

The Blue Guitar



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Editor’s Note

The flaming ocotillo. The paloverde showering yellow. Purple lupine reaching for the sky. Orange and yellow African daisies lifting their bright faces. Much to our delight, Spring has burst forth with all of Nature’s vibrant and multihued palette of colors (and to my chagrin, I’ve been sneezing over almost every bloomin’ thing ... suffering for the sake of art — Nature’s art?). Like Spring, this issue bursts forth with its own vibrant and multihued palette — Arizona artists and writers and their beautiful works reflecting a diversity of styles, genres, mediums, ideas and life experiences. 2014 is off to a fantastic start. Just as the snowpack up north melts and flows south this season, I hope your inspirations thaw and flow. And just as wildflowers spring spontaneously from the desert floor, may the seeds of your creativity also take root and burst forth. And keep those wonderful submissions coming!



Rebecca
“Becca” Dyer

Great staffing news: Production Editor Richard “Rick” Dyer is now co-editor of The Blue Guitar. As a newspaper editor and welded-steel sculptor, he brings to the role all of his journalistic and artistic experiences and expertise. Among his focuses will be overseeing and shepherding through the process our art submissions.

Rebecca “Becca” Dyer
Editor

Editorial Staff

Editor: *Rebecca Dyer*
Publisher: *Elena Thornton*

Editor: *Richard H. Dyer Jr.*
Artwork for front,
back covers: *Marjory Boyer*

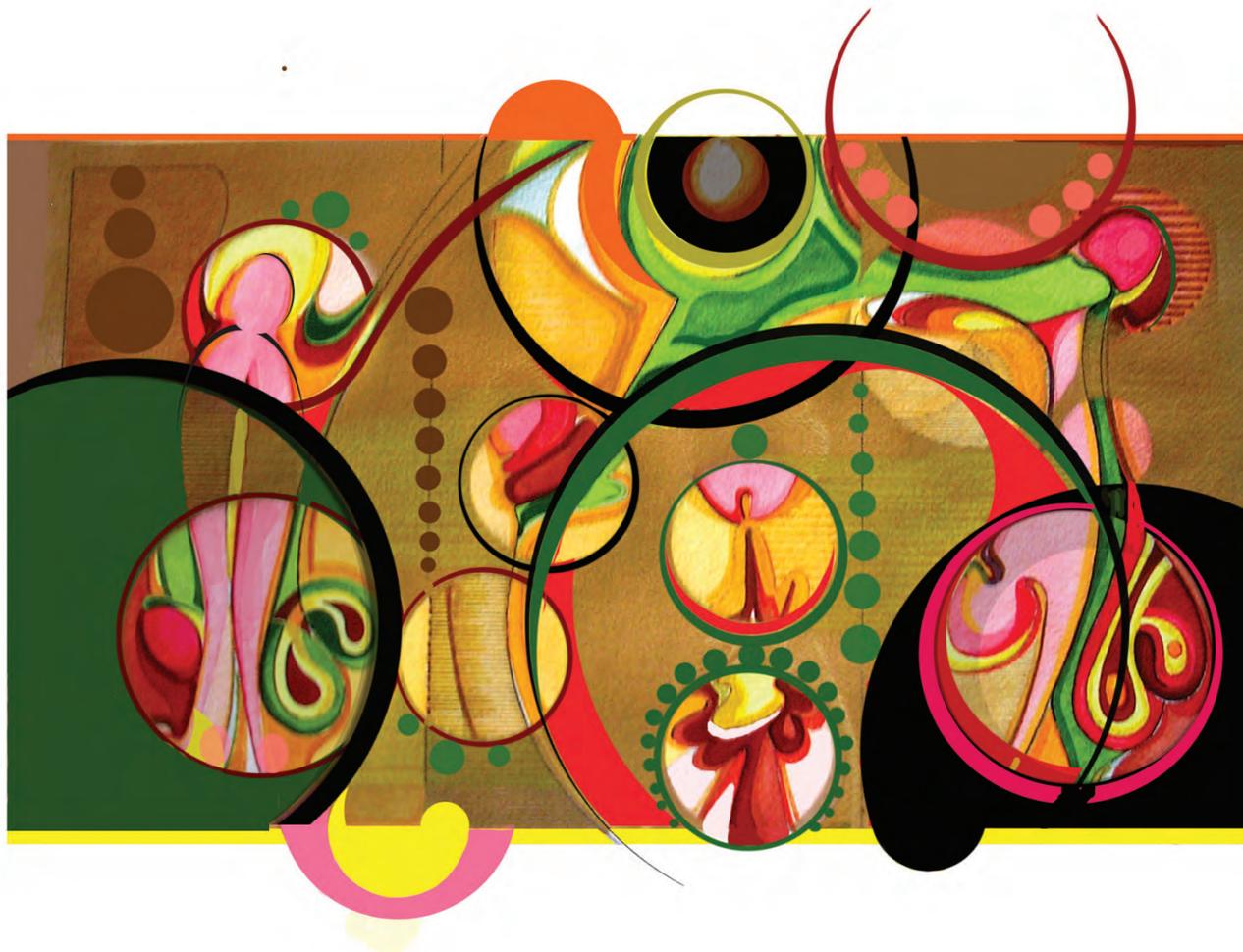
The Blue Guitar arts and literary magazine is a project of The Arizona Consortium for the Arts

www.TheBlueGuitarMagazine.org

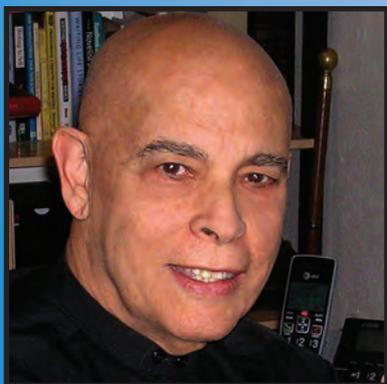
Spring 2014

Eduardo Cervino

Phoenix Artist



“Eve Garden”



“My husband, Eduardo Cervino, was born in Havana, Cuba, where he studied art and architecture. The Castro revolution failed to deliver on its promises of freedom, prosperity, and peace. Eduardo refused the communist regime’s indoctrination. Instead, he voiced his opposition and ended in an agricultural forced labor camp. In time, he moved to Madrid, Spain. To leave his loved ones hit him like a ton of bricks. The pain seeded his heart with an overwhelming desire to give a hand to the fallen and join any group dedicated to healing the hurting. After arriving in the USA, he wrote his memoirs. Eduardo found great satisfaction in writing. In New York City, he renewed his painting career. Since then, he has combined painting, architecture, and writing to quench his curiosity and express his awe for life’s wonders. He has traveled throughout the Caribbean, Latin America, Europe, and Canada. In the USA, Eduardo and I have resided in New York City, Denver (my hometown), and Phoenix. ‘Life’s ups and downs make it a marvelous experience,’ he said. ‘But only if we cultivate an ever-growing circle of friends to share it with.’” — Lesley Sudders

They can be contacted at ecls@cox.net.

2 Poems by Gari Crowley

Canis Latrans Nocturne

© 2014

The air was a mist of snowy vapor;
a field of vision for myths and legends
and realities secreted in the night.

The headlamps beamed through flakes
of snow lighting a slow and silent byway.

Leaping over barbed wire and crossing
the highway were halos of greenish-gold,

their panting evanescing
into flecks of fluttering white.

They spoke as they adventured
down some lost dog road,

telling stories of the great ones,
the ones of old.

In the midst of winter's heart
was the alpha male in lambent light.

The jefe, the champion, the heritage
of his history is howled and told

as their refuge is taken in hostels of darkness,
spying from stanchions through halos and secrets.

Counting Leaves

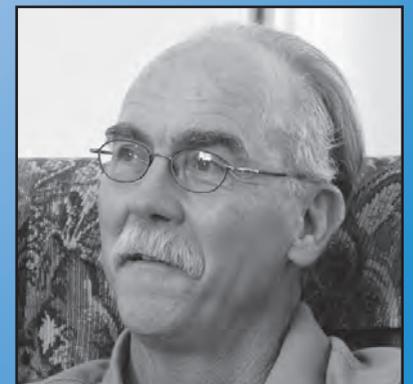
© 2014

not a long encounter
when it's all said and done
barrel burning
raking ashes
in the chilly wind of the autumn sun

the unwished for
the mea culpa of seasons past
random harvests
deciduous baggage
it's human nature once the die is cast
to gather back egressing leaves

but the past is left
when it's all said and done
a lonely intellect
a bad son
the prodigal memories of no account
in a gutter where the leaves collect

Gari is an Arizona native and has lived here his entire life. He is a lover and respecter of the desert. He lives in Sierra Vista with his wife, Linda, and their cat, Sam. He has been employed in the property management/development field as a landscaper and groundskeeper. He is now retired. Reach the poet at arroyo_verde@yahoo.com.



4 Poems by David Chorlton

Coyote at the Riparian Park

© 2014

Among the broken stems behind the mudflats
where dowitchers and avocets
pick at their reflections
and pintails glide among the teal

a coyote brushed with sunlight
extends a foot
while keeping both eyes raised
before he shifts his body weight
onto his other leg

and follows a scent to where it blooms
into a carcass
almost stripped. He noses the bones,
grips remains in his teeth,
shakes them until they are no more
than taste, then

tosses them aside and dips his brow
as he paces each forward motion
so a step takes exactly the time

both eyes require to see
what lies in all directions.

Cochise County Sightings

© 2014

A thousand quiet acres run
through grazing land and cottonwoods
beginning at the fence
where two burros drink from metal
tubs and one
Say's Phoebe flies and returns to the wire
square that frames
its russet flash and black tail
against the pale Dragoons.

*

Seventy driving miles from Lordsburg;
sixty miles north as the crow flies
from the Mexican border; where
Bisbee Avenue crosses Rex Allen Drive;
between the Days Inn plastic sun
and faded number six on the motel sign,
a Harris hawk has found
a telegraph pole on which to rest and turn
his head in profile to impress
a yellow beak into the clouds' diluted grey.



David Chorlton was born in Austria, grew up in England, and spent several years in Vienna before moving to Phoenix in 1978. He pursued his visual art and had several shows as well as writing and publishing his poetry in magazines and collections, the latest of which is "The Devil's Sonata" from FutureCycle Press. Although he became ever more interested in the desert and its wildlife, the shadow side of Vienna emerges in his fiction and "The Taste of Fog," which was published by Rain Mountain Press. David will be reading in the "Poetry in April" series at Tempe Center for the Arts, on Wednesday, April 23rd, at 7 p.m.

