moved toward the kitchen. How I wish he could simply awaken! Among the many legends in her village, she had heard rumors of the dead awakening when the heavens openly wept for them, especially when lightning shows respect by its absence and even the stars avert their faces. She had heard of them living again when the tears of a loved one settled into the spirit path of their eyes. No... Ramon is gone. She dabbed lightly at her own eyes. At least I've had a chance to say goodbye.

A knock sounded lightly on the door, and Maria Elena set the bowl, cloth and all, on the kitchen counter alongside the sink and went to answer it.

Her mother, Federica, and her mother's sister, Juana, peered at her from beneath Federica's umbrella, their faces on an eerie cusp between the shadows of the night and the flickering glow emanating from the fireplace. Pushing Juana ahead of her, Federica closed her umbrella, then entered and enveloped her daughter in a warm but restrictive hug. Rainwater from the umbrella dripped on the saltillo tiles, discoloring the mortar between them. "We have been so worried about you, Maria! Are you all right?"

"I'm fine, Mama." Maria Elena shrugged away from her mother's arms and hugged Juana lightly to get it over with.

Juana's brow furrowed. "Are you sure you are okay, Mija? Not a word in three days!"

Her mother sighed and shook her head. "Nothing is going so well these days, eh?"

"Nothing has gone well for a very long time, Mama. But it's --"

Continued on page 44



Harvey Stanbrough was born in New Mexico, seasoned in Texas, and baked in Arizona. He spent most of his early life in the home of his heart, the Sonoran Desert of southern Arizona. After graduating from a 21-year civilian-appreciation course in the U.S. Marine Corps, he attended Eastern New Mexico University where he managed to sneak up on a bachelor's degree. He writes and works as a freelance editor and writing instructor from his home in southeast Arizona. Visit his website at <http://HarveyStanbrough.com>. Many of Harvey's magic realism stories take place in or around the fictional village of Agua Rocosa. The storyteller and keeper of the cantina in Agua Rocosa, Juan-Carlos Salazar, blogs regularly at <http://CantinaTales.com>. Please visit soon!

Continued from page 43

Her mother brushed past her, followed closely by Juana. Federica removed her coat as she bustled into the kitchen. “Oh, how I’ve missed this kitchen!” She flopped her coat over the back of a chair and laid her umbrella on the table right between Ramon’s legs. “Is there coffee?”

Maria blanched, retrieved the umbrella and hung it on a peg on the wall. “Of course there is coffee, Mama.” She took a mug from the cabinet over the sink and turned to the stove. Just as she turned back with the coffee, Juana flopped her coat across the table, effectively covering Ramon’s lower abdomen. Maria Elena screeched as the hot coffee sloshed from the cup and scalded a rivulet across the back of her hand. An instant later the cup shattered on the floor, and in the next instant she’d covered the distance to the table. “I’m so sorry, Mama. I’ll get you another cup in a moment.” She grabbed Juana’s coat and flung it over the back of a chair, then returned to the stove, her legs gone weak and her voice having assumed a trembling quality. “Perhaps... we should take our coffee in the living room?” She poured a cup and turned to the women, then handed the mug to her mother. Regaining her composure a bit, she said, “Y Tia Juana, would you care for a cup?”

The two women looked at her oddly for a long moment, as if an evil twin was peering at them from behind her ear, and the only sound was the cruel, popping, staccato laughter from the fireplace in the next room. Her mother set her cup on the table, nearer Ramon’s left ankle than his right, then reached to caress her daughter’s arm. “We just worry, Mija. It’s that time of year again.” Just as quickly she pulled her hands back to herself and bit her lip. Then, in a very quiet voice, she said, “He’s gone, Mija. You know he’s gone, yes?”

Tears brimming in her eyes, Maria Elena nodded. “Si, Mama... and everything will be all right. What cannot be remedied – ”

Her mother caressed her arm. “Yes, yes. That is the truth of things.”

Her Aunt Juana caressed the other. “Remember, todo es posible con Dios, Maria. With God, all things are possible.”

“Yes, yes... everything will be all right.” She retrieved her mother’s coat from the back of the chair, and the umbrella and Juana’s coat from the pegs. “For now, though... for tonight... I must complete my private mourning.”

Her mother took her coat and sighed. “Yes... of course you must decide for yourself what is proper and right.” She hugged Maria and looked closely at her daughter’s face. “We will see you soon, then?”

Maria wiped a tear from her cheek, the only one she’d allowed to escape in her mother’s presence in over five years. “I will see you soon.” She saw them to the front door, closed it

gently behind them, then turned the latch and returned to the dining room table. She pulled out a chair, sat, and lay her head on her husband’s shoulder. “Ramon... mi Ramon... mi corazón. Regrese por favor. Please come back to me.” But she knew that wouldn’t happen. As sobs wracked her body, she thought back to the evening she’d known the love of her life.

Long before her parents had begun encouraging her to find a man of her own, to marry and have children, she and Ramon had run down to the sea almost every day after their lessons. The son of a stone mason, Ramon took his lessons at his home very near the center of the village and from his next door neighbor, a priest who was teaching him to write in two languages. Maria Elena took her lessons, primarily in sewing and cooking and the tending of a home, in her parents’ house, which was situated just above the beach as necessitated by her father’s station as a somewhat successful fisherman, sometimes.

Because of the location of their houses in relation to the sea, most often Ramon would come get her, though it seldom seemed like that. A very physical boy, he would run from his house all the way to the beach, the better part of three kilometers, but as he approached her little stone and mud house, he would slow his pace. It was their secret, their way of him picking her up without making a fuss of the whole thing and including parents and friends and other outsiders. He knew he belonged with her, and she knew she belonged with him, and what anyone else knew or did not know was of no consequence.

Over all those years, from the time he was six and she was five until he was fifteen and she was fourteen, most days found her waiting for him in the front yard, perched on the stone fence “like a little bird,” her father said and then waved as he headed off to the cantina to relax from his arduous day and her mother, inside, fingered her rosary, nimbly moving from one bead to the next, and mumbled quietly in the dark corner near the fireplace. And from the time Ramon came over the hill from town and veered east-northeast past her house, he seemed almost suspended in time. Seeing such a beautiful physical specimen slowed to such a degree, his bronzed arms and legs pumping in slow motion, muscles tensed but seeming almost to hang in midair, always invoked a kind of sadness in her, as if it were a great, raw omen. Then a grin would spread across her face and she would launch herself from her perch and catch up with him, at which time they both whisked away, laughing, covering the final 200 meters at full speed. Secretly, she had ardently suspected they covered that remaining distance at very near light speed. They swam and laughed and explored and built sand castles and could not imagine that anything sinister would ever

Continued on page 45

enter their lives.

Maria awoke, looked at her beautiful Ramon. He was growing more pale, as if fading. She caressed his hair. “Do you remember, Ramon, when Francisco called me Cara Pequeña de Puerco? Little Pig Face?” She smiled. “You defended my honor well, my love. It was the first time you declared by your actions that I belonged to you and no other. I think I will never forget the look on Francisco’s face when he stepped back and apologized.”

Francisco was an apprentice stone mason in training with Ramon’s father. As Ramon was sweeping up the leavings of the day, Francisco grinned mischievously. “You spend much time with Maria Elena de Cordoba. Perhaps someday you will marry her and no longer have to perform woman’s work.”

Bent to the task at hand, Ramon didn’t realize the comment was intended as an insult. He shrugged. “I spend much time with many people. Maria is my friend. I work for my father. I do the tasks assigned to all apprentices... the same tasks you performed until a year or so ago. There is no woman’s work or man’s work. There is only work.” He looked up.

Francisco sneered. “Still, it would be better to have Cara Pequeña de Puerco doing the sweeping and the sewing and cooking... and perhaps other things, eh?”

Ramon dropped the broom and balled up his fists. “What did you say?”

Ramon’s father came in. “I heard what was said. You both come with me.”

The boys followed him out the door and down the street to the village rectory, where he paused and knocked on the door.

The priest, Father Pablo, opened the door and listened as Ramon’s father conveyed the earlier conversation. He looked at Francisco. “Do you wish to apologize for having insulted the honor of young Ramon’s friend?”

Francisco vehemently shook his head.

The priest looked at Ramon and shrugged. “Surely you do not wish to fight him, so – ”

Ramon’s gaze never left Francisco’s face. “Yes, Padre, I do wish to fight him.”

Ramon’s father tried to intercede. “But he is older than you, Ramon, and larger and stronger.”

Ramon shook his head. Quietly he said, “He is not stronger, Papa. He is merely more brash. I will fight him.”

Ten minutes later as Ramon, thirteen, and Francisco, fifteen, were getting set to do battle in the street outside the rectory, a small crowd had begun to gather. The village seldom saw such

excitement in the late afternoon. Indeed, it was late enough and the rumors loud enough that Maria had left her perch and wandered into town to find her tardy friend. The crowd had attracted her, but once she recognized the boys in the circle, she faded back and remained mostly out of sight near the corner of the rectory.

Father Pablo made a show of announcing the reason for the dispute. The fact that young Ramon was willing to fight an older, much larger boy to defend the honor of his friend – his girl friend – was not lost on the females in the crowd. The padre was instructing the boys in the rules of the contest. “There will be no kicking or clawing, do you understand? No biting, and no gouging to the eyes. There will also be no – ”

Francisco interrupted the priest with the first punch, a hard blow that caught Ramon on the left cheekbone, snapping his head to the right and glancing off his nose just enough to cause a trickle of blood.

Ramon grinned broadly, partly to show off for the girls among the small crowd circling around him and Francisco, but mostly with pleasure. He sensed the punch was Francisco’s best shot, and it had only barely stung him.

The priest stepped back in awe, his mouth open. “Francisco! It was not time to begin! It was not time!”

Never taking his gaze from Francisco, Ramon raised one hand and the priest stopped. Ramon glared at Francisco, blood trickling over the slight smile on his lips, and motioned him forward with a cocked index finger.

Eyes set in slits, Francisco approached him, not realizing he was on the verge of defeat.

The priest advanced as well, ready to intervene if necessary.

Blood streaming from his nose, Ramon stuck his face close to Francisco’s left ear. His smile tempered his words. “You cannot hurt me. You will step back. You will apologize aloud to Maria Elena... who is my woman... or we will finish this.”

The priest stepped back quickly, barely able to contain his own smile.

A red spot soaked through Francisco’s white linen shirt at the shoulder. A sea breeze swept up the hill from the ocean, but even as the sweat cooled Francisco’s brow, the spot on his shoulder grew warmer, almost hot. Almost imperceptibly, he nodded, his gaze locked with Ramon’s, then stepped back. He tested Ramon’s eyes for a moment, found stone-solid resolve, and bowed his head for a long moment. When he looked up, he spoke quietly but loudly enough for everyone in the circle to hear. “My sincere apologies, Ramon, for having made such a crude comment concerning Señorita Maria Elena de Cordoba.” A slightly sarcastic tone crept into his voice as his fists tightened at his sides. “I did not understand that she was... su

Continued on page 46

cariñosa.”

Ramon nodded almost imperceptibly.

Francisco bowed again, low, then righted himself. “I am in your service.” He took another step backward, then spun on his heel and went off down the road. He did not show up for his apprenticeship the next morning, and nobody in the village ever saw him again.

Maria stroked Ramon’s hair again, noting that she could barely feel it. “You were my strong, handsome defender, Ramon. You were and are the love of my life, and it shall ever be so.”

On the sixteenth anniversary of Ramon’s birth, at the end of the workday, his father greeted him with a broad smile. “Today, my son, you are a stone mason. I can teach you nothing more. You have learned to speak and write English as well, so you can choose the life you live and where you live it. I hope you will remain in the village or at least nearby, but the world is at your feet. Ramon, I am proud of you.”

Ramon embraced his father. “Gracias, Papa!” He stepped back, but could hardly contain his grin. “You will excuse me, Sir? I should probably – ”

His father shook his head and burst into laughter, gesturing toward the door. “Go, my son, and be swift! She is waiting, probably perched on the fence as usual.”

Ramon raced along the path to the east just as he did most days. But this day was different. He grinned broadly. This day he would stop short of the sea. This day he would ask Señor Cordoba to allow him to court his daughter. Then, in a year, once he had proven to her parents that he was worthy of her, he would ask for Maria Elena’s hand in marriage. Of course, her father would give his assent and her mother would be ecstatic to have a stone mason in the family. There would be a massive engagement party. They would be married a year after that in the grandest wedding the village had ever seen. He leapt for joy and redoubled his pace.

As he came over the edge of the hill and cut east-northeast from the trail, he did not slow down as usual. If anything he sped up, wanting to reach her, to pick her up and swing her in the air, to tell her he was a stone mason, to talk with her father, her mother. Then, if there was time and if it was still proper, they would go down to the sea together.

For Maria Elena, an unearthly sound brought the beginning of realization: a sharp, flat crack, like the strongest, most surprising bolt of lightning. She started to leap from the fence, her eyes stretched wide, her mouth trapped

in a scream that might never end, and she watched Ramon slow down as usual, but not for the usual reason. She and he simultaneously hung in mid-air, trapped together in an excruciatingly long moment of horror but separated by eternity, her feet straining to reach the ground so she could run to him, wrap him up, protect him, just as a reddish-pink cloud appeared next to his head. As her feet touched the ground he pitched forward into the earth, never to move again.

Her father died two years later of a liver affliction, and her mother moved to the other side of the village to live with her sister. Maria chose to remain in the stone house near the sea, where, over time, she developed a habit of going down to the sea. There, after dark so nobody could see, she would walk along the shore with Ramon, his hand on her waist, her head on his shoulder, and they would swim. Of course, she knew he wasn’t really there, but she kept hoping he would be. She prayed one night he would show up, take her in his loving arms, and pull her into the sea where they would reside together forever. Such is the way of love that has lasted over many lifetimes.

Four nights ago as I write this account, five years to the day after Ramon was murdered, it happened.

The sea beckoned, much more strongly than usual. Maria Elena ran down to the shore, stopped and peered into the darkness. She was alone, but if others had come along she wouldn’t have noticed. Tonight there was something different... something more. She trembled, not with fear but with nerves, something she had never done when anticipating an evening with the sea. She pulled her blouse over her head and dropped it on the sand, then stepped out of her flowing skirt and her underwear and sandals. She waded out from the shore, closed her eyes and dove beneath the waves, gracefully stroking, her hands smoothly slicing through the water as if caressing its heart. Where she sensed the water was getting deeper, she stood again, peering out into the gentle waves, her arms slightly above her head, almost as if in surrender. I would surrender to the sea, she thought. It was such a wonderful place, a living entity. Ships had sunk there, and airplanes, and lovers had drowned there. It alive with wild creatures as well, but also with beings from above. Countless times she’d seen the small fireballs in the sky arcing perfectly toward the sea. Sometimes, she imagined, she heard Ramon laughing, no doubt with pure, heavenly ecstasy, for certainly he was an angel now. On those nights when she heard his laughter, she rushed to the shoreline and dove in quickly, immersing herself in the elation carried in the joyful waves. She could swim for hours on those nights, and when she left the water, she did so with a heart made lighter

Continued from page 46

with joy, and she often smiled for the next few days. At other times she heard heart-wrenching sobs and imagined a few immortals had chosen to drown their sorrows in the sea. On those nights, she knew Ramon was busy caring for his fellow angels. On those nights she did not swim. She did not want to interrupt her love in his important work, and she would not risk being overcome with celestial sadness. Her human mind and emotions, she was sure, would not be able to handle it.

Of course, her musings had a strong basis in fact. In her small village one legend held that an angel, a very old man with enormous wings, had fallen from the sky and ventured into a family garden to molt and rest and renew itself. Surely if an angel had fallen into her village, many more had fallen into countless other towns and cities and nations. And how many more must have fallen into the vastness of the sea? And they and the other creatures, in concert with the rhythms of the universe and the phases of Luna, had imbued the sea with true life: its own throbbing heartbeat, its own gentle rhythms. She felt most natural when surrounded by its swirling, watery tendrils, when receiving its loving caresses. And tonight would be special. She just knew it. Then the realization hit her: Tonight Ramon is coming home to me!

She waded deeper, her feet alternately touching sand, then giving way to weightlessness. This is how Ramon must feel all the time, she thought. Flowing, weightless, everywhere at one time. The waves rolled in gently, one after another after another, each soothingly warm, kissing her cheeks and chin, massaging her shoulders and throat, flicking around her small, buoyant breasts. Beneath the surface, the undercurrents paid homage, caressing her ankles and calves, swirling about her thighs and hips, stroking and circling her abdomen and waist. Her eyes closed, Maria Elena sighed, never having felt such remarkably gentle yet electrifying sensations, and with something akin to reverence rested her arms on the surface. She reached to embrace her lover and whispered, "Venga a mi, mi amor. Come to me."

The currents swelled and warmed, swirling more strongly, firmer in their intensity, their heat embracing her, at once enveloping and penetrating her. She half-opened her eyes for only a moment, then closed them again and lay back, her lips curled in a soft smile as the sea's rhythm washed over her, kissing her forehead, her eyelids, her ears and throat and lips. It caressed her shoulders and arms, her back and abdomen, her hips and thighs and calves and feet. It bathed her, worshiped her, loved her. Her passion matched that of the undulating, untamed sea, and it surged and swelled and heaved around her, into her, through her, caressing, twirling, swirling, writhing, undulating, whitecaps frothing, her breath quickening into

gasps as her great lover finally, finally, finally began to ebb.

Three hours after she'd ventured into the surf, she slept, one with Ramon and completely at peace as he carried her along to the shore. He lay her gently next to her clothing, then faded back into the sea.

She awoke a few hours later, her heart filled, her mind and body satisfied. She looked at the sky, the few wispy clouds, so thin that their passing only dimmed the stars, and only momentarily. She'd had an amazing dream, one in which every fiber of her being had been inundated, permeated, saturated with pure love, and she knew Ramon had been there. She'd been filled with light, every cell transformed into something better than it had been. She finally sat up, pulled her knees to her chest, and clasped her hands in front of them. She looked at the beautiful sea, sparkling beneath the full light of Luna. And he loves me so much, he caused me to sleep. That had never happened before. She tried on a frown, but it wouldn't stay. She tried to feel sad that she'd slept so long, but there was no sense of loss or sadness at parting. Because he is with me... he is still here. She remembered how he used to wade just offshore, then plop down, immersing himself completely, yet still within reach. And it dawned on her: That's what he's done this time! He's right here! Right here! Somehow, she felt only unbridled joy, as if it emanated from her very core. The sky beyond the edge of the sea began to grow light and she knew she must hurry. This might be the last chance she would have to say a proper goodbye to her love.

She put on her panties and sandals, then swept up her skirt and blouse, and waded into the surf. A warmth caressed her legs. Here. She smiled. He's right here. She stooped and soaked Ramon into her skirt and blouse. When she was sure she had all of him, she waded out of the surf and walked up the path to her small stone house.

Just as the sun peeked over the horizon, she closed the door, kicked off her sandals, and carried Ramon to the dining room table. She released him from her blouse and skirt, then tossed those over the back of a chair and turned back to him. He looked so handsome lying there.

She leaned over the dining room table, which took up one whole end of the roomy kitchen, and gently stroked her husband's black, wavy hair. "Ramon... mi Ramon," she whispered, her voice barely disturbing the air. "Tu eres mi corazón."

And intricately connected as they were, Ramón himself became aware of a certain reduction, a letting go followed by an ebbing of himself and the tides in his cells, a wafting away of the need for sensory stimuli, then the rapid distancing of the stimuli itself. His hearing and eye-

Continued on page 48

Spring 2012

Continued from page 47

sight didn't fade as he'd always thought they would. Instead, those things to which he tried to listen or upon which he tried to focus quickly withdrew, receding to mere pinpoints of sound and light as quickly as a snapped finger. Still, he seemed able to sense their digression from here to there through their quantum trick. Simultaneous with this reduction, Ramón experienced a kind of draining, a funneling from something into nothing, perhaps to make Nothing more full, or perhaps more empty. Even as he drained and even as he became the flow that accompanies being drained, a numbing, half-hearted deadness, a throbbing, pulsing, liquid gravity, pinned him and his numbness to a dark, stark, undulating mass.

At almost the same time the despondent grief of she who was letting go washed through him in a series of waves, gentle as the caress of a loving hand. The undulations were almost physical, and he welcomed them, absorbed them, taking them to himself and far away from her. Each wave began at the center of his forehead, smoothing out and down, out and down, out and down, descending over his eyelids, over and around his nose and eyes, down over his cheeks. Each wave lingered for an extra beat at his lips as if encountering a breakwater and mournfully regretting the need to surmount it, then slipped remorsefully down over his chin, throat and torso. Each wave continued through each limb and out through the tips of his fingers and toes. Of all the waves, the first was by far the strongest, and although each followed the same pattern, each washed through him with less intensity than the one before, merging him more fluidly into the liquid gravity that had been above and the undulating mass that had been below.

Even as the waves washed one after another after another through his body, tendrils from the first wave rose through his brain, probing, touching off electrical impulses, a grand finale to his personal fireworks show. Synapses fired in sequence, dozens setting off hundreds setting off thousands, and through a misty fog he flashed from a dark red warmth through light

to crib slats and saltillo tile floors to jeans with a rope belt and friends and laughter and a wayward cursing of a coward with a gun and a brilliant, screaming-red instant and – synapses fired, thousands setting off millions setting off billions. He must have glowed like a shooting star, he thought, as he plunged from the heavens into the undulating mass of the womb. The waves ebbed, dwindling to ripples, and eventually, just as he and the gravity and the undulations fully blended, the ripples lessened, lessened, lessened and blinked out of existence. The mist dissipated, and the mass he had become rose and fell, swelled and ebbed.