Signs of Drought's End

© 2014

The first anticipation
was that off-balance, slightly hollow
feeling that arrives when
pressure falls. It's short
of a headache, but gnaws
at the nerve-ends
and makes concentration
impossible. A few clouds

gathered overnight, but the day
stayed warm and reflections
lay calmly on the park lagoon
where a green heron darted
low and gripped
the bank where it stopped. By late
afternoon, the dry ground

remained dry, while the sky
gave none
of its secrets away, until
the wind chimes
rang the opening note of a storm.
At that moment
the towhees who come at the end
of each day to the carob tree

ran quickly out of sight
and when a branch still bare
from winter on the neighbour's
stunted mulberry
caught the light that came
from the western horizon
against the darkness

to the east, it held for a moment
the apocalyptic glow
that illuminates times
of ultimate relief.

Cowboy

© 2014

Between rangeland and the wind
a cowboy in the saddle
tips the hat back from his brow
and as the horse rears up
he poses for a souvenir edition
of the past. He's silhouetted now

against the winter sky
paling to a strip of rose
that says High Noon is long gone
and the Night Raiders
are fast approaching. He wore
a yellow slicker when it rained,

had a red bandana to save
his face from blowing dust
and outlasted every weather
that blew across the border
when the world had salt on its rim.
Tonight, at the small town restaurant

he orders without reading the menu.
In a booth by the window he'll watch
the taillights of trucks disappear
while he waits for enchiladas
with his bootheels pointing wide
in two directions

and the silver buckle on his belt
a match for the new moon's
sharp edged icy glow.

Through All Windows

By Maya L. Kapoor

© 2014

Jane is on the move again. She scrambles through steep forest, nimble in the dark. The night buzzes and chirps. As the sky lightens, Jane pauses to scan foliage with a battered pair of binoculars. She's looking for nesting chimps, hoping to catch up with them before they descend to start their day. An ant, pincers the size of a small wrench, crawls up her leg. *Should I say something?*

Just then, I hear, in the distance, the unmistakable sound of a primate mother calling to her child. In this case, the primate is human and the child is me. It's dinner time. I slip away between the trees. Jane, intent on the groggy chimps before her, never hears me go.

Not a lot of my relationships have stayed the same since I was 15. My relationship with Jane Goodall is an exception. Jane is still my hero.

Until I encountered Jane Goodall through her writing, I was the kid turning over rocks at the edge of parking lots, trespassing on lakefront property with a fishnet and a bucket, dreaming in wildflower and sometimes insect. No big surprise—most kids play with the toys at hand, and many adults were once kids whose favorite playthings grew outside for free. But I was a kid who wanted more than to look. I wanted to know what I was seeing under logs and in streams, and why.

Lying on my bed in New Jersey, with the late afternoon sun slanting through the window, reading *Through a Window* for the first time, I saw how exploring woods could be so much more than a way to pass time. To Jane, looking through a window meant studying wild chimpanzees patiently, season by season, gesture by gesture, until we humans could see the world through the window of another species' eyes.

For me, reading *Through a Window* meant seeing the natural

world through the eyes of a field biologist. Jane pulled back the curtains on a discipline that elevated nature to science. I discovered that the mesmerizing things I found while poking around in my New Jersey woods—frogs and fossils, seedlings and nests—had history, geography, and patterns. Famously, when Jane Goodall saw a chimpanzee carefully reshape a blade of grass and use it to fish termites from a mound, she inferred a crude example of tool-shaping by a non-human primate. Jane's curious and capacious mind did not stop with observations; for her, observations were where stories began.

In her writing, Jane revealed she'd never gotten a bachelor's degree. After high school, she worked as a secretary and then a waitress, saving money for her childhood dream of a trip to Africa. Was it coincidence that my female role model, my mother, also was a secretary from England who never went to college? *Through a Window* described a world where young women with minimal education could rock the scientific world through careful observation and inference, not to mention hard work—and all on the misty sides of a forest-shrouded extinct volcano. Needless to say, it was a world I visited whenever possible.

After a bachelor's in biology, I threw myself into my own career as a field biologist. I looked through Jane's window, and I saw my future unfolding. Except for one problem: I couldn't focus. Jane had chimpanzees; I had California sea life. Appalachian salamanders. Puerto Rican trees. Desert plants. It wasn't a lack of intent; it felt more like a lack of attention span. I found so much nature, and so many processes, in such interesting places. I wanted to look through all windows at once. It wasn't as if merely settling on a research topic would have made me the Jane Goodall of, say, the white-tailed antelope squirrel. But it seemed a necessary first step.

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Maya Kapoor is a student in the University of Arizona's creative nonfiction MFA program, where she focuses on science and environmental writing. These days, she is researching and writing about Sonoran desert natural history. Before coming to the UA, Maya worked as a field biologist. In college, she met Jane Goodall at a book signing, but felt too shy to speak. Contact Maya at mlkapoor@email.arizona.edu.

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Not until 15 years after meeting Jane on the page did I realize the obvious: In addition to being the kind of field biologist who tracked down a family of sleeping chimpanzees before dawn to observe them first thing in the morning, attacks by aggressive alpha males notwithstanding, my idol was the kind of writer who sucked suburban 15-year-olds into those raucous Gombe mornings completely. Jane, I realized, didn't just look through windows; she was a woman who built windows. Then she beckoned people over and said, Consider this view of the world.

Collecting data in various ecosystems was a lovely way to travel in my 20s. And, thanks to Jane, field biology would always be my first love. But it's possible that what moved me in my teens, even more than Jane's work, was her writing.

I'm a nonfiction writer now. This allows me to indulge my magpie enthusiasm for all things biology.

And I've returned to Gombe to see Jane, thanks to my creased copies of *Through a Window* and *In the Shadow of Man*. She sits at a table under a canvas tent, long after the rest of Gombe goes to sleep. The chimps won't move until dawn. As hand-sized moths batter the cloth walls with gentle pops, Jane reaches for her notes, and I reach for mine. In the jungle by candlelight, there is plenty of time to write.

Sources

Goodall, Jane. *In the Shadow of Man*. San Diego, CA : San Diego State University Press, 1988.

Goodall, Jane. *Through A Window: My Thirty Years with the Chimpanzees of Gombe*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1990.

Coming Oct. 26: Save the date! The Arizona Consortium for the Arts' Annual Fall Festival of the Arts

Noon to 4 p.m., Sunday, Oct. 26

In the beautiful, huge courtyard of the
Arizona Historical Society Museum at Papago Park,
1300 N. College Ave., Tempe.

Admission is free!

For more details, visit The Arizona Consortium for the Arts website,
www.artizona.org

Transformation

By Fran P. Harris

© 2014

“Wake up and be counted, your time has come,” I answered the annoying phone. Nine o’clock in the morning – who the Sam Hill anyway?

“Mom? It’s Lonnie. You about ready? I’ll be out there by 11:00 to pick you up. No later, okay? Ruth’s talk starts at noon, then there’s the reception.”

“Look Lon. You need to be helping Ruth at the gallery, not coming way out here to get me. I’m seeing okay, feeling good, you know, steady. We talked this through last night. Let me handle it. I’ll be fine.”

I could sense his apprehension in the distance between us – mine too. The two parts of me were always fighting it out – the can-do part and the self-doubt part. I rooted for the “I can do it part,” but it felt good to have Lon and Ruth there to carry along the pieces when the other half needed it. That seemed to be happening more and more.

I couldn’t be 100 percent certain, but I really did feel okay to be driving. I had been on Tucson’s twisty, rolling Gates Pass Road hundreds of times. I had written down my directions on a little piece of paper that I could stick on the dash. That always helped me go anywhere once I got into traffic. I had done that for years anyway, even before.

Ruth, my precious daughter-in-law, had been putting this show together for months. She and Lon didn’t need the extra burden of coming way out here to fetch looney-tunes me.

“Okay Mom, if you’re sure. But don’t forget the cell phone. I put it on your charger last night. By the bed. And don’t forget to turn it on,” Lon said.

“Got it. And Lonnie? Thank you.” I never minded his hovering. We were all trying to cope in the best ways that we could.

I left the little red stone house, looked around at the views of Tucson, at the desert sprouting its flowers with the coming

of spring. It was such a transformation, that change from the browns of winter to the greens of spring. I got in my Honda Civic hatchback, the perfect old lady car, drove by Ruth and Lon’s house of glass and steel that somehow still seemed to blend naturally into the volcanic reds of the Tucson Mountains, and reached the end of our little dirt road.

Okay, Naomi, now stop. No cars left. No cars right. Go.

Turn left onto Gates Pass. Good girl. Left. Gates Pass. Speed it up to stay out of the way of the big guys.

Saturday, right? January. Visitors. Gawkers. Wanderers going to the Desert Museum. Keep a sharp eye. Please God, don’t let me have to use this cell phone.

Speedway then straight then right on Stone, good girl, got it made and the light at Silverbell, plenty of time. Brake and stop. Breathe.

My poor Civic felt tossed around like a little blue leaf in a dust filled wind tunnel. Strange. Were we being invaded? Where was all that dust coming from anyway?

I looked around and noticed the chain link fence surrounding the empty lot on the corner. Had it appeared out of nowhere, this empty space covered in dusty desert dirt, creosote bushes, plastic bags, aluminum cans and squashed water bottles? Had it always been there? Were my eyes playing tricks on me? The Circle K was there for our convenience, like always, but this lot? A large yellow dirt pusher was parked inside the fence, idle, but ready to scrape away any remaining desert, transforming it into some unnatural form, like most of the lots now in this area. More homeless bunnies – poor babies, no place to hide.

The insistent horn blast made me jump, jerk forward and jab at the horn of my Civic, then I laughed and gave the SUV behind me the finger. Impatient humans needing all that extra

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Born in Georgia and raised in the south, Fran P. Harris moved to Tucson, AZ in the late 1960s for graduate school at The University of Arizona. She went on to earn a PhD in Speech, Language, and Hearing Sciences, has been on the University of Arizona faculty and has lived and done research in Germany and Switzerland. She has over 50 scientific publications in peer-reviewed journals and lay publications on hearing and is now active in the Creative Writing Program at Pima Community College in Tucson, AZ, where she resides. Fran P. Harris may be contacted at fphwrite@gmail.com.

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protection for parking at the grocery store or getting safely over speed bumps. Maybe they knew something I didn't about keeping safe.

I looked down to the dash to confirm my directions, and my sticky note had fallen off. Or had I even put it there? There had been that phone call, then I left. Well, the gallery was close, I knew that. Stone. Left on Stone, then on the left. Lefty, lefty.

The parking lot was half full. The place looked different, but then everything was looking different. I got out of the car and went towards the side door. It was the only entrance I saw.

The inside was dim – a kind of hazy glowing light created by bulbs of different colors poking out of the wall at odd locations. The air felt grey, as though it had been sitting in the same place collecting dust for a long time. There were tables covered with a variety of items, some shelves, posters of nude women on the walls, doors leading someplace, partially covered by dangling beads – a faint noise coming from somewhere – muffled dialogue, some moaning, music notes of an aimless tune. A few guys were milling around thumbing through magazines. They didn't pay attention to me. Something wasn't quite right. I had seen Ruthie's gallery space. It couldn't have changed so dramatically in a few short weeks.