Something in his blood began to mix with his need and he began to seep, to dissolve, to reconstitute in drops that slipped through the slats in the table and off the edges, then reunited beneath. He – the first bit of him – ran along the slats and dripped to the floor even as the next bits above were dissolving, slipping through slats, dripping to the floor and forming a rivulet to the drain in the back wall.

In a few hours he was just in front of the garden and stretched around the corner to the shed and from there back through the drain where the last of him was seeping across the floor. And from the old, tired garden gate that he'd meant to fix after the honeymoon, from there back around almost to the shed, the water from the sky dripped from limbs and leaves of trees and eaves of houses and trickled into rivulets and streams. There it was, the rainwater and Ramón, and together it whispered its way east, to the ocean. The overcast and mist continued for his protection, but the lightning, no longer able to contain its joy, flashed across the sky in bright smiles as the thunder applauded his return to the sea and from there to the heavens and from there, someday, to another womb. The stars burst like supernovae, celebrating.

By daybreak even the young widow, Maria Elena de Cordoba, had stopped mourning, for she couldn't remember a time when she hadn't been alone, and she couldn't remember ever being happier.

2 Poems By Esther Schnur-Berlot

Absurd Absurdities

© 2012

You left me no clue.
Did you mean subliminist or minimalist?
I read your demands.
Revise beginning or end.
Is this the beginning of the end?
My mindless middleclass doesn't get it.
When you speak, I attentively look up
Why are you looking down?
You scrawl Pretentious across my paper
accusing me of pretending meaning
when there is no meaning to meaningless.
My mind screams at phantom perfectionists –
It's good enough – but my good enough
is not good enough for you.
You insist I explain Pinter's long pauses.
Those long dead silences elude my imagination.
Must I admit I have none?
Your inanimate or is it indomitable questions
leave me faint.
I never got the hang of my own native language
and now you want an interpretation
of Pinter's foreign English.
All those unconventional conventions
leave me feeling conventional.
And for the kiss of death my paper is returned
with your red felt scribbles – bleeding
dangling participles and parsed phrases.
By the way what are participles and parses?
I'm totally confused by your wants
as I sink lower and lower into
low brow bewilderment.

Honey Do

© 2012

Today we'll clean
said she. Don't be
mean said he.

Help me dust,
said she. If I
must said he.

Vacuum floor,
said she. What a
bore said he.

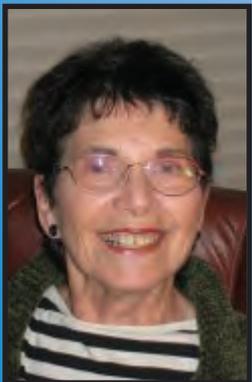
I feel dismissed
said she. I'm getting
pissed said he.

Let's clear the air
said she. Try being
fair said he.

Let's stop for a break
said she. I'm on the
make said he.

Don't be a tease
said she. A little
squeeze said he.

Let's change the
sheets said she.
Before or after
said he.



Esther Schnur-Berlot is a transplant from New York City where she worked behind the scenes in TV commercials and then on to California where she taught wearable art. Now living in Tucson, she devotes her time to writing poetry. Esther's poetry has been published in the California State Poetry Quarterly, the Sonoma Collective and Desert Voices. E-mail iberlot@q.com.

2 Poems by Hannah Richard

Growing Up Too Fast

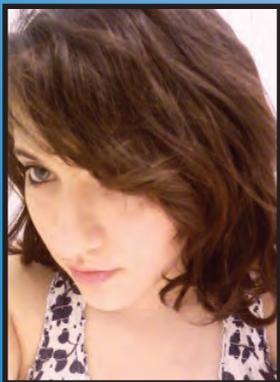
© 2012

I have been painting gray skies gold
And I have been focused on doing what I'm told
But I'm walking out and it's getting cold
So could you hold me before we both get old?
I understand only now what you see
And sometimes I think that maybe, maybe
It would be okay to just be happy
And when I look into the mirror, like what I see
Because I can't paint these gray eyes gold
And sometimes I have to forget what I'm told
And sometimes waiting leaves you standing cold
So come and get me before we both get old
Edges are sharper when you stand
On their jagged tips and hand
Them your heart and promise band
That cuts off blood flow and
I am seeing grays wash away, leaving gold
And I am standing against the dull rush of what I'm told
I'm just walking, walking; and it's cold
So come and get me, get me, before we're both so old
We get distracted with painting gray skies gold
And we're so focused on doing what we're told
It won't make us happy, just makes us cold
So just hold me, hold me, till we grow old
I know I can't paint these gray eyes gold.
And sometimes I sing to forget what I'm told.
But my throat is sore now and it's cold.
So come carry me home, 'cause I feel so old.

When No One's Watching

© 2012

Skin: cracked, red
Where the contours taper in,
She lies naked
On the bathroom floor
Staring up at holy lights
Seeking out a holy son
A father, a spirit's kiss
To heal
Her stricken, stolen face:
Pale, washed out,
By ceiling bulbs and
Rough hands that
She didn't know, she means
Under the ever-present eyes
That bares a truth
Buried in her dry lips,
Her raw throat: screams,
Unheard and blood
Bright red
Where the skin splits
And he took out
And he took away
And he... she stares
At the flickering
Of memories
Of public restroom lights
Lips quivering, then still
Asking, then giving up
On an answer
Seeing nothing
In the lights
Becoming nothing
Before the lights
Hollowed but alive:
On the bathroom floor.



Hannah Richard is the winner of several writing and art contests. She has written two children's puppet shows performed at the Surprise Library. She has been published in several magazines, and competes in film contests in her free time. Recently, her film "Cancer Song" qualified on the Arizona state level for the International Thespian Festival in Lincoln, Nebraska, this summer. If you would like to contact her about her poetry, art or films, please contact her at hannahdraws@yahoo.com or on her website at allthewonderful.deviantart.com.

3 poems by Mike Alvarez

Telluride

© 2012

Three-cornered bay window
facing the San Miguel River.
Fat raindrops splattered on glass,
like a shattered diamond necklace.

Ski slopes without snow
rising to meet a nacreous sky.

A narrow cobbled street of
cloistered restaurants
and tourist shops.

A small town waits—
in the belly of a canyon
surrounded by motherly mountains—
for the snow: the lifeblood
that brings the people
who bring the
money that keeps it alive.

A Brisk Walk

© 2012

Each foot rises then falls.
Up and down—faster.

Normal breathing becomes
rough, ragged with each step.
Heartbeat accelerates;
Sweat appears in uneven lines.

Runners go by and sneer.

Each foot rises
then falls
Up and down—faster still.

Twenty minutes elapse
then thirty go by.
The heart is a galloping racehorse,
a cheerful metronome.

A tingling sweeps across both legs
as they churn.
Forty-five minutes later, the pace
is diminished.

Each foot rises
then falls
Up and down... slower.
Breathing slowly returns to normal.

I pass a familiar runner
who has gone too fast and
has nothing left to give.

It is my turn to sneer.



Mike Alvarez lives in Tucson, Arizona. He teaches writing at Pima Community College. Mike's poems, stories, and essays have appeared in various publications, including *The Arizona Daily Star* and *Writers Digest*. He has also written four novels (two in the Nick Madrid mystery series) and a nonfiction book about the writing life: *Mamas, Don't Let Your Babies Grow Up to be Writers*. Mike is a member of The Society of Southwestern Authors and Arizona Mystery Writers. E-mail: sundance96@juno.com.

Life In A Small Mining Town

© 2012

Rising before the sun,
men who work the mines
dress solemnly in quiet
bedrooms.

A meal of toast and strong, black coffee,
as the machinery in the copper smelter
creaks to life.

Ugly, gray-black smoke billowing
so high it blots out the morning sun.

Climbing into battered pickups,
the men wave to darkened windows.
The way to the mines is not far:
it has taken them all their lives
to get there.

As the sun treks across the cobalt sky,
the men toil in the stench-filled
mines of copper.

The work shift ends;
the men trudge home to
dinner: a ritual of muffled silence.
Thoughts like lasers cross their minds,
but words never reach their lips.

My father works in the dust-filled hellhole.
What dreams has he forsaken?

He smiles as he strips the charcoal gray uniform
shirt from his hard, lean body and drops
the white hard hat on the ancient refrigerator.

He showers but cannot wash away
the sweet, sick, coppery stench.

The sky, not yet fully darkened;
weariness claims the men who work
the mines.
Who knows what dreams, if any,
they permit themselves.
Tomorrow will be the same as the day before,
and a thousand days that follow.

Nothing changes much in the small copper town,
Not even the quiet murmur of despair.

Kenny G Can Blow Me

By Sara Dobie Bauer

© 2012

I hated going on blind dates. My sister, Janet, put me up to it. She'd been all romantic since meeting that Dave guy. Oh, Dave is so sweet; he took me to dinner and took me dancing and blah blah fucking blah. It had been fun, just the two of us single gals partying in northern Ohio. But no, she had to go and get herself a boyfriend, which meant I had to find a boyfriend so we could do stupid things like double date. So there I was at a Kenny G concert with a guy I didn't know who seemed to be exhausted—or maybe the music was putting him to sleep. He barely spoke, and I swear he was nodding off. Why had I agreed to a blind date and, even worse, a blind date to see Kenny G?

I didn't have a Kenny G album at home. I would never pay to see the guy in concert, but the blind date buffoon had suggested the evening's entertainment. I would have preferred James Taylor, but I didn't say that on the phone because you aren't supposed to be honest on a first date. On a first date, you're supposed to be on your best behavior and pretend you have no dirty secrets. Dates were like job interviews, only instead of getting a paycheck, you might get laid—which sounded great. I hadn't had a good fuck in a couple months, which seemed like forever in hot-and-heavy 1983. A couple months between orgasms was too long. All the women's magazines told me so, as did my jazzercise instructor, who made us do thrusting exercises to strengthen our kegels.

"Can I get you another beer, Susie?"

"Uh. Yeah, that would be great, Scott."

Scott. The buffoon's name was Scott. He wasn't my type. He was skinny with the meek shoulders of an abused dog. I could tell he'd had acne in high school. There were remnants of pimple scars on both cheeks. He wore wire-rimmed glasses,

which would have looked studious and sexy on someone else; on Scott, they made him look nervous, because he kept pushing them up and pushing them up. God, it was annoying. Plus, Scott liked Kenny G. Horror of fuckin' horrors. I watched him get up and head to the bar in the back of the crowded Toledo music hall to get my second beer of the night.

I checked the scene. Kenny was down on stage, illuminated by overhead orbs of golden light. He blew hard on his ... what instrument did he even play? I squinted. Was that a saxophone? No. Some kind of funny horn? I guess. I sighed and blew my brown curls out of my face. I'd worn a dress for this? I brushed at the paisley fabric that covered my skinny knees and glanced at some guy's watch in the row ahead. We'd only been there an hour. Two more to go.

Scott the Buffoon returned with my beer, and I slurped like a kid with Kool-Aid.

"Are you enjoying the show?" He pushed up his glasses again.

"Yeah. Totally." I nodded.

"I'm a huge Kenny G fan."

"Me ... too?" Lies, lies, first date lies. Maybe he'd be okay to sleep with. I considered the alternative: going home alone to hang with Janet and Dave and all their lovey-dovey happiness. Yeah, maybe I could sleep with this loser instead.

He settled in next to me in our plush, red velvet seats. I drank my beer and thought about how much I wanted to see James Taylor next month. God, I hoped I could afford to go. Just as I considered the cuteness of Taylor's ass in bellbottoms, I noticed a heavy weight on my left shoulder. I turned slightly and was mortified to find Scott dozing on top of me.

Continued on page 54



Sara Dobie Bauer is a professional writer and editor. A Magna Cum Laude graduate of Ohio University, she is currently working on a Creative Writing Certificate at Glendale Community College. She plans to finish her first novel by the end of 2012. In her free time, she watches bad horror films, roots for the Pittsburgh Steelers, and enjoys a good IPA. She is married to her best friend, Jacob; they live in Phoenix, Arizona, with dog-daughter, Ripley. Read more of Sara's work at <http://saradobie.wordpress.com>.

Continued from page 53

“What the fuck?” I whispered. Or maybe I didn’t, considering half the row in front of us turned to look. “Scott?” I poked him in the forehead with the hand not holding my beer. “Scott!”

He shot upward but didn’t say anything. He just went back to watching Kenny G, halfway through Astaire’s classic, “The Way You Look Tonight.”

I resumed normalcy with my beer, but about thirty seconds later, Scott’s heavy head found its way to my shoulder again. I didn’t have time to catch him this time, and next thing I knew, his head was on my lap and beer spilled across my dress. I pushed him away.

He weaved away from me and soon, his head fell on the stranger to his left. The stranger did not like Scott’s head on his chest, so he gave that heavy cranium a shove. Scott flew back toward me. Before he could spill the entirety of my beer, I sprang to my feet. His head came crashing down on the armrest. Even with sappy horn in the background, the sound of his head whacking into hardwood caused quite an uproar.

“Wh-wh-what?” Eyeglasses askew, he gawked at me open-mouthed.

“Take me home.” I chugged my beer and headed for the exit.

Once we got to his car, he said he was fine to drive. Because I am polite on first dates, I let him behind the wheel. Of course, halfway home, he was weaving all over River Road.

Maybe I was drunk, or maybe it was the Valium I’d taken in the bathroom an hour earlier. I finally lost my shit. “Stop this fucking car!”

That got his attention, and Scott pulled over.

I drove the rest of the way home. Once we pulled into my driveway, I could hear my dog, Fennell, barking his face off inside the house I shared with Janet. I imagined he was saying, “Just because your big sister is in love doesn’t mean you have to go on blind dates!”

In my scuffed cowboy boots, I circled the vehicle and tore the passenger door open. Scott’s forehead slumped against the dashboard. I pulled on the edge of his wide-collared shirt and dragged him out into the front yard. He lifted his head long enough to say, “Call my dad,” and rattle off a local phone number.

Oh, I called him all right. I don’t remember what I said, but I imagine I was slightly incoherent. Yes, it had to be the Valium talking.

By the time Scott’s dad pulled up, I’d already gone inside to grab a bottle of cheap, red wine. I hadn’t said a word to Janet and Dave, cuddling on the couch. I wanted to scream at them and say, “Well, aren’t you lucky that you found each other? Aren’t you lucky that you’re in love and don’t have to date anymore? Yes, you’re so fucking lucky!” But I didn’t. I just grabbed the wine and returned to the porch.

Scott’s dad didn’t look anything like his son. He was big, butch, and wearing jean overalls. He drove a rusty red truck and wore heavy work boots. He glanced at his son sleeping on the front lawn before walking up to me, huge hands in his pockets.

“So how was your date?”

I drank straight from the bottle. “I think your son is on drugs.”

“He is. Insulin.”

“I’m sorry?”

“Scott’s a diabetic. He probably forgot to take his insulin.”

“He didn’t tell me he was a diabetic.”

His dad shrugged. “First date. He didn’t want you to think he was some wussie who needed medication.”

“Right.”

The dad rounded the car to get his son. He picked Scott up like a half-empty bag of potatoes. “Mind if I stop by tomorrow to get his car?”

“No. That’s fine.”

As his dad shoveled him into the truck, Scott revived. He looked up at me and grinned. “I’ll call you, Susie!”

I shook my head. “Don’t bother.”

The car rattled when the ignition turned, and I watched the exhaust pipe belch black smoke as father and son disappeared into the crisp, cool Ohio night. I returned to slouching on the front porch and decided from then on, if anyone asked me what I thought of Kenny G, I would tell them I hated his fucking guts.

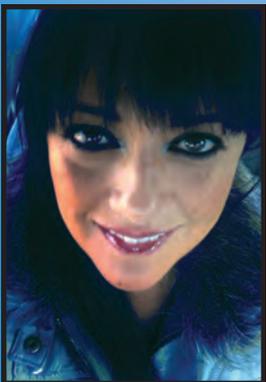
Quetzally Hernandez Coronado

Tucson Artist



“3 & Some”

48 x 40 inches – Mix Over Wood
2011



Quetzally Hernandez Coronado is an award-winning artist and writer who divides her time between Colonia Polanco, Mexico, and Tucson, Arizona, and has shown her works in exhibits around the world, including in Paris, New York, Mexico City, Puebla, Mexico, Bilbao, Spain, Grand Junction, Colo., Santa Fe, N.M., and Tucson. She received her Undergraduate Degree in Arts (Honorable Mention) from Escuela Nacional “La Esmeralda” and her Master’s Degree in Restoration from al Escuela Nacional de las Artes, Mexico D.F. She was an apprentice to the master Desiderio Xochitiotzin Atzayacatzin, Mexican muralist, in Tlaxcala, Mexico, and studied at the Vincent Gallery (photography) in New York; Escuela Bilbao Arte (scholarship) in Bilbao, Spain; the Contemporary Art Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao; Museum of Anthropology and History (art history) in Mexico City; and the engraving workshop “La Malagua” from Professor Sergio Martinez in Jalisco, Mexico. Contact her through her website: www.quezally.webs.com.

Quetzally Hernandez Coronado

Tucson Artist



“In my mind”

**48 x 32 inches – Mix over wood
2011**

My work is inspired by every day scenes from life. I see myself as an open channel where creation flows through me in my visual art and in my writing. I believe that the finished work opens the door for the viewer to have a glimpse in and perhaps see my vision. I am driven by what I feel in my heart as to the direction my creativity will take and how it should be released to the world. Everyday I look at life as a new adventure to explore, with new paths to continue my passion. Always searching for a way to reflect my soul. If you look closely at my work, you as a viewer can feel the passion that moves me every day to express myself on the great canvas we call life. Every day I feel the need to give my passions, my heart yearnings a life of their own.

- Quetzally Hernandez Coronado

Quetzally Hernandez Coronado

Tucson Artist



“Just”

**46 x 36 inches – Mix over wood
2011**

Quetzally Hernandez Coronado

Tucson Artist



“Blue dreams”

48 x 32 inches – Mix over wood

2011

A Poem By Richard Fenton Sederstrom

Penelope

© 2012

Proem: Oar

The returned is no longer himself,
What was broken in her is no mystery.
What may be broken in him is still rooted
In his longing.

Longing, he is driven to be whole again.
Longing for her, his only wholeness
Must be the two connected in that myth,
Those roots . . . Earth.

She looks back at the bronze sword,
Broken on the bleeding floor,
Looks,
Before returning to his eyes,

Out at the standing ships, sails furled,
Sees the banked oars
Ready for sea again,
Returns his look and knows.

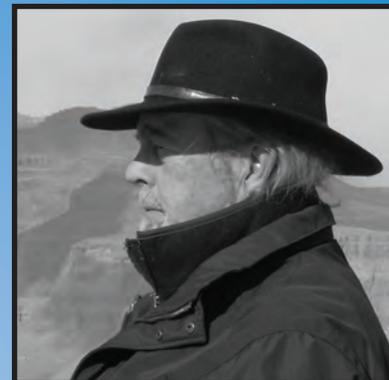
1. Her Warrior

The day he left, face disguised by the helmet he wore then,
Because he had no arms unencumbered to carry it seemingly,
Untied chin strap flapping, his awkward bronze sword
In the belted, studded leather scabbard slung over his left shoulder,

Ammo belt over his right, olive green duffle
Dangling from under his slung plated armor,
All slipping, leather and bronze, supple and burnished,
Over the right shoulder a sheaf of spears,

Bronze tipped, glinting in the tide-hurrying sun,
Like the proud glint of his untried cleverness.
And I saw. And was what?
Saddened and somehow delighted at once,

Continued on page 60



Richard Fenton Sederstrom lives in the Sonoran Desert of Arizona and Mexico and the North Woods of Minnesota. His book, "Fall Pictures on an Abandoned Road," was released in 2009, "Disordinary Light," in 2010, and "Folly, A Book of Last Summers," in 2011. Sederstrom's poems have appeared in The Talking Stick, English Journal, Plainsongs, Big Muddy, Mother Earth Journal, The Blue Guitar, Memoir (and), and Ruminare, among other journals and magazines. Fortunate to have retired from all respectable pursuits, especially teaching, he returns to the classroom as a visitor, where, "instead of teaching out of pedagogy, I teach out of confusion, and into it, the way teaching should be done, the way poetry should be done, the way life should be done." Contact Richard at richard_sederstrom1221@q.com.

A seed of this longing these twenty years.
He had tied them too loosely, the spears,
Hadn't balanced them on his blistering shoulder,
Hadn't considered the weight of the forward ends,

So that they threatened to pitch into the path before him,
As they splayed around like an ill-bound sheaf of stalks in the field.
He nearly tripped then, looked about to see me again
And those old mariners too, his trusting . . .

How hard they had practiced away their natural doubt,
The men not looking, seeming not to be watching.
He hopped a little when he readjusted to a wooden chatter,
A clanking, a tooth grinding squeak of oiled leather.

The outward look of what should have been his first test
Of warrior poise, the last pose of his manly apprenticeship,
Laertes looking on critically, distant,
Chest puffed in fatherly pride, all disdain, and a tear.

I saw that he was still a boy; I a girl.
I swallowed and held out my hand to the glittering sea,
I waved, not, I almost hoped, the full goodbye.
These fingertips were smooth then,

Uncalloused by these years of pushing the needle,
Pulling thread . . . in, out . . . then out, in,
The beat of my heart, pace of breath,
Pattern of our loving consummated pulse.

In, out – pride, longing, love, loneliness.
This practiced pulse of weaving the shroud,
These many hued strands of finger biting wool,
The pulse too, of decision, of wifely obeisance,

Of governing on the sly, of motherhood,
Of keeping the secret kingship, of ruling without ruling,
Learning to deceive, too seldom free for interruption
Or completion by that other pulse, the longing.