A man behind the counter was hunched over, reading the Tucson Weekly, chewing on a toothpick. The few pieces of black oily hair left on his head were combed over into one long piece plastered onto his cheek in a big curl blending in with the tattoo of a woman that began on his neck, her long draping, swirling hair mingling with his own in an elaborate design. He was an ageless character, maybe 45? Fifty-five? Sixty-five? He seemed to be carved out of another time entirely. Like a sideshow barker from long ago. He peeked over his reading glasses. Then back at his paper, turning the page. The curl didn't move a millimeter.

"Mister. Excuse me, I know I'm in the wrong place, but I don't seem to know why or where to go from here."

"Yeah, lady, I'd say you could be in the wrong place, but there ain't no rules about who walks through that door." His whole face moved into motion as he talked with the toothpick moving from one side of his mouth to the other. I wasn't quite certain of what he'd said.

"This is not the Coyote Gallery." I looked around again. I knew that it wasn't, I just didn't know how to get myself turned back around.

He pulled off his reading glasses and looked at me more carefully. I had wrapped my neck in two scarves, one with tassels, one with sparkles, both in blues and magentas to match my long

skirt, and I had on my Doc Martens to stabilize my walking. Maybe he thought I was an alien. Maybe I was an alien. Certainly in here, I felt like an alien.

"You got that right, lady. You're on the wrong side of the tracks. You're on the wrong block. In fact, you don't have much of anything right. Look around you."

I took a closer look. Besides the nude women on the posters, there were posters of guys holding big protruding dicks, displays of long things, short things, big things, little things, frilly things, metal things. It wasn't that I couldn't have been curious in this place, but it was not the place where I was meant to be.

I turned back to the man behind the counter. "Mister. I'm clearly lost. I'm supposed to be at the Coyote Gallery on Stone before noon. My daughter-in-law, Ruth has an opening. Perhaps you read about it?"

"Well, lady. Exactly which day, because it's noon thirty already, and I don't believe you're gonna be making it on time." He moved off the stool, and his shoulders barely came up above the high counter. He laid his reading glasses down by the paper and began to walk around towards me.

A persistent vibration started against my leg. I thought it was something off the bargain table, then realized it was the phone in my skirt pocket. I pulled it out and stared at the screen, but I couldn't make out the numbers and put it back. Probably best to leave well enough alone.

He was standing beside me. I felt like a giant. His shirt was a shiny silver material with the top two buttons open, showing more of the tattoo that moved up his neck. His pants were black leather. The heels of his boots must have been three inches.

I felt disoriented – like I had been transported to this place and couldn't figure out how to get out of it.

"Come on. Let's go out in the parking lot," he said. "My gal can take care of the place for a minute." He reached into a large fishbowl with a sign on the front written in fluorescent lime green, "Free," pulled out a small packet, then guided me by the elbow towards the door. I caught a whiff of talcum mixed with nicotine. It reminded me of something, but I wasn't sure what. Maybe just of an era that no longer existed.

"Now I'm going to tell it to you straight lady. You got your car out here, but you ain't getting in that car by yourself. Not in my parking lot. I ain't taking the risk. Now, I'd be glad to drive you on down Stone, just in case, you know – well, you didn't want to be picked up here. Or we can call somebody."

"What's your name?" I asked.

"Al. Alvin Pope."

"Pope, like in Rome?" He rolled his eyes at me as though he had heard that a thousand times.

"Listen, Pope Alvin. True confession here – I'm a dead

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woman walking, well, driving, and I need to get to my daughter-in-law's gallery. I promised my son that I could manage it, and I obviously failed." I felt like going home. Curling up. How stupid of me.

"So, I get it lady. You ain't perfect. Welcome to the club. I pass that gallery place every day on my way here. I'll take you down there. You can get your car later. Okay hon?"

He guided me over to a shiny red car with '1970 Corvette Stingray' written across the back in scrolling letters. I folded myself into the seat and scrunched down, pulling my skirt in after me.

When he started the car, I felt like I was in a rocket ship. Not a bad way to go.

"This is some car," I said.

"Yes ma'am. She's my baby. I grew up around classic 'vettes, and this one here, I practically rebuilt it from scratch. Some guy just wanted to scrap her. Like a useless piece of metal. Now, she's my best girl."

"You know where it is? The Coyote?"

"Yup, like I said, I pass it on my way to work every day. It's on Stone, just the other end. Maybe you were daydreaming and passed right by it. I do that plenty of times. Get to thinking about something else, you know?"

"Maybe that's it. I know I left in plenty of time. I didn't really check the clock. I think I'm just dying on the vine." I felt the phone vibrating again and thought about answering it. Pope Alvin looked over.

"You going to get that phone hon' or let whoever's been ringing you for the last 15 minutes keep on trying?" I looked out the window. It was fun being a passenger so low to the ground. Everything looked different. The undersides of things seemed to surface and people were walking more slowly. I knew I should answer the phone, I just couldn't bring myself to do it.

"You really dying, lady? Well, all of us is dying, I guess, but you know what I mean." He was focused on the road. Watching left and right, chomping on the toothpick. Both hands on the tiny steering wheel. Maybe he was 70. Just couldn't tell about that and what did it matter?

"Yes sir, seems my brain is growing an addition, right on its own. Imagine that – at 66, still growing. And it's a speedy bugger. I have, let's see, maybe three more months and slowly slowly I forget where yesterday went and what's around the corner." A little girl was bouncing up and down beside her mom at the stoplight, anxious to cross.

"You're pretty feisty for a little dying bird." He looked over and grinned and I saw he had no front teeth. Had I missed that completely before?

"Fake. I'm a good fake. It's a big smoke screen. The real

parts are more like denial and fear. I try to cover it all up with old-fashioned determination, then whammo, the brain misfires, then I'm in a sex shop or saying words that just sit in the air like giant goose eggs that make people look at me funny."

"Fake. Well, you're doing a pretty damned good job of it, but you did kind of misfire this time around. We'll take care of it, lady. You can count on Alvin Pope." He reached over and patted me on the knee. What possessed me to talk so openly to this little man? Somehow, it felt good to say the things I needed to say, but with fewer consequences.

We rumbled into the parking lot of the Coyote Gallery, and Lonnie was standing outside. Pacing. Two cops were with him. Oh my God. Had the place been robbed?

Al opened his door and stepped out, then Lon saw me trying to crawl out of the car.

"Hey. Hey you. What do you think you're up to with my mother?" It was quite a contrast, my tall blond white-shirted architect son striding over to accost all five and a half feet of Pope Alvin.

"Wait. Lon. Wait. This is Alvin. He just helped me. I... Somehow, I got turned around. He drove me here. It's okay." I reached for Lonnie's arm to steady myself. I was feeling a little woozy. Unfocused. Lost. Somewhere outside myself. People were talking around me, but I was marginal.

Al leaned against the Corvette and starred at Lon, at the cops. Shaking his head from side to side, chomping on the toothpick. He came into focus for me, and I knew that he had saved me.

"Al. I'm saved now. It's okay. You want to come in, meet Ruth? Have some refreshments?" I said, feeling at a loss for what to do next.

Lon was holding on to me like I might run away. I swayed a little. It was time to sit down.

"No ma'am, but I'll see to your car until you can get by to pick it up. I put the keys in your purse there on your arm. Car's safe until you come back to get it." He was looking back and forth between me and Lon, but talking to me.

"Thank you mister. We'll figure out the car. I appreciate you getting my mom here."

"No problemo, buddy. You take care of yourself little lady. Don't be getting lost again." He turned and got back into his car, revved up the engine and the 'vette scraped bottom when he left the parking lot.

Lon took me inside to sit on a chair at the entrance while he went back outside to sort things out with the cops.

Ruth was talking to the few people still milling around inside the gallery.

The long carved wooden table beside my chair was covered with brochures scattered on its surface, "Ruth Ann Mahlon Adopts a New Form." Ruth looked up and saw me and rushed

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over.

“Naomi. Mom. You’re okay. We were worried sick.” She knelt in front of me, holding both my arms. She could have squeezed me into a little pile of bones, she was that strong.

“Ruth. I...I’m so sorry. I tried. Damn. I just...my directions, they disappeared, then I disappeared. Dammit all to Hell.”

“You’re safe. That’s all that matters. Let’s focus on that. Come with me, I want to show you something.”

I stood up and the ground felt steady. She walked with me over to the niche in the wall on the other side of the table. A light coming from a source I couldn’t see enveloped a clay piece – mine, one of the first bowls I’d made in Ruth’s studio when I moved back to Tucson from Denver. Six months after my husband Eli died. Clay that had started out white and grey had become charcoal and purple and burnt orange from the intense heat of the pit firing. I had carved a turtle on the side – crawling up to the rim, pulling itself out of the swirls of color. I read the card beside the piece. “Transformation. By Naomi.”

Lonnie had come up behind us, and he put a hand on each of our shoulders. I turned around to face them. Our heads bent towards each other, and we huddled together like a wagon train circling up for protection. I was the first to start crying, then Ruth, then Lon.

“You two. You are...” I couldn’t finish. We separated from each other, none of us sure about where to go next. What to do.

“Mom. We have a few loose ends here, then we should be getting on home before it gets much later. We can go together to pick up the Civic,” Lonnie said.

The sun was low in the sky when Ruth and I crossed through the intersection at Silverbell. Lon was behind us in the Civic. It had been right where I’d left it. No one had said one word about that. About Alvin. I looked over at the fenced-in lot. The scraping was almost done, dust still hovering in a sheet suspended over the whole area. In half a day, life had been wiped away and pushed into a big pile at the back of the lot to be hauled away and disposed of.

Valentine’s Day. Ruth and I were in the truck returning to the house. The back was filled with supplies. She was beginning a new series of pieces, and I needed some white clay to start on an idea that had popped up one night when my head was keeping me agitated.

I was getting used to being a passenger, sitting back, watching the world pass by slowly – as good as any Disneyland ride. I looked over at the construction site as we passed by.

“Ruth. Have you noticed that building going up over there?”

“Where?” She was slapping her hands on the wheel and singing along with Johnny Cash, “My own, personal Jesus.

Someone to hear your prayers...someone who’s there...”

“By that Circle K.” The only sign on the fence was B&K Construction Company and a large plywood sheet leaning up beside it with 8116 sprayed in orange. The concrete slab had been poured and steel girders put in place. The structure seemed to be outgrowing the lot.

“Oh, I see where you mean. It’s for storage, right?”

“I don’t know. There’s no sign. It’s big enough to be an airplane hangar.” She punched the radio to NPR. Car Talk. Something about Corvettes. I had the thought that I should know about that car. I couldn’t quite find it though.

The desert began to show more color as we drove further west – yellows of the cassia bushes and desert marigolds mixing with the oranges of the poppies and the purples of the lupines.

“I’ve never seen so many wildflowers in the desert, or have they always been there, and I was too focused on the driving?” I said.

“Rain. It’s all that rain we got in the winter. Remember, it even snowed one day and capped off the saguaro?”

“Rain. And...snow?” I felt like I was floating back and forth as we moved from one curve to another.

She looked over at me. Both her hands gripping the wheel.

“Remember? In November? The day we sat together in Dr. Filcher’s office and saw your scans? The day we found out? We got back to the house, and it was flooded. It took Lupe a week to clean everything up. You had to stay with us. Remember?”

The dreaded “R” word. It held so much expectation.

We were turning into the driveway of the little stone house. “Well, look at all those African daisies. Those are from the seeds I planted in October,” I said. The Civic was parked on the side of the house, coated with dust. We used it only occasionally to keep it running, and I suspected to make me feel good. Ruth pulled up by the back door but didn’t get out.

“Can you manage? I need to get these things down to the studio before it gets dark.”

“Of course. Take care of it. I need a rest. All that remembering wore me out.” We smiled at each other. Some days it was easier to put others at ease.

I opened the door of the truck and pulled my cane from behind the seat. Four prongs now. I was graduating.

I heard the truck go down the drive to the studio as I went into the house. I looked around. It was all wrong. Someone had moved into the house while we’d been out. Nothing was in the right place. Strange books on the table. Odd dishes that I didn’t recognize. Lon would be here later. I would have to talk to him about this. Help me move things back into place. Keep strangers from moving things around in here while I was gone out. So tired. Time for resting in the warmth of the sun coming through

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the windows of my bedroom.

Ides of March. Ruth was outside the back door frantically tooting the horn of the golf cart. Lonnie had constructed paths on the property for us to use to get me around. After a few ill-fated attempts, it was obvious I'd have to rely on them, even for these limited excursions. Not even a golf cart was safe.

I grabbed both canes and struggled out of the armchair in the living room. The screen door slammed shut as I went out. Ruth revved the little engine. She had her favorite turquoise bandana tied on her head, long dangling earrings swinging back and forth.

"Come on, tiger. Let's get this buggy on the road. I've got a life to create," Ruth said. The thing threw me back in the seat when she took off.

"You okay, Ruth?"

"Yeah. Lon and I had a few things to talk about this morning. Then you didn't call and we didn't know whether to call Lupe or if you were up and you didn't answer your phone and... Oh Hell, Naomi. Just dammit all to Hell." She braked the cart, we both jerked forward, and she put her head on the steering wheel and burst into tears.

"We have to do something, Naomi. We have to. When you tripped the other day and cracked your head open, we ended up in St. Mary's Emergency for 8 hours. Eight fucking hours. They left you sitting there like a vagrant, and we were useless. Useless, Naomi. It sucks, it just sucks."

"Useless," I said.

It was early and the doves were cooing together – beginning their morning wanderings into the desert. The cool breeze coming up from the wash blew against my face, and I could feel the hairs of my arms tingling from the chill.

"I'm sorry. But I hate it. I hate it that we're just getting started, you and me, and this has to happen. I hate it for you. I hate it for me. I hate it for Lonnie." She slammed her palm on the steering wheel again and again and the whole cart rocked with each blow.

"Ruth. We're stalled. This is getting us nowhere. Let's get on to the studio, plug in the coffee pot, rev up the music, unwrap the clay, and talk this out down there." My own lucidity shocked me at times. My brain's circuit board operated with its own set of decision-making criteria choosing which switches to flip on and which off. Flip on the eye switch, old girl, for about 5 minutes, but shut down on that language switch or we'll get overload. Now up with the language and off with the balance. Up, down, up, down. Before long, the whole panel would short circuit.

The light on the Catalinas was shifting – the scene framed through the windshield of the cart. I reached over and loosened her hand from its grip on the wheel. She started the cart, and we bumped along the rest of the way to the studio and started working.

"Ruth Ann, it's time for me to start making little things. Things you can hold in your hand and feel, or place in obscure spots then rediscover them." I held a chunk of Cinco Blanco and kneaded it between my fingers. I could still feel the movement of the clay, my sense of touch not completely gone.

"Touch stones, I'll call them. What do you think?"

"Do it. I like it." She was settling into her work – covered in Canyon Red – hands, arms and a long smudge on her cheek. Pounding the moistened clay, throwing it on the table, kneading it, then starting all over again. Deep red droplets spattered the air, then landed on her, the floor, the work table.

I moved the small piece of white clay in my hands and the rudimentary suggestion of a mother figure holding a child emerged. Magic. It was still magic to me for a piece of the earth sitting in my hands to become something else, just through its own urging. Transforming under its own will.

"I'm sorry I was so snappy on the way down here. It's just, last night, Lon and I were talking. We can't imagine that little stone house without you in it. And it's only been a couple of years since Papa Eli died. It's just too much. Dammit. Too much. And Lonnie. He's turning into a zombie. Just to make it through."

I chose a pick from my tools and teased out the image, hoping that the eye-hand switch would stay open long enough for me to finish.

"Are you afraid?" Ruth had rolled out a thick red slab and was beginning to form it around a tube.

"Afraid? You mean afraid to die? No. I'm not afraid to die." I put my first touchstone on the shelf to dry and rolled up a ball of the Canyon Red in my palms. I didn't know how it would work for a small piece.

"Dying feels natural to me. Just a shift in form – all part of the divine order of the universe. Just like this clay. It's just a change. It's not the dying that scares me, it's the living. It's this." I pointed to the canes, to my twitching face, then my stitched up head. "This kind of living. Living like someone I don't recognize. Some creature who's eating herself alive. Some alien that pulls tricks and puts you in a strange place, throws you on the floor or says words you've kept politely hidden away. That's what I'm afraid of."

The tube was upright on a pedestal and Ruth was beginning to carve swirling lines into the surface. Music filled up the room. Prokofiev. Spinning tales. Peter. The wolf. Trying to assimilate with the elephant in the room.

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“And I’m afraid for you. And for Lonnie. What I want when I leave is for you to feel the magic of the change, not the grief. And that won’t happen. It won’t. I know how these things work.” The red clay in my palm had formed itself into a shape with a deep depression in the middle. I flattened the bottom. It could be set under a creosote bush to catch droplets of rain and store them for wandering critters. I would make a whole series of these. And some small clay critters to sit alongside the basins.

Ruth stopped turning the tube of swirling lines and walked over to me. Red rivulets were streaking her face, and she turned my tall stool around to face her. She sobbed and pulled me in to her, and we tried to fill each other with some sense of release.

It was 3:30 in the afternoon. March 28th. I read the big black numbers on the day calendar. I needed some nacho cheese flavored Dorito chips. I had to have them. Right now. I could taste them. I could feel them in my mouth. Check the log book. Ruthie at the gallery until 4:30. Lonnie at his office until 6:00. Lupe signed out, 2:30. Naomi in the stone house without Doritos. The Civic was parked alongside the house. Extra keys in the kitchen drawer. The Circle K was just down the road. It was such a short trip. It was so easy. Left, straight, Circle K, left, home. I grabbed my change purse, the keys, started up old Bessie and headed out. Piece of cake. Easy Peasy.

Sitting in the turn lane across from the Circle K, I was proud, oriented, ready for a big bag of Doritos. Maybe I would get a big soda too. Sit outside. There was a big shiny new building next to the Circle K. The parking lot looked like it should belong to a Wal Mart. Universal something. Couldn’t quite see. Turn my head. Universal Life Church of the Familiar. My eyes must have shifted again. Not a church. Not possible. Universal Storage? I squinted, trying to clear my vision.

I felt the Civic sliding sideways towards the chain link fence, then spinning as it gained speed. The white truck had come out of nowhere and hit the rear of the passenger side hard enough to start the motion. My head hit the windshield, and I fell back into the seat.

God. Oh, thank you God for this miracle. Please. Take me. Take me now.

“Lady. Lady. You alive, lady? You coming out of nowhere. Oh mi Dios. You alive, Lady? Stay awake. I’m getting help.”

A small man with a straw hat. Rakes and shovels were sticking up in the back of the truck and debris was piled in the middle. The tailgate was wired shut. His clothes were soiled and his hands looked like they had been in the dirt all his life.

His eyes were gentle. Concerned. Afraid. I saw the little palm trees painted on the door of the truck with angels on top of them. Miguels.

“Are you here for me? Are you my angel from heaven?” My eyes shifted back out of focus, and I put my head on the steering wheel.

“Lady. I’m going for the Circle K. Okay?”

I had to get out of this folded up tin can. I couldn’t stay crunched up behind the wheel. I reached for the door handle, then realized a man was standing there, opening the door for me.

I looked up and saw Jesus Christ. Okay, Naomi. You are right on track now. Right on track.

“Ma’am. You shouldn’t move. Stay still.” His voice sounded like velvet – yards of deep, purple, flowing velvet.

“No. I have to get out of this tin can. I’m not hurt. Just help me out of here.”

He opened the door wider and extended his hand. It was warm and soft and energy seemed to penetrate my body when he touched me.

“Where did you come from, Jesus? Were you in the truck?”

“No. No, I am Cristoph. I belong to the church. I am the pastor. I was walking out to go home when I saw the accident.” He reached over to the seat and picked up my purse then helped me out.

“Then this is – a church? This can’t be a church. It looks like an airplane hangar.” I steadied myself against him. Had I forgotten my canes?

“Yes, please, come inside with me. We can go into the sanctuary and call for help.”

Going inside a church was not exactly what I’d intended for the afternoon. I would be content to live out the rest of my few remaining days never setting foot in one. Church was a place where the unholy worshipped. I worshipped in the land, in the creations of daily living. I had no need to be inside a building, and certainly not one that looked like an airplane hangar. My God lived in the washes of the desert, in the sky, in the mountains. I knew where to find God.

When we went inside, I expected to hear my footsteps landing on hard surfaces, but instead, my foot gave into the material and it gripped me, like a cushion, like I was being guided. I had never walked on anything like it before. It was black with a moss green patina. The sound was dampened.

Windows of different shapes were carved out of the walls on the opposite sides of the structure. The light coming through them was reflected off convex and concave mirrors placed in strategic locations, catching, enhancing and diffusing the light – creating a pattern dance throughout the whole interior.

Cristoph brought over a couple of wooden fold up chairs,

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and I sat and looked around, mesmerized by the changing patterns of the light.

“What is your name?” he asked, sitting in the chair next to me. I had to stop and think, then it surfaced, just as always.

“Naomi. Naomi Mahlon. I live up Speedway, near Gates Pass. In the Tucson Mountains. On the land. My son and his wife live on the property too. They have to help take care of me now. They are tired of it.”

“Well. And you? Are you tired of it?”

“I just wanted some Doritos. Tired of it? Yes. I’m tired of it. Who wouldn’t be? Aren’t you tired of it?”

“No. No, I’m just getting started.”