What of Ithaca, abandoned now to Wall Street,
Flesh-faced lust for cargoes of full amphorae,
For resigned comfort, fat bellies turned from the fall?
What of the child, only incarnation from our cosmos-rooted bed?

Continued on page 61

Continued from page 60

2. **Their Child**

Two discolored sheets of paper
At the top of the heap
Of scoria left over from living,
Reduced to the sifted ash of evidence –

Imitation parchment marriage license,
Yellowed certificate – High School Social Studies
Unused for fifty years.

Yellowed paper as virgin as
Your bland courses abandoned
But saved at the top of your cargo,
The very pick of scuttled treasure –

Your need to protect your own from the direr
Wolf of ordinary wants, happiness,
The desperate continuity of husbandry,
The teaching,
The music you loved,

Your library of Classical 78s, all discarded, given
To a stranger on a whimsical gesture
Of what terrible pain? –
Cables cut,
The voyage . . .

Your voyage, my drift,
Too far apart
Or too close not do be apart?

You too far in love
Not to sacrifice passion for position,
I too far in passion to be able to love.

*Who on his own
Has ever really known who gave him life?*

They say I am his son.

I am hers. *Why do you spurn my father so?*

Continued on page 62

3. Penelope Rex

My little man.
How can she honey the hard bread of his nightmare days,
Even to tell him what dream he's in?
You're the man of the house now –

And more Nobody now than the maker of tricks,
No trick in his own repertoire,
No repertoire but . . .
You've got to be brave.

Let Mother alone with her housework, her weaving –
That web, strung, unstrung,
The plot ravel, unravels as her only control.
The tapestry of his errand must never unravel –

A man now, my little man, my big man –
Must travel; his princely chiton
Declares manhood, disguises only who he is,
Nobody the Second,

*He whoever among mortals
Is most unblest –
Disguises also what he must not know,
His mother's marriage licence*

His death warrant.
He would die if he knew,
Only maybe at someone else's hand.
My big man of the house . . .

Of woman, enigma.
No epic but mother-story,
The she-trickster's own fun house of dire necessity,
A chilled triad of suspended love.

4. Penelope and Odysseus

All his trials over but one,
He returns the texture of her apprehension.
The cold gaze retires softly for him, he fondly
Shifting the weary, taut slump, residue

Continued on page 63

Continued from page 62

Of his hero's flexed posture, sitting
Against that pillar, nothing flexed but his own apprehension –
Dripping bronze sword still and always unsheathed
Like his hero's meager conscience,

But the sword exiled now from this new decorum
Only waiting to be cleaned by who still live of the servants,
No longer a weapon – a mere utensil
Of obsolete manliness.

All corpses dragged off to parents and pyre,
He sees into her, knows this is not mere death,
But life for the first time in twenty years, the essential,
Terrifying generation of continuance.

She looks at him from this self-imposed refraction of distance
And one last question, the unspoken challenge
This time asked so far before language
That no syllables can save or staunch her instant desire.

She moves with the seasons of their stable cosmos
And with their lives, all stable because movement
Is visible, and she touches the thread of it.
Her hand is visible as it spins and unspins –

The moving web, out and in, out and in, back
And forth like the sea, like Odysseus in their bed,
Like Odysseus in her undulating memory, rooted
Like the hard knots of olive rooted into the moving rock –

Caress and lunge, caress and lunge, weaving,
Unweaving, always the movement of hands, of limbs,
Of memory, surges of grief, palpitations of returning heat
Unanswered for so long. Now.

Himself again, not hero, not king, only self again,
The husband he had forsaken, she has forsworn
In the whirl of recognition.
No one moves again in the cosmic adventure.

Olive tree, bound into the unshifting Earth
Dance of memory. Blood
Of rooted Earth, blood of olive,
Oil beyond mere living – oil, blood, unction,

Continued on page 64

Continued from page 63

Union, one rootbound, guided in moving swift
Close cycles. Patterns glide, charioted
Round and round their sweat glistened fecund unmoving
Earth –

5. Nobody's Son

"You were always cold, Mother,"

Derides this son, their Telemachus,
Who may travel the ancient field of love
Someday in his own halting pauses,

That it is love, not hard breathing and immediate,
Though surely breath is part of the whole,
But not resigned either – passionate, middle-aged no doubt,

But, yes, passionate, fired, not damped by maturity,
Hot in a way that no twenty-year-old
Could understand the source of its steady heat –

"If it's bed you want . . . "

Almost all of their own age have long given up,
Gone cold before the onset of cold,
Who have failed to understand.

Thoughts of old age, even death,
May bank passion in lasting embers,
May even stoke, stroke living warmth from dying flame.

But who has ever thought to define this fervor –
Too late in mortality for Erato to jiggle over it,
Antique, stubbornly monogamous, sturdily dull,

Bound in and to marriage, to the rootbound
Cosmos as well, and utterly free now,
"A happier old age" for these two old lovers,

"Whenever the spirit moves"

Continued on page 65

Continued from page 64

Epilogue: Circe Circles

a vocational killer

in the machismo of senility

Robert Lowell, "Ulysses and Circe"

It's the silk cuts scissors, Cal, in her world, not his,
Not yours, you, alive to any urge but love . . .
To gravity, Nobody awash again in brine and booze,
The drunkard's remorse disguised once more as wisdom,
Volte-face, even in Homer's wood-hulled cosmos.
Would the knowledge have revived you somehow
To know that Homer's man is woman, woman man
For their own good and Homer's, their ship re-keeled,
Fresh sailed, they married not merely "long enough"
But again? Or did you know anyway, and did the knowledge
Overwhelm you, and your woman, your Penelope?
Dolphin drowned in the dust of your dried seabed,
Can you tell siren from siren, your ships burned,
Un-lost friends' weary eyes on your shark's false teeth?

(Italicized internal quotations from Robert Fagles' translation of "The Odyssey"; the poet's italics)

Notes From The Poet

By way of some little explanation: When I talk to students about "The Odyssey," I like to start out by asking, "When you first meet her, what is Penelope doing?" The answer I lead them to is, "She is ruling Ithaca." And she is doing it, not by force, but, as her husband does in his life, by cleverness. She is a woman in a man's world (to say the least!), doing a man's job the way Odysseus is likely to do the job. She has gone so far as to treat her beloved son Telemachus with the cold eye of the ruler, knowing that if the suitors are led to believe that Telemachus means nothing to her, the suitors might not kill him (which they do attempt). But it won't work for much longer. And yet, Penelope carries on, dry-eyed and determined.

Then I ask, "When you first meet him, what is Odysseus doing?" Student are less likely to remember than they are with Penelope, perhaps oddly, perhaps because what Odysseus is doing seems so out of character for a hero in a "man's world." Odysseus is weeping, "like a woman." Odysseus is weeping helplessly for Penelope. Odysseus has lived for seven years in a Hugh Heffner paradise, wine, woman, song, more woman. And he has been promised immortality, which is a glorious amount of time, outside the realm of time, in fact, for wine, woman, song, more and more woman. But Odysseus is sitting on a crag overlooking the sea, weeping for Penelope.

Homer has switched the traditional roles for man and woman. The woman will understand the life of the man, defiant in the face of certain defeat, iron-willed, determined. The man will understand the life of the woman, dependent, vulnerable, trained to weep at her inevitable human losses. My poems culminate at their final moment of reunion, the suitors gone, the blood mopped up, nothing for this aging married couple to do but size each other up finally and make do with what they are left with.

At the crucial moment, Odysseus is seated on a stool, resting his back against a pillar (it has been a hard morning). Penelope approaches him, then stops short. Telemachus chides her for not going to her husband ("you are always cold"), and Odysseus stops him, letting him know that Penelope will come to him when she is ready. If she means to test him more, it is her choice to do so. He has figured out what it is to be in love and to be loved. Then Penelope has her way with the famous trick about the bed. I really don't think that Penelope fails to recognize who Odysseus is, only what Odysseus may have become, and she needs, for their life together, to find out. She finds out.

— Richard Fenton Sederstrom

2 Poems by Karen B. Call

Kiva

© 2012

It's come again.
That e-mail message
that tells me
we have money to lend
because someone has repaid our loan.
Again.

We've lent to Saana in South Lebanon
with 42 others
including M & N from Tucson.
Do they look to see where
other lenders are from?
Do they wonder where
in Tucson we are?

This morning we loaned \$25
to Toshmat in Tajikistan,
the poorest of the countries
from the former Soviet republics.
No one else from Tucson is on this loan.
But together with Thorsten from Germany
and Simon from Australia
and 58 others from around the USA and the world,
we have shown Toshmat
that there are people who care about him
and his dreams to enlarge his cattle and taxi business
to make life better for his family.

I know he will repay our loan
just like the 12 others
to whom we have loaned \$25
through Kiva.

When I need a boost I go to Kiva
and loan \$25
to someone who is trying for a better life.



Karen Call came to Tucson on New Year's Eve 2001 from northern Wyoming via a stay in Denver. She retired while in Tucson and stayed to make it her home. Karen has essays in "Crazy Woman Creek: Women Rewrite the American West" and "Woven on the Wind: Women Write About Friendship in the Sagebrush West." She travels with her husband, Bill, who she met in Tucson, to visit far-off places and their three sons, wives and three grandchildren (so far) in Pennsylvania, Colorado and Oregon. She has had the good fortune to be a member of a snail-mail poetry round robin for more than 15 years and reaped the benefit of members' comments on her poetry. Karen is exploring other writing opportunities and thoroughly enjoys her writing classes at Pima West Community College in Tucson with its excellent writing instructors. Contact her at Karenmb@cox.net.

Last Night I Woke Up

© 2012

Last night I woke up thinking about you and me
and the room was cold
because the furnace is turned off
and your feet were outside the covers.
I wanted to cover them
but I knew if I did they would hurt
in addition to being cold.
And I watched you sleep.

Last night I woke up thinking about you and me
and how you no longer climb ladders
and I don't wear spiked heels
and I'm still 57 and you're 58
on the bathroom scale
because I haven't changed our ages.
And I watched you sleep.

Last night I woke up thinking about you and me
and how we bought this house and live and love
within its walls just as we would if we'd met
20 or 40 years ago. But we didn't.
And I watched you sleep.

Last night I woke up thinking about you and me
and how every year when we go to our doctors
we come home with a new diagnosis or a new prescription
or both. I wondered if we stopped going to the doctor
maybe we won't have these distressing additions to our lives.
And I watched you sleep.

This morning I woke up thinking about you and me
and wondered how many others woke up last night
thinking about things they won't talk about today.

3 Poems by Jesse McDowell Lungren

Arms Unharmed, Such Stories They Would Tell

© 2012

For what?

The keeper wonders,

Arms at ease, impatient, waiting -

as he shines the words, removing the excrement
From the birds above.

He finishes the hard ball of sugar
that he had started earlier
that morning while polishing the finish,
chewing slivers that remained.

The slivers like
the glass
They had been found in.

Now they lay in a bin, Scarlet -
like the apple, whose core was
Rotting.

Was their death, a case of love?

The keeper asks.

He stands over the coffin,
Made of oak,

Fine oak - the finest you have.

Their mother ordered.

They lay inside, cleaned of the blood,
and their dried tears,
as well as the drool, that had been thick and mixed with
their own scarlet.

Helpless as they were in life - glaring,
unfeeling eyes as they are undressed,
bathed, and clothed.

Hands brush the breasts as the dresses are smoothed -

Continued on page 69

“Arms Unharmed, Such Stories They Would Tell” is a translit piece based on the poem “Vad händer minns” (“What Hands Remember”) by Johanna Ekström. A translit is a piece that goes through various steps as far as translating the piece (originally done in a language other than English), and then changing it to make it one’s own entirely.

– Jesse McDowell Lungren



My name is Jesse McDowell Lungren and I'm an Arizona native, poet, author, blogger, student, brother, son, and hope to soon do songwriting along with other writing endeavors. This is my first official publication here in The Blue Guitar so I'm pretty dang excited, especially since I've only been writing poetry for maybe 4 or 5 years now, having dabbled in fiction since Kindergarten. My blog is called The Gazebo - <http://thegazebo.wordpress.com/about-the-author/> . Also, I presently write as a Glendale Poetry Examiner on Examiner.com - <http://www.examiner.com/poetry-in-glendale/jesse-lungren> . And I co-run a creative writing zine by the name of Everything But - <http://everythingbutwriters.com/> . If you would like to contact me, you can email me at jmcdlungren@yahoo.com and / or jmcdlungren@everythingbutwriters.com.

Continued from page 68

*Who wouldn't have feared
for them in
my hands?
The keeper wonders.*

It had been a week when they
were found - petals lay on their faces
Covering the scars.
It was only their arms, their hands,
Unharmed - they were clean
as they had been
hiding under their bodies within the dark -
such memories they surely had.
They would tell you -
what they had been holding,
as the body was marred,
Before the flash of lightning -

It hit the metal frame of that greenhouse,
his greenhouse that he had taken them
to - a diversion from their trip
through the mysteries of their own lives

- that caused
it all to fall down
in pieces around them,
and *him* to die alongside.
They would tell you -
of the screams that came
from the mouths

that were now closed,
Looking peaceful -
Lipstick having been applied.

To give them some beauty.
The keeper responds
when asked by
their mother.

Continued on page 70

Continued from page 69

He had been there to prepare them
For the trip they were to take
Into that golden kingdom above where everyone wears white -
Their mother understands,
As she too has come
To lay a blossom over them.
She strokes their foreheads
A final time, saying a prayer,
Watching as the cover closed
And sealed.

*No, not a case of love,
But of greed, a drunken desire.*
Their mother responds.

The wind picks up outside, as the sleets of rain
pound on the window pane -

*It's nothing compared to the
fire in my heart,
The love for the children
whom I had never met.*
The keeper knows.

Pink and Laced With Strawberry

© 2012

You could hear the trees swaying
outside, the music of the shop mixing
in ever so beautifully, making you
want to get up and dance, while your
ice cream, pink and laced with
strawberry sat melting on the counter,
with mine, a cream blended
with the fruit rather than flavoring, us both
in white after labor day – not that we
cared, watching the wind spin notes
out the door as it swung shut.

As we stepped out, the cold enveloped
you as if it were hunter and you, its prey.
I gave you my jacket to have
as well as your own, though
we didn't stay outside for long,
knowing the car called out
to us, invited us in
so you would not freeze. We listened
to your song. It made you happy,
your favorite band and I, absorbed by
the music, the bouncing of the melody,
the tight rhythm, with the singing
of the screams – it kept me in
time, allowing me to think solely
in the present. That's what
concerned me. The past had no longer
an effect, the future only a glimmer.

It was the now, the smooth feeling
of the ice cream, the rush of the wind
as it sent chills from my shoulders
to my feet, the rising goose armies
on my skin, the ever-constant shine
as the lights reflected in your eyes.

Summer

© 2012

The sun is out, the time for flip flops and swim trunks and a dip in the pool. Don't forget to buy your Coppertone sun screen - SPF 50. I've been waiting all year for that first cold jump and the shiver before the repeated diving to the bottom to grab the rings warms me up. It's the time for competing with our swim caps on. 100 freestyle and 50 breaststroke but don't forget the 100 Individual Medley, such a lovely mix of it all, so fast it makes your heart want to jump out of your chest, while your ears tell you of the screaming above the surface. You know your parents are there on the deck, clapping, waiting for your hand to hit the wall, followed by the rush of water as your body comes to a stop. It's an American time, baseball season has started while you're in the water. But you don't care because you're going out tonight with that girl whose tan faded away over the winter - All the while, I'll be at the movies, happy about air conditioning after the win in the water. We'll be having a snow cone tomorrow when we go to the park, my sister and I and then we'll go home to our dogs who've laid out in the misters, their paws wet with mud because of their pool, but it's this summer, along with a few trips up north to the cabin, that I look forward to as the last school bell rings for the year.

Thanks to all for attending The Blue Guitar Spring Festival of the Arts!

By Elena Thornton

The Fourth Annual Blue Guitar Spring Festival of the Arts was held at the Desert Ridge Marketplace on March 25, 2012. The Festival featured music, dance, a community art activity by Pebble Planet and readings of literary works. A huge thank-you to all of the amazing performers who shared their talents with the community and made the festival a smash hit with attendees! A special thank-you to all who attended and

supported our festival. THANK YOU to all of the talented performers - Arizona Classical Kids and Maestro Zhanna Tevan; Nikki and Grace Tordil; Tammy Zappier and Sarah Clinebell; Clifton L. Collins Sr.; Laurel Lee for balloon art; Peter Tompkins; Jonathan Gabriel; Michele Lefevre; Grupo Folklorico I'Naru and Elena Mitchel, Program Director; Tosca Kerr and Lynn Briones for art activity; readers: Richard Fenton Sederstrom; David Chorlton; Cora Hol-

ley; and The Kards Band for an amazing performance and support all day! A special THANK-YOU to Jared and Lucas of The Kards, Tim and Jessica Aikin, The Kards Band and their families for all of their support, hard work and sound equipment! Thank you to Jim, Becca, Rick, Florentina, Jonathan, Leo, Zhanna, Tosca and Lynn for all of your help during the festival.

Editor's note: Elena Thornton is the publisher of The Blue Guitar Magazine.

Arizona Classical Kids, Maestro Zhanna Tevan at festival



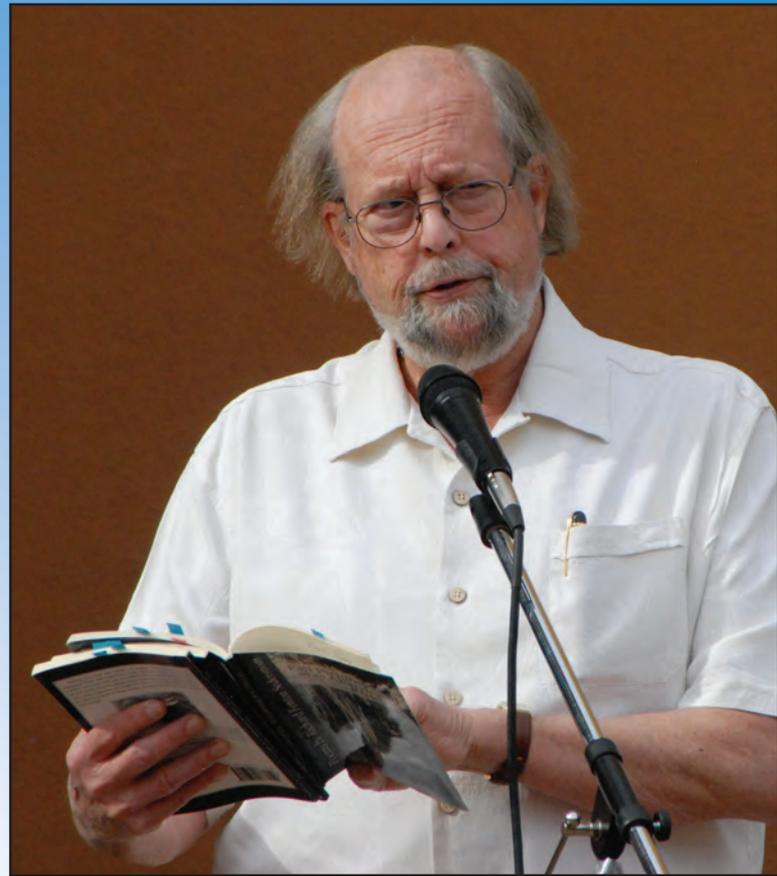
Photos by Richard H. Dyer Jr., The Blue Guitar Magazine

Spring 2012

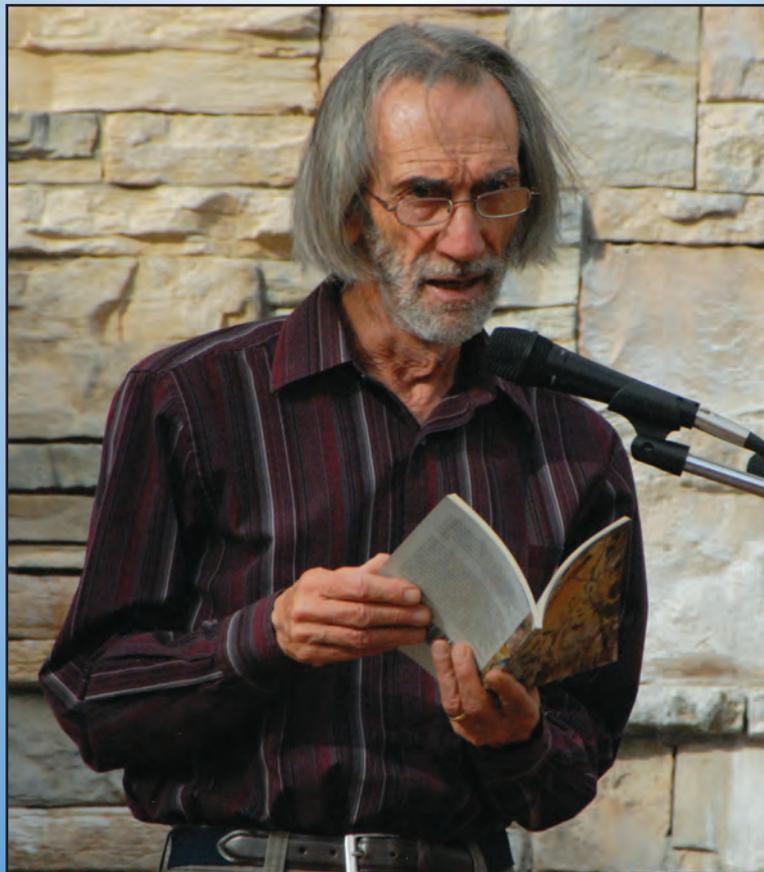
Spring festival held March 25 at Desert Ridge Marketplace



Cora Holley



Richard Fenton Sederstrom



David Chorlton

Photos by Richard H. Dyer Jr., The Blue Guitar Magazine

Spring 2012

More snapshots from Blue Guitar Festival of the Arts



Grace and Nikki Tordil



Sarah Clinebell and Tammy Zappier

Photos by Richard H. Dyer Jr., The Blue Guitar Magazine

Spring 2012

More snapshots from fourth annual festival of the arts



Michele Lefevre



Jonathan Gabriel



Clifton L. Collins Sr.