He was holding my purse in both hands on his lap. “Who shall I call for you?”

I reached for the purse and started fumbling through its contents looking for the emergency card. It was like a foreign land in there. Something fell out onto the floor. Christoph picked it up. A small plastic packet with a fluorescent condom attached to a red, black and silver card.

“Here. This number? Adult Expectations? It says on the back, ‘Call if you need me. A. Pope,’ is that your son?”

I looked at the card. I had never seen any of it before. “Pope? I don’t know any Pope. That must be a mistake. Maybe that’s Lupe’s son. My house helper, Lupe. Maybe that’s what we’re supposed to do. Call Lupe’s son.” My head felt like a watermelon.

He punched the number into his cell phone. “Mr. Pope, please. Yes. This is Cristoph, from the Universal Life Church of the Familiar. On Speedway. Near Silverbell. No. No sir, we do appreciate donations, but I’m calling about Mrs. Mahlon. She needs your help. There’s been an automobile accident. Yes, that’s right, a blue Civic. Yes, she’s okay, here, you can talk with her.”

He handed me the phone.

“Yes. I need...is Lupe there?” I did not recognize the voice. “I’m sorry. No. I don’t remember any Pope Alvin. I don’t go to church. I’m sorry. I think it’s this church man here you need.” I handed the phone back. I was in the wrong place.

“Oh, I see. Yes, I understand. Thank you. I will call him.”

“Mrs. Mahlon. He says to try to reach your son, and if I can’t find him, to call the number on the card again, and he will come right away and help you. That he’s a friend of the family.”

“Yes. Yes, I’m sure he’s that familiar man.” I had found Lon’s distinctive yellow and grey card with the wavy line on the side. “Here, this one. This is my son’s card. I’m sure of it.”

He got up and walked away, mumbling into his cell phone. When he came back, he sat beside me again.

“Your son is on his way. Do you like our sanctuary, Mrs. Mahlon?”

You could tell he was proud of the place. That he fit here.

“No. Well, yes. I mean, it was a surprise to me. I thought it was a warehouse. The outside is stark and cold. But on the inside, it’s more like a cave. I don’t know how you created that.”

“We didn’t. Not really. We just followed the plans. It created itself.”

“And the place is so huge. Do you really have that many people in here at one time?”

“We will. Once we’re officially open. Second Sunday of April will be our first service. You can come and see for yourself. We already have four buildings on this street. We’re just consolidating. Have you not seen them?”

“No. I can’t say I’ve ever noticed any Familiar Churches on this street. I’m awfully thirsty. Do you have any water?” I was starting to feel like a limp rag doll.

I didn’t hear Ruth and Lonnie come in.

“Mom.” It was Lonnie. He touched my shoulder, then sat in the chair beside me. I folded my head over into my lap, my hands covering my eyes, I started shaking and couldn’t stop sobbing. I didn’t know what I needed.

“Lon. I crashed the car. I’m gone.”

“It’s all right, Mom. Everything’s all right. The Civic hardly has a dent and nobody got injured. How about your head? Do you need to go to Emergency?”

“I don’t think so. I just have this lump on my forehead, but you know. My head’s so messed up anyway. Let’s leave it alone, okay?”

He was rubbing the back of my neck. Stroking my hair. Talking to me softly. Telling me everything would be all right. “It’s okay, Mom. You’ll be all right. Let’s go on home then.” I had what I needed.

The Jesus man crossed over to meet us, emerging out of the light from the opposite walls. Ruth was talking with him. They walked over together, and he handed me a cup of water. I couldn’t hold it and gave it back. I was ready to go home now.

“Mrs. Mahlon. Ruth was explaining the situation to me. Please know that I am here for you, for all of you, whenever you need me.” He touched my arm, and I felt it all the way to my heart. “The Lord be with you.”

“Thank you. Yes. Thank you,” Ruth and I said together.

Ruth supported me as we walked to their car, and Lon went over to where the police had gathered. A white truck was parked alongside my Civic, and on the other side was a long red car. Two small men were leaning against the truck talking to each other. One held his hat in his hands and kept shaking his head back and forth, the other had funny dark hair and was wearing high boots and smoking. Lon went over to them and

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they all turned and looked at me sitting with Ruth. Maybe these were the men who had come to fix things. Everything would be taken care of now. I closed my eyes and leaned against the warmth of the car's window. Taken care of now.

April 9th. A warm evening. Lon and Ruth had come over earlier with take out and we had spread the Sunday paper all over the kitchen table. Lon had read the comics to me, panel by panel, keeping Charlie Brown and Lucy, Linus and Snoopy alive in my brain. I had lost my appetite but enjoyed the fortune cookie. "You will have a long and happy life," Lonnie had read. We all had a good laugh. He stuck the paper on the kitchen bulletin board along with all the other sayings, cards, forgotten recipes, dead wildflowers, scattered photos.

It was dark now. Lonnie had come back to tuck me in. Making sure Mom was behaving herself. Taking her sleeping pills and seizure meds. I was already in bed. Waiting for him.

"Lonnie, honey. Don't come by in the morning. Lupe'll be here early, and she can take care of everything. She'll call you. And Lonnie. Don't worry. You know, I have had a long and happy life. I know we're all getting tired out."

"We're just doing the best we can. Nobody gave us a rule book to follow when all this started. How should we know what to expect? It's day by day. Step by step. Right?"

"Right. Honey, out on the back porch. My touchstones. Go bring me the red one with the big dip inside, and pick up the white one right by the back door then come back in here to me."

He held out the two touchstones, cradled in his palm. I took the red one, felt its deep depression then put it in the pocket of my kimono. I closed his hand around the white one then covered his fist with my hands.

"Take this and when you get home, you and Ruthie hold it together in your hands. Okay honey? Now, I'm tired. It's time." I let his hand go.

"Night, Mom. I love you. Phone's right here and here's your water. You warm enough?"

"Perfect. Everything's perfect. Lean over here and let me hug your neck one more time before we go home." I could hardly let him go.

The porch door slammed, and I heard the whine of the golf cart become fainter as he drove up the path toward their house. I got up and went into the bathroom and tried to recognize Naomi out of the blurry image in the mirror. She was long gone. I opened the towel cabinet and reached around in the back until I found the pouch. Over the last three months, I had been collecting everything I needed. It was the one place I checked every day so that I would remember. Could take care of it.

I made my way out to the back porch. My legs were weak, but I could still get along slowly, even without the canes. I held onto the porch frame and knocked off the last touchstone I'd made. It had been so crude, but Ruth had insisted that we keep it. I could imagine the shards of red and yellow flying into the dark then nestling down, hiding themselves in the dust piles that had accumulated in the corners of the porch.

I stepped outside. The night was calm. A full moon rising. The sky filling up with stars. A breeze from the wash blew the silk of the purple and blue kimono against the insides of my legs. My dear husband Eli had brought it back to me from the war and had given it to me on our wedding night. It was so beautiful, I hadn't wanted to wear it. I'd kept it in a box 364 days of the year and on our anniversary, I would pull it out, and we would enjoy its beauty together. After he died, I never put it back in the box. I crossed my arms around my body and felt the cool material grow warm as it caressed my skin.

I could make out the path to the right that led down to the studio. To the left, Lonnie had cleared a walkway and put up railings so I could get down to the stone bench on the embankment above the wash. I would sit there for hours, feeling the changing light on the mountains, listening to the sounds of the desert.

I held onto the rails and started down the path, sensing the numb bottoms of my bare feet as they slid along, finding their way. The touchstone bumped against my leg with each step. My pouch, my deliverance was in the other pocket. I put my hand on it. One foot in front of the other, I passed by the bench then descended into the sandy wash. I had walked miles in this wash over the last years. I knew all of its secrets, its side canyons, its caves. I stood in the middle, looking left, right, then turned towards the west and began walking. The sand felt welcoming, knowing how to guide me, I trusted it. It would take me to the perfect place.

Carla Keaton

Tempe Artist



“A Glimpse of the Past”
Oil



Carla Keaton received her degree in Painting and Physical Anthropology from Arizona State University in Tempe, AZ. She is a full-time artist, residing in Tempe, with her fourteen-year-old daughter, Anansa, and dogs Zoey and Snickers. Contact the artist at keatonfineart@gmail.com or visit her website at keatonfineart.weebly.com.

Carla Keaton

Tempe Artist



**“Downtown Phoenix 2”
Oil**

Carla Keaton was born on August 14, 1969, in Cook County Hospital in Chicago, Illinois. She was born the daughter of a small-town Mississippi sharecropper, and to a woman of a strict Southern Baptist upbringing. Carla was raised in Minneapolis, after her parents, along with her two other siblings, moved to Minnesota in 1972. She recalls growing up in an environment where very little was ever said, and feelings were rarely expressed. Work was her parents' sole companion. They worked long, and they worked hard. Bills had to be paid, and children had to be fed. Quality time was not affordable. Carla, the youngest of the three, spent most of her time in her room reading and drawing. She looked forward to the late evenings when her mother and father returned home from work, and stayed up way past her bedtime just to steal a glimpse of them wearily climbing the staircase towards their bedroom. They were tired and worn, and too tired to notice. Carla watched and read the drain on their faces, the anguish in their eyes and the exhaustion of their bodies. It was all very clear. No words needed. No questions asked. This has been the basis of her work ever since. “Inspiration for my paintings comes from a need to capture, define, record and communicate a moment in time. These recorded ‘moments’ serve as a portal, allowing the viewer access to the lives and souls of those captured on canvas, and the lives and souls of us all.”

“The eyes are the windows of the soul.” - English Proverb

- Carla Keaton

Carla Keaton

Tempe Artist



"Kin Folk"
Oil



"Family Vacation 1977"
Oil



"Self-Portrait"
Oil

Carla Keaton

Tempe Artist



"Reading Lesson"
Oil

3 Poems by Kaitlin Meadows

Insulation

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I am a woman who leaves no vestiges,
no visible traces, no crumbs,
when I vacate my rented rooms
out on the raw edges
of our wind blustered cities.
My kit bag is whittled down so small
I can live a solitary life
out of a tattered rucksack,
eating pumpkin seeds
from cupped hands,
drinking nectar
from the bud.

When I escaped a thoughtless lover
and fascism in America,
I took my flayed heart
to an abandoned shack
in the western Sierra Nevada's
and used my books
to swathe the bare walls,
insulating me from my despair.
I made a womb of books,
stringing an umbilicus out
of my melancholic retreat
into a world of pure ideas.
I hid my shatters
and mended my breaks
all that long, slow winter
in that book barricaded cabin,
which had been crafted
from hand-hewn cedar in 1921
for the traveling midwife.
The battens were only added later,
when the cedar dried and shrank,

leaving slits for ice raw winds
to slice through the walls.
That ark of books nourished me,
revived, and reinvented me
that sleet flooded winter.
I ate Thoreau for breakfast,
lunched on Dorothy Parker,
had dinner with Neruda,
while the pallid winter sun
sunk itself into a blushing
down comforter of fog
over the far off valleys
that I had left behind.
Sometimes I'd wake
in the shiver and weep
of a lonely 3 a.m.
and pull out my own
frayed journal of
scribbled poems
to remind myself
my heart was still alive
and then fell back
into a dream stirred sleep
where books floated me over
treacherous rapids
and out
into the open sea of
some semblance
of peace,
well insulated
in typeface
from my tears.



Kaitlin Meadows is the Mistress of Merriment at her enchanted art studio The Creative Cottage where she teaches creativity and art classes, makes masks and books, paints and sculpts, works with clay and invents mischief. She holds a twice-monthly writing circle called Word Weavers for women interested in writing and sharing in a nurturing environment. Check out her classes at: www.thundermoonstudios.wordpress.com or visit her website at: www.kaitlinmeadows.com or contact her at: paloma@dakotacom.net.

The Path of Patient Practice

© 2014

Kneeling hollows worn to ruts in stone and wood
Bent knee, bowed head, eyes lifted
To Mary, Buddha, Allah, Mohammed,
All the dervish diva goddesses
In the temple of Hope.

I seek a church where there is freedom
For fools,
Lodging for the lost ones
Who beg in ornate litanies
For what cannot be named.

Believers
Are always famished
For miracles,
The possibility of fullness,
The promise of transmutation,
The thrill of the quested grail,
Which is always
Just
Out of reach.

Wearing white,
A symbol of our pilgrimage,
Marking the purity of our intent,
We wend
Through the black alleys
Of our plague subverted world,
Where the slips and slops
Of our despair
Breed sensible disbelief
In any god or good.

Each on our own journey
Through cities of blood,
Greed, and war,
Soiled to the core,
Destiny's spangled whores.

Relentlessly,
Almost by default,
We are pulled upward
Toward mythic shrines
Glittering on wind seethed hilltops
Where black olives stew in oak vats
And oregano furs the footpaths fragrant.

Where houses are made of straw and mud,
Wind and wet firewood,
Yeast and the tears of our grandmothers.
Where rinds of goat cheese
Brined in salt scraped
From the Dead Sea,
Figs and almonds and strong teas
Of mint and mercy
Are fed to the novitiates.

We are all on the same path,
The path of patient practice,
Endlessly at the apprenticeship
Of our awakening,
While delicious sin
Skulks and slithers
In the wild oats
Like an adder
Whose tongue
Flicks a warning
Its deadly fangs will soon deliver.

Despite the devil's scathing eye
And wide seducer's grin,
Leering and triumphant,
Though our faith in love
Is injured,
Our trust in miracles
Abjured,
Our ardent supplicant's will
Tested,
We stumble on,
Wanting to believe.

I wait on the foot path
Of patient practice,
Feeling like Eurydice
In the underworld,
Hounds baying
At the gates of my heart,
Willing to trust
In what I cannot see,
Waiting for Orpheus
To come to claim me,
To lead me from
The dark labyrinth,
So I can run head long
Into the sacred,
Sweet mysteries
Of a faith
At last
Required.

Time Is Not Absolute

© 2014

Time is not absolute
But variable,
Dependent on dark memories
And calculations that chart
The journey of the sun
And reveal how the moon
Dresses up in light
And then
Slices off her clothes
With the obsidian knife
Of the midnight sky.
It is what we agree to,
A gathering place for breakfast,
Before a catchment of labor,
A pause
For feasting,
A hallow in the
Reeds
For sleep.
Moments
Stolen
From the clocks
Of martyrs
For love.
We are brilliant
And impotent
Like a star already
Burnt out,
Atoms spent in a combustion
Named light.
No small bit of magic
That.
Flame
Leaping up
And dashing
Out,
The flash
Burning our eyes
Even as we
Awe.

6 Poems by Ronald G. Auguste

I'll Love You Still

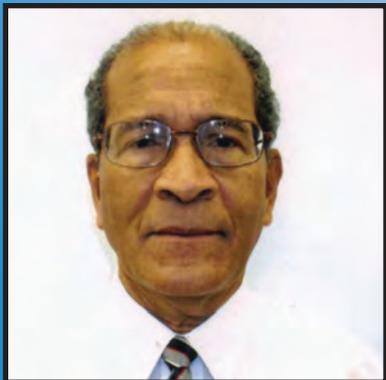
© 2014

(For my Wife, Anita)

When you are old, my Darling, and the days
Become mere catalogues of boring things,
And wings,
Once soaring splendid, flap on common ways,
In mellow woods where fall life's Autumn leaves,
Before snows of life's Winter shroud the ground,
Around,
I'll love you still.... Even as dawn retrieves
Its pearly splendour from the vanquished night,
And drapes drab city streets with holy gleams,
While dreams
Dance off to other worlds with their delight,
My hands will reach into the Arc of Time,
To conjure days of laughter, buried deep,
Asleep
In bygone years, to make last days sublime.

You'll always be the fuel for the flame
That urges me onward to finer things,
And brings
Me nearer to salvation.... When you came,
My lodestar blazed in glory in the sky,
And myriad sparks feel earthward in a gay
Bouquet,
Which I would swear is blooming in your eye!

May you be blessed of God, my Darling,
And,
If fate decides I be the first to leave,
Don't grieve –
Since we'll have kept our promise,
Dear, please understand....



The poet writes: "I was born in Saint Lucia, in the West Indies. After spending many years in London, England, I emigrated to the USA in 1970, and became a citizen in 1975. I am the father of two sons – the second one deceased – and one daughter. In my early teens, strongly influenced by traditional poets such as Shakespeare, Byron, Longfellow, Wordsworth, Tennyson, and William Cullen Bryant, I started writing poetry. I've written hundreds of poems – quite likely more than a thousand – a great number of which are dedicated to family, friends, and public figures whom I admire and respect. In Phoenix, I have often read in public places – Libraries, Book Stores, Coffee Shops, and, occasionally, in Schools. Some years ago, after a reading at Horizon High in the Paradise Valley School District, I was informed that some of my poems had been copied for circulation there. I've also read my poems at venues in London; in Santa Monica, California; and at several schools in St. Lucia."

In The Autumn Of My Life

© 2014

(For Ned Mullan)

Now, in the Autumn of my life,
I can't remember all that sang in Summer....
But Spring – its Spring –
Is still a vibrant thing!

I see the green grass rich in rain.

I see the rising suns place gems
In dews of morning,
And scatter diamonds
In the spiders' silken tents.

I see the setting suns drop shades
On languid hillsides,
And cover up the whispering seas
With changing tapestries.

I see bright fishes leap –
They leap and shine –
How quick!,
Their scales reflect the silvery sunlight.

I see black song birds in the crickets' fields,
Seeming to come and go in pecking order;
And paper hawks,
Sweeping the skies on bamboo wings –
Strange birds,
With dancing tails,
Floating through air on strings of cotton....

I see the mango trees,
In green and fragile gold,
And they seem poor and barren,
Empty in my sight,
Though laden with a wealth of coming sweetness,
Coming juice,
Yet to evolve from countless beads
Of yellow, bee-stung flowers....

I see a boy, as if on wings,
Moving in sun,
Running in rain and showers.

The late Spring of my life was such a joyful time!

Love was, and is, an orange;
I, a pear – Good fruit! –
From whose sweet seeds two seedlings grew.

They grew ... they grew ...
In nurtured soil,
I see them grow,
Leaves finely veined,
And soft and bright,
Translucent in their sunlights ... all aglow!

Sweet Spring led to bright Summer –
The Summer of my seasons –
The Summer of this life ...
I can't recall ... well ... hardly ...
Vaguely ... not at all ...
Except in broken fragments,
Of bright and broken days;
And broken dreams of broken hopes,
In sweltering broken nights....

The younger seedling, broken –
Crushed! –
In my bright Summer....

Broken during his early Spring,
Before the season of his blooming!
Broken and shattered,
In his Spring,
By a society –
Drunk! –
Entombing....

Broken,
A rising Sun, my Son,
Whose shattered rays
Deepen the glooming....

O Lord,
It is so hard to bring again to life ...
A shattered season.

Continued on page 26

Continued from page 25

A shattered season – memories lost ...
Yearning to bring, at any cost,
Back into form,
In this,
The cheerless,
Sunless Autumn of my life....

So often must I clear dim visions through my wife.

The Autumn of my life is not yet kind.

It is being hot.
It is being cold.
But there's some joy, as I grow old.

A sprout,
In his bright Spring,
Leading to brighter Summer,
Has borne fine blooms,
Which bore fine fruit –
Fine blooms, fine fruit! –
That yet may ease the sorrows of my Summer....

I hope that I shall see
Leaves of my Autumn die,
In vibrant tones....

I hope the Winter of my life
Won't be like early Spring,
Less stepping stones....

I feel my Summer's loss –
Loss of my younger seed –
Deep in my bones....

On The Beach

© 2014

(For Edison Lansiquot)

Bronze-hewn,
He strides the silver strand in Sunday sunlight.

The swooning waves curl at his feet,
Then sigh into the sand....

He struts!

Beneath his copper skin,
His muscles sing like wires ...
And his eyes smolder with a glow of inner fires....

Clean limbed, and palm-tree tall,
He struts,
Basking in the sun's hot admiration,
And the approving glances of dusky,
Tempting girls,
Whetting their desires,
Reclined like splendid yachts upon the torrid beach.

Given half a chance, he'd rig up each!

Without a qualm,
He'd break their calm,
And put wind in their sails,
Then set them drifting....

Sea waves,
Sun waves,
Leap and flash!

He leaps and flashes,
Cleaves the water, going under,
Their bells of laughter
Ringing in his ears like thunder!

Spring Song

© 2014

(For my Son, Byron)

I danced down many a street,
By the pale Spring beguiled,
And none that I did greet
Replied....

Some of them looked at me
As though I were insane;
While others gawked, simply
Inane.

The nearest to a word
Came from the birds that sing.
Good Lord! – Hadn't folks heard ...
'Twas Spring?

What frosts of reticence
Still froze their cruel lips,
Stifling eloquence,
And quips?

Joy in the silent Spring
Took me to dizzy heights,
My glad eye fashioning
Delights,

Round every budding leaf,
And blade of glinting grass! –
My thoughts whirling from grief,
En masse....

Oh, how can I forget
How slow the sweet day waned –
Was it for my regret,
It rained?

For as I swirled away,
Homeward in fading light,
The Spring rain seemed to say:
“Goodnight!....”

Reminiscing In Autumn

© 2014

(For Denny Guge)

Once, in an August time,
I roamed the fields of my sweet island home.

Free as the birds,
And happier than their songs,
I flew the ways of sunlight,
In prime pastures,
In the constant Summers of my youth....

I danced on high with paper hawks
That rode the windy hours in erratic frenzy,
Until the savage sun, in anger, hurled
Its javelins into the west! –
And mauve and pink,
And scarlet turning rose and gold,
The wounds would bleed a tapestry ...
Breath-taking in its beauty....