Peter Tompkins

Photos by Richard H. Dyer Jr., The Blue Guitar Magazine

Grupo Folklórico I'Naru at March 25 festival

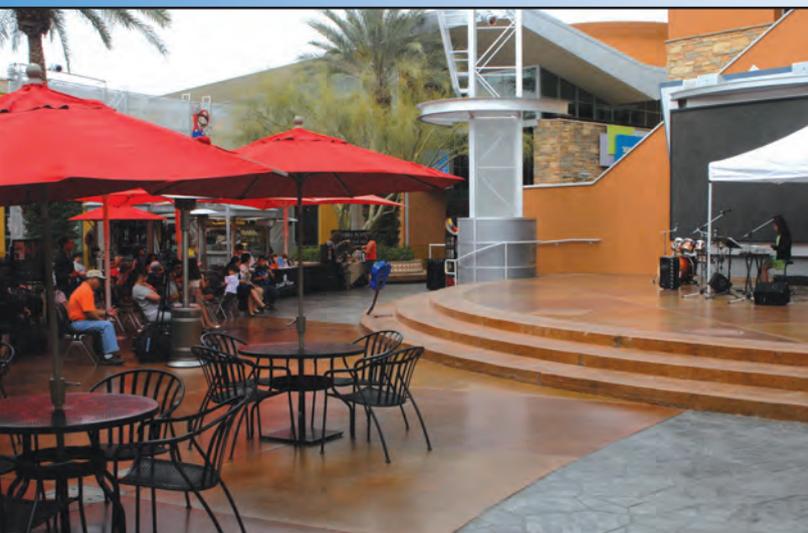


Photos by Richard H. Dyer Jr., The Blue Guitar Magazine

More snapshots from Blue Guitar Festival of the Arts



The Kards



The Fourth Annual Blue Guitar Festival of the Arts was held at the Desert Ridge Marketplace's District Stage.



Rebecca Dyer



Elena Thornton

Photos by Richard H. Dyer Jr., The Blue Guitar Magazine

Dyer nominated for Arizona governor's arts award



Photo by Jim Thornton, The Blue Guitar Magazine

From left, Arizona Consortium for the Arts founder and President Elena Thornton with Blue Guitar Editor-in-Chief Rebecca Dyer on March 27 prior to the start of the 31st Annual Arizona Governor's Arts Awards program at the Herberger Theater Center in downtown Phoenix. Dyer was nominated in the category of "individual," which was described as a living Arizona individual who has made a significant impact on arts/culture in Arizona through philanthropy, leadership and/or direct involvement. Two winners were named in the category: Robert Breunig, PhD, of Flagstaff, Museum of Northern Arizona director; and Colleen Jennings-Roggensack of Tempe, ASU Gammage executive director. Artist Ed Mell, who most recently designed the Arizona Centennial Postage Stamp, was named Artist of the Year. Beth Lessard, Ph.D., Tempe, former chair of the Arizona State University Department of Dance, received the Arts in Education – Individual Award; Arizona School for the Arts received the Arts in Education – Organization Award; the Arizona Cowboy Poets Gathering, Prescott, received the Community Award; and JP Morgan Chase received the Business Award. Arts advocate and leader Darryl Dobras of Tucson received the 2012 Shelley Award for advancing the arts through strategic and innovative work in creating or supporting public policy beneficial to the arts in Arizona. More than 80 individuals, artists, businesses, arts education programs and community programs from almost 25 communities around the state were nominated for 2012 Governor's Arts Awards. Nearly 500 arts supporters, advocates, business leaders and elected officials attended the annual event. Arizona Gov. Jan Brewer gave the welcoming remarks. The Arizona Citizens for the Arts, the Arizona Commission on the Arts and the Office of the Governor sponsor and present the awards each year. For more information about the event, go to <http://www.governorsartsawards.org/>.



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ARTIZONA.org/Art_from_the_collection exhibits pieces from Arizona Consortium of the Arts permanent collection. It is with great pride and gratitude that the consortium presents the work of local artists with a wide array of perspectives and mediums.

OUR ARTISTS

- | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------|
| Jasmine Blanchard | Cj Heru |
| Effie Bouras | Veronica Hoganson |
| Marjory Boyer | Bill Manson |
| Diane Brand | Corinne McAuley |
| Dr. Judith Brandstadter | Dolores Neumann |
| Aleksandra Buha | Roger Kirk Nelson |
| Lupe Cavanaugh | Erika Schafer |
| Elena Eros | Annette Simpson |
| Mark Faraday | Nancy Troupe |
| Mary Guy | |



Founded in 2007, ARIZONA CONSORTIUM OF THE ARTS is a 501c3 non-for profit arts organization dedicated to developing a multicultural art center, where children, teens, and adults will become inspired to develop their creative abilities in conjunction with exhibiting artists of all mediums and disciplines. The center will include studios, galleries, classrooms, and theaters that will serve as artistic homes for multiple arts organizations.

In Memoriam: Charles (Chuck) E. Mallory

• Oct. 7, 1944-Jan. 13, 2012 •

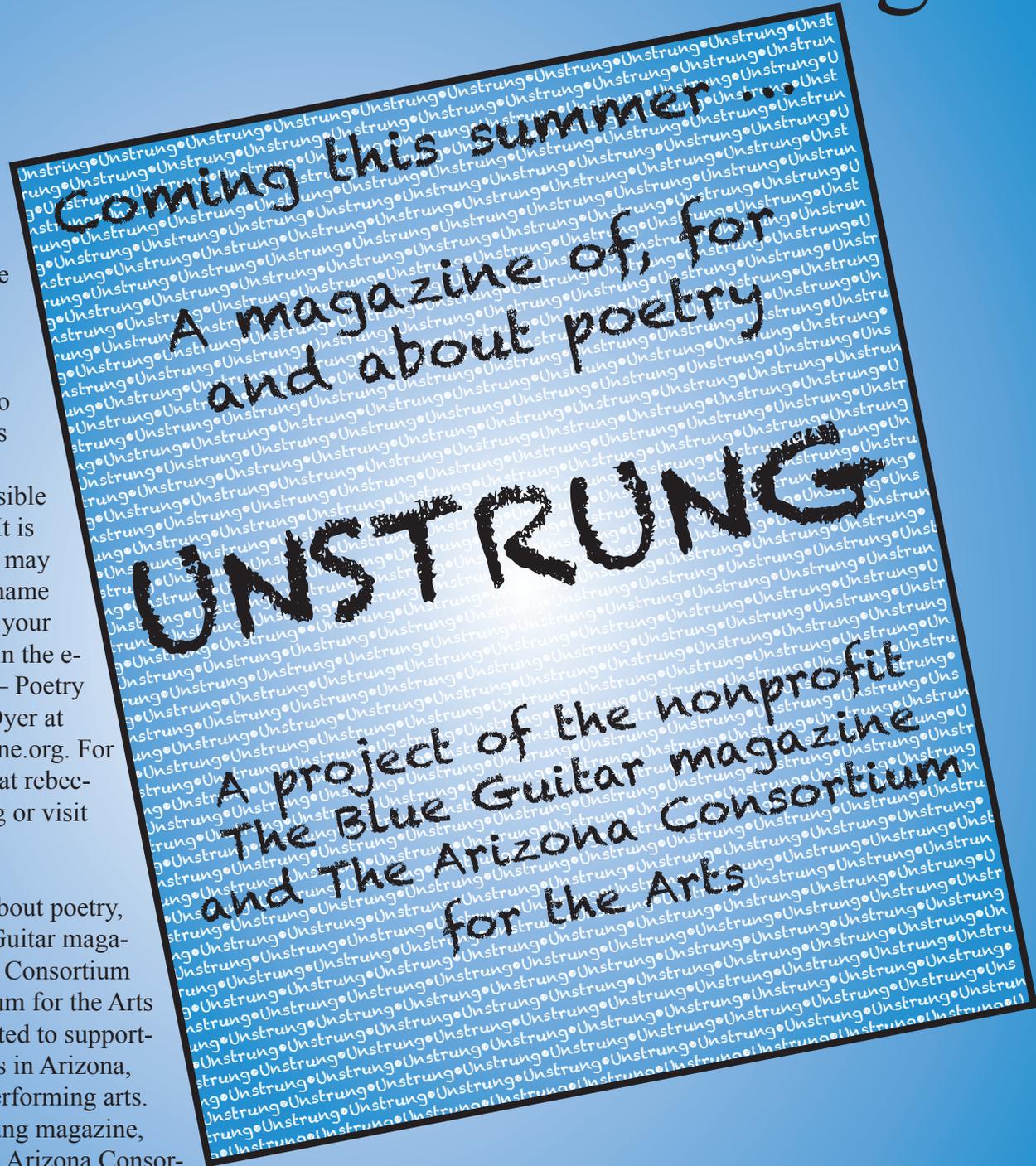


Charles Mallory — musician, composer, writer, teacher, father and brother — died Jan. 13, 2012. He was born Oct. 7, 1944, in Cincinnati, Ohio. Charles had a love for music and began composing at an early age. He later played professionally and traveled the world with many artists, including Marvin Gaye, Sonny and Cher, Diana Ross, Dusty Springfield and other icons from the 1960s and '70s. A tribute was recently held at Dog-Eared Pages Bookstore. He attended many of The Arizona Consortium for the Arts' events as an attendee/friend. He also read his poetry and his writings at the consortium's monthly open mic events. He was a great friend to all.

A Call to Poets for the Inaugural Issue of Unstrung

The Blue Guitar magazine seeks poetry submissions for the inaugural Summer 2012 Issue of Unstrung, a magazine of, for and about poetry. Submissions will be accepted from June 1 through July 6. 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. 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. For more information, e-mail Rebecca at rebeccadyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org or visit 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 and www.artizona.org.



Open Mic: A celebration of the arts

Join us at our Monthly Open Mic Arts, Letters and Culture Events! This is a great chance for artists, writers and performers in all genres, spanning all disciplines and cultural representations, to get together, meet one another, read, present, share, learn and enjoy!

WHERE: Dog-Eared Pages Books, 16428 N. 32nd St., Suite 111 (just south of Bell Road), Phoenix, AZ 85032; (602) 283-5423.

WHEN: Every last Sunday of each month, 3 p.m. to 5 p.m.

We also address key issues in contemporary art and culture, exchange ideas, learn new things through rigorous talks, conversations, debates and readings in an informal setting. Join us! Everyone is invited to bring a friend(s) and enjoy exciting conversations in the beautiful surroundings of the neighborhood bookstore. Meet new and old friends and enjoy! All programs are free and open to the public. For more information, contact Elena Thornton — (602) 263-5373 or info@artizona.org.

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, multi-disciplinary 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

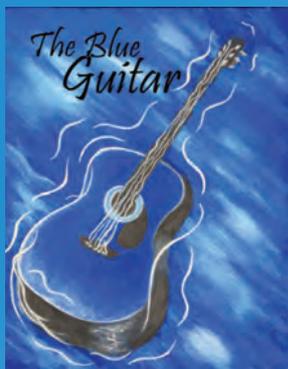
visit www.artizona.org or www.theblueguitarmagazine.org for more information

about becoming a member, networking, donating, advertising, volunteering or submitting work to The Blue Guitar magazine. You can become a part of the Arizona Consortium and make a difference. There are countless ways to contribute, and the consortium is grateful for any donation in any form. For us to grow as an organization, provide various services to artists, and support inspiring projects, your financial support is needed. Every dollar received will support our website, the publication of our first project The Blue Guitar,



and the establishment of our future center.

Support our consortium without spending a dime! Simply open a new BBVA Compass checking account and tell your BBVA Compass Banker to apply our organization code – 93098. BBVA Compass will pay us a royalty of \$50 for your account opening. If you are already a BBVA Compass customer, simply tell your banker to update your account to include our organization's code – 93098. You can also do this by calling 1-800-COMPASS or at any BBVA Compass Banking Center. For more information, visit: <https://www.bbvacompass.com/special/201001/cause/> and use the affinity code – 93098.



A Call to Writers for Fall

The Blue Guitar magazine seeks literary submissions for the Fall 2012 Edition from Sept. 1 through Oct. 5. Submissions are sought in all genres — fiction, poetry, plays, creative nonfiction. 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 Rebecca Dyer at rebeccadyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org. For more information, visit www.theblueguitarmagazine.org.

A Call to Artists for Fall

The Blue Guitar magazine seeks art submissions in all mediums for the Fall 2012 Edition from Sept. 1 through Oct. 5. The art entries will be juried for inclusion in the Fall Issue. Any artists who work in any visual art media and are 18 years or older and are 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. Images must be identified in the e-mail with the artist's name and contact information, titles of works, dates and mediums. To submit or for further information, e-mail Rebecca Dyer at rebeccadyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org. For more information, visit 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 and www.artizona.org.

“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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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.

Rebecca Dyer, editor: A Tucson native, Rebecca is a poet, journalist and teacher now residing in Mesa with her husband, Rick, The Blue Guitar production editor. Reach her at rebeccadyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org.



Richard H. Dyer Jr., production editor: Richard (married to Rebecca, above) is the managing editor for four weekly newspapers in the East Valley, a photographer and a welded-steel sculptor.

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.



Check our websites for news on the arts



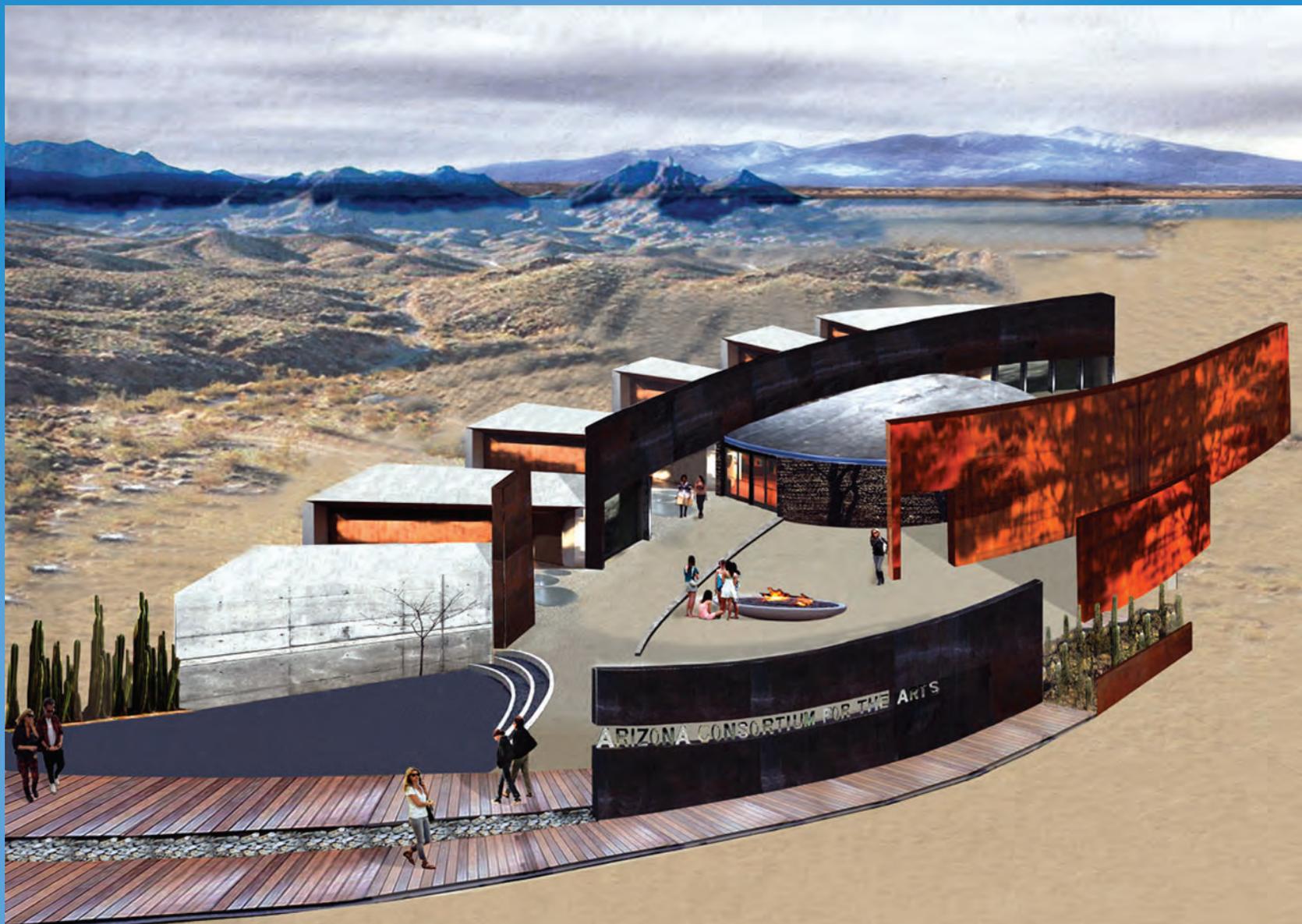
The Blue Guitar Magazine's website is www.theblueguitarmagazine.org.

Check out The Arizona Consortium for the Arts website, www.artizona.org. There, you can sign up for an e-mailed newsletter.

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A big thank-you from The Arizona Consortium for the Arts!

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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

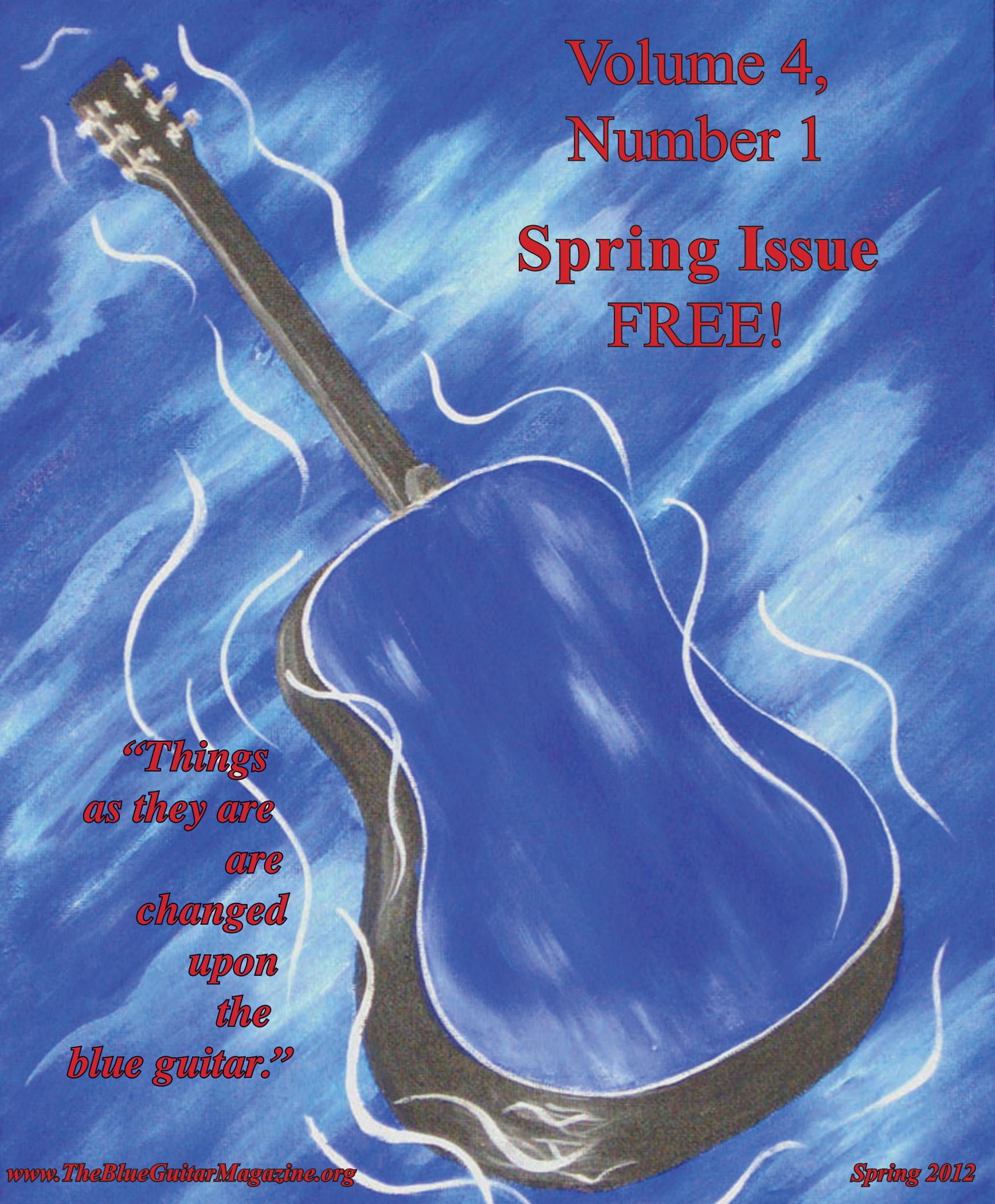
The rendering of The Arizona Consortium for the Arts' dream multicultural arts center by Effie Bouras, Building Designer, Mechanik Design Office, LLC.

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.



Volume 4,
Number 1

Spring Issue
FREE!

*“Things
as they are
are
changed
upon
the
blue guitar.”*