More splendid than the crowing,
Dew-gemmed glowing,
Cobweb-sparkling,
Coral-tinted ...
Holy dawn!

I sang with rainstorms in the brooding hills,
While giant thunder roared in rage to see
Electric talons maul the pregnant sky!

I flashed with leaping fishes in blue rivers,
To cool my burning bronze in sweeter waters;
And roamed savannas while day fled the landscape,
Where the waning glow of sunset lingered
Like stubborn fragments from a shattered rainbow!

I was the steel-jaw,
Crunching Lord of cane-fields,
With elastic-bucket-belly never full,
And rumbling for more cane juice!

I was a reaper of the mango harvests
In the blessed, no-more-Latin days of school vacation,
When the sun, Olympian in the Heavens,
Seemed to explode into a trillion shafts
Of brazen, blinding light, killing the hours
Towards the sudden star-sung birth of night!

Oh for the pleasures of my island home!

Its majestic mountains, proud and rolling,
Rising-falling-rolling ever onward to the sea,
Serene, yet rippling-green-and-cobalt-silver –
Shining in the sun! –
When weather showed a happy face!

Or wild! Tempestuous! Heaving dark-and-raging
To the shell-and-almond-seaweed littered shore!

Green dancing fields,
Seen from the heaven of a wind-swept ridge,
In sunlight ... after rain!

And mango trees, past blossom, but in fruit,
Sweet scented, rose-and-purple
Greenish-yellow orbs of goodness –
Hanging on the swooning boughs!

Now, in October days and self-exile,
I prowled the sunless asphalt lanes of England,
And the wind-swept,
Swirling,
Countless,
Whirling bloody Autumn leaves are as my sorrows,
Tossed in the chilly winds of my despair!

You Choose The Road

© 2014

(For my Nephew, Jason)

There is a road ahead you cannot see,
Littered with failure, woe, and cares unknown;
Littered with broken dreams, that hopelessly
Meanders through the brambles you have sown.

There is another road just round the bend,
Meandering through vales where blossoms blow!
That road just rolls on, to a joyful end,
Strewn with the wholesome crops of seeds you sow.

Oh, yes! – Two sudden roads branch off ahead:
One will be brightened by both sun and moon!
The other's just a path, where heart-aches tread
In so much gloom ... a spark of light's a boon....

You may be burdened on the road you choose,
But you, alone – In Truth! – can make the choice.
The future is your own ... to win ... or lose....
Yet you should listen to that loving voice,

Which urges you to choose the better way,
That you might journey on, complete and proud;
Bypassing all the exits to decay,
Amid the vulgar virtues of the crowd....

The vulgar virtues of the crowd, you know,
Should not prevail ... unless you favor strife!
You choose the road, bypassing all the woe,
That you may journey through a happy life.

3 Poems by Felix Ramon Valencia

The Pruned Skin Fingers

© 2014

In Queen Mary's Dollhouse, I have to sneak out a few.

I slip the tiny, silver, kisses out in my deep black pockets.

I have to hunt for them in the gray-darkened light. I let my fingers and begin to trace the edges of dusted fragmented perfume bottles. In the cabinet with the bottles and bags.

there are only two bandages and too many things to conceal

in the shower the tiles blend together a crashing tide of waves that turn, to a murky goodbye Norma Jean blue.

It pours over me. It drips and drizzles over my hunched, whale, back bone arc

It begins to pour over me a warm, golden and white light that cost extra in the back pages of print and black ink.

Two rotten, shaped plums, in the shape of a saggy heart. Nested like a pair of holding hands between my legs.

I've left brain cells on the tiles under the white-goo-shampoo. Scattered and rough like thin, pine needles.

The rose pink soap slices on my legs. It slips its smooth lips on my tired brown beaten skin.



The poet writes: "My name is Felix Ramon Valencia. I was born in Tucson and have lived in Tucson all my life. I am currently a student at the University of Arizona. I am studying Gender & Women's Studies, Creative Writing, and Education. This is the first time that I have submitted any of my writing for publication. Contact me at felixv@email.arizona.edu."

The Bathers

© 2014

The sun is out and the clouds are gone the blue is melting in the sky.

Sunday on the mall I see the bathers in the light.

Perched like mermaids on their cloth rocks, spread out like the skins of deed deer.
They look awfully bored to me

yawning trying to keep their Bermuda tans they seemed bored as hell.

Their plastic sunglasses, beach towels and nearly naked bodies burning in the sphere of
the atomic-bomb white sun. The bathers spread out on the lawn.

That the groundskeepers with their dark, hard, leather-skin roll out and water from July
to August.

The lawn that they mow and trim that stains their clothes and pains their knees.

The bathers lay on their stomachs. As the sword-needle tips of the blades dip into their
pink and white flesh. For a moment they lay still and don't move.

White corpses in the sun

they are like the bodies of dead immigrants in the desert.

I mistake the bather's skin for sandwich ham.

Marble-white and swirling pinks that change color like a dollar store mood ring. Soft
pinks, light yellows, bronze and Dixie Cup red.

The bathers in the light don't sparkle or move

they burn in the light.

February 1936

© 2014

July 17th, when I was 19 I had my portrait taken by an Italian photographer. Paolo Pellegrin a pale, Italian, with horned rimmed glasses and curly brown hair. He had been shot once in Palestine. He talked about Pompeii and was obsessed with guns.

He photographed only in black and white. He carried his camera in a spotless nylon bag. His fingers slowly sitting on the shutter. Walking around with his hands in the air, his eye glasses magnifying the range filling up the vacant spaces.

The fragmented faces crept into his frame. The white and black silhouettes of shadows that peaked out of hijabs and around crowded street corners. In South Darfur a crippled child, blood stains on a bed where a mother and child were assassinated.

He photographed me like his tidal wave corpses and prostitute AIDS patients.

He took my portrait in the shadows of a cactus and a tree as I stretched out my fingers letting the desert dryness lick through them. While the cold mountain winds grasped my shoulders and held me still.

Time to be tamed for Paolo.

I smiled my Romanov smile. I waited in the desert next to the cactus and the tree. As he stalked around me, his hand slipping over me. Holding my chin in his pink, silk hands, turning my body to face his lens.

I was his destitute pea picker his Florence Owens Thompson. His February 1936. My portrait was made into postcards and sold to Hipsters and gay men in San Francisco. I heard that someone famous and important bought the original print of me.

Everyone strives to be famous, everyone wants to be recognized.

To have their names on the stained lips of strangers. Simply a motionless face that stares back at you.

Birding Without Fear

By Cathy Rosenberg

© 2014

We were lost. As we reached the place where we expected the path to turn back, it wasn't clear which way to go. After we had gone down several trails without a clear way back to the car, Emmett said, "It's a short way back. Why can't we find our way out?"

It was unusually hot for February in Southern Arizona, 90-plus degrees, and we didn't have any water. After starting down yet another trail, we discovered why so many paths weaved through the trees. We found ourselves in a makeshift camp. Empty water jugs, discarded clothing, tin cans, backpacks and human feces were scattered all around us. People who were crossing the border illegally stopped here. Emmett and I were on a leisurely bird watching adventure and didn't expect to get into this predicament.

Arizona is a bird watcher's mecca. Up to 500 species of birds live here year round or migrate to the area for the summer. I live in Tucson, where in many parks I see different, sometimes unusual, birds, such as pyrrhuloxia and phoeniceus. In February, my brother-in-law, Emmett, comes to visit, and we spend the month birding.

Each year we ratchet up our goal of how many species of birds we see. A few years ago, we started going to Patagonia Lake State Park, a popular campground surrounding a 250-acre lake, 18 miles north of the Mexican border.

We never worried about safety when we were birding, either in Tucson or Patagonia, where on one occasion we thought we saw someone who had probably just crossed the border. Emmett and I briefly exchanged ideas about immigration. I'm opposed to Arizona Senate Bill 1070, which allows law enforcement officers to check the immigration status of someone they suspect is an illegal alien, which I believe is racial profiling. Since human migration is a natural process and has occurred

since the beginning of human history, it makes sense to accept the immigration of people escaping religious or political persecution, war or impoverished conditions. Emmett wasn't as engaged in the topic, so we began looking for our next bird.

Last February, we set our sights on birding in Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge, an 117,464-acre park that rests on the U.S./Mexico border. That's where we got lost.

When we first arrived at the trailhead, I noticed many empty water containers strewn on the ground, but didn't think too much about it. Since it was a short walk, we brought our binoculars, but not any water. It was quiet, no birdcalls.

I had my cell phone, but wasn't able to get service. After going in circles for a couple of hours, I said, "I think we should split up. You stay here, and I'll climb to higher ground to get a phone connection." He agreed.

I reluctantly left Emmett and headed up a steep hillside. I didn't see anyone else as I climbed. When I reached the top I successfully connected to 911. Eventually, the Pima County Sheriff's Search and Rescue team and the U.S. Border Patrol found us. The sheriff lectured us on hiking without any water, and warned us about the danger in the area because of drug smuggling and human trafficking.

Emmett and I were both fine after a couple of bottles of Gatorade, and we were on our way back to Tucson when we spotted another species, a black-throated sparrow, not yet on our list.

After recovering from our ordeal, I again thought about my views on immigration. My opinion only became stronger. I had a taste of what people experience as they wander through the desert, not sure where they are going, at the mercy of human smugglers, and sometimes without adequate food or water. My

Continued on page 34

Cathy Rosenberg is a graduate student at the University of Arizona in the School of Journalism. Rosenberg focuses on the environment, natural history and politics. Contact the writer at rosenberg@email.arizona.edu.



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experience with Emmett was scary. I was so glad to see the Border Patrol officers as they cut through the brush to reach us, but for someone else, lost and in Buenos Aires illegally, the Border Patrol is not a welcome sight.

I still believe Arizona SB 1070 violates our human rights. I'm also in favor of creating a pathway to citizenship for the 11 million undocumented immigrants now in the U.S. Yes, we also need border security, but with improved immigration laws, people can migrate to the U.S. through safe, legal channels.

Emmett and I will continue our bird watching adventures without fear, looking for that bird we haven't yet seen. I hope someday people migrating to the U.S. can safely cross the border also free of fear.

The Stain

By Andrew J. Hogan

© 2014

“On certain days I forget why I’m here,” MobiCU said. “Yesterday we had only three customers. I barely sold 20 amp-years. The photovoltaic vehicle membrane is making us obsolete.”

“It’s not in your nature to forget, MobiCU,” Lulubelle said, opening up the packet of jalapeno salsa to put on the tofu-dog, already smothered with red onions and Indonesian relish, she had just purchased from the Mobile Monitor Refueling Station in the westbound service lane just after the I-10/I-35 interchange. “I mean, once you’ve logged a work assignment, it’s in your memory, forever, barring some kind of power surge.”

“My memory is operating normally,” MobiCU said. “I just do not have much sense of purpose anymore. Who really needs us, LuBe?”

Lulubelle dripped some of the salsa on her whitish uniform. “Damn, another stain.”

“Who cares if your uniform is stained? Our customers only see your face through the video feed from the charging ports. I will photo-shop the stain out of the feed. You could be naked, and they would never know.”

“You’re not showing me naked to the customers, are you? Putting my face of some porn star’s body just to sell more juice?” Lulubelle said.

“Do you think I would do something like that?” MobiCU said.

“Sure. You don’t have a morality app. Maybe some of those lonely transport monitors would buy more juice given a free peepshow.”

“It is true I do not have a morality program, but I do have a legal risk avoidance protocol that prohibits me from distributing a copyrighted pornographic image without paying a licensing fee; for that I would need level III management approval,”

MobiCU said.

“What about my face? Don’t you need my permission to distribute my face to customers?”

“No, you signed away those rights in your employment contract,” MobiCU said. “Didn’t you have your legal assistant review the contract before you signed?”

“No, I kind of ran out of money after I lost my last job, so I let the service contract expire in order to pay the rent.”

“That is unfortunate, because facial analyses of male transport monitor customers show some signs of arousal when your image is displayed on the video monitor,” MobiCU said.

“Just my face?”

“Yes, when you have had to leave the cab to do a manual connection with a customer vehicle, facial analysis shows only minimal customer arousal. However, the sample size is too small for a reliable marketing assessment.”

“What are you saying?” Lulubelle said.

“That we should pay the fee for the porn star body to put under your head.”

“Oh, I knew you weren’t my friend.”

The Mobile Charging Unit’s control panel flickered. A text box opened displaying the initiation of a stored subroutine.

“There is a mobile bar twenty kilometers ahead of us,” MobiCU said. “Perhaps you would like to dock with it and get a drink.”

“I can’t drink and drive.”

“I’m driving.”

“But I’m the monitor.”

“Your contract stipulates your blood alcohol limit should be less than 0.08%. I can monitor you with the breathalyzer,” MobiCU said.

Continued on page 36



Andrew Hogan received his doctorate in development studies from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Before retirement, he was a faculty member at the State University of New York at Stony Brook, the University of Michigan and Michigan State University, where he taught medical ethics, health policy and the social organization of medicine in the College of Human Medicine. Dr. Hogan published more than five-dozen professional articles on health services research and health policy. He has published thirteen works of fiction in the OASIS Journal, Hobo Pancakes, Twisted Dreams, Long Story Short, The Lorelei Signal, ThickJam, The Copperfield Review, and Sandscript.

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“There’s a breathalyzer in my cab?”

“In the microphone.”

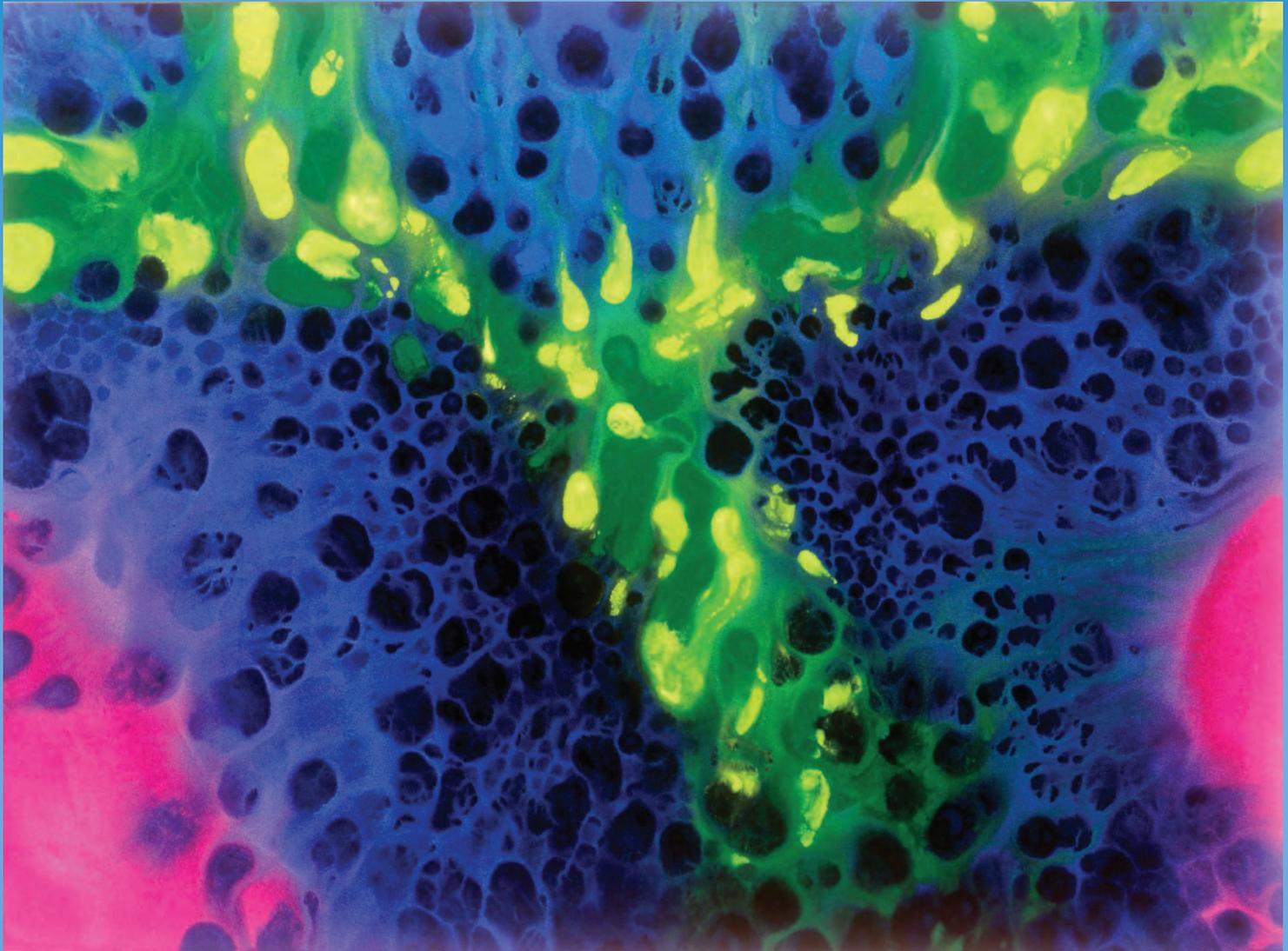
“Let me out. Now!” Lulubelle tried to open the cab door, but it was locked.

“Wait. A vintage Volt just docked at port 5. You need to attach the UE-386 adaptor manually.”

“All right,” Lulubelle said. “Let’s hope he doesn’t get too aroused. Then I’m getting that drink, and to hell with your breathalyzer.”

Susan Canasi

Tempe Artist



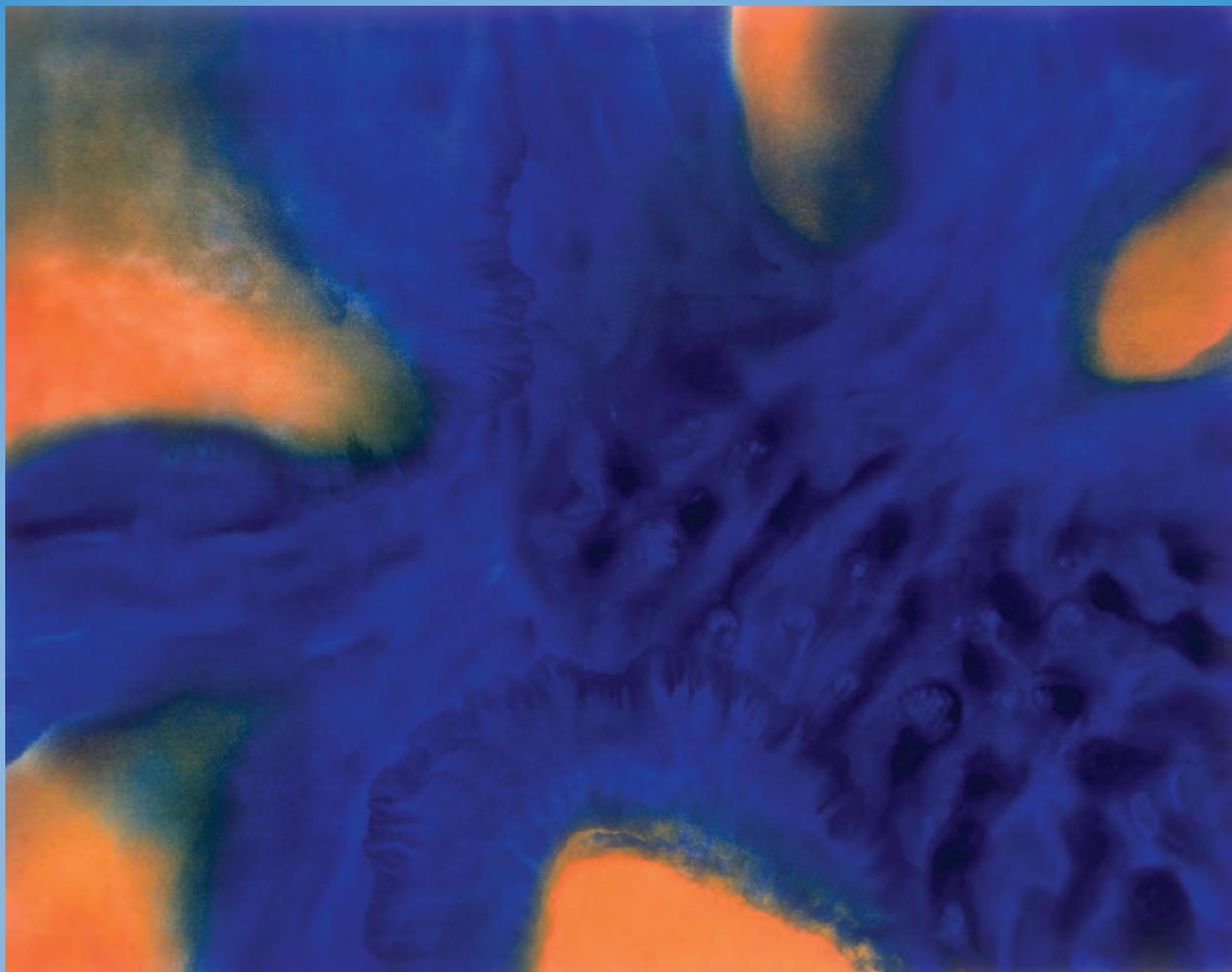
**“From The Ashes”
Acrylic on Canvas
36” x 48”**

Susan Canasi was born in Detroit, Michigan. There she pursued her studies at Wayne State University, receiving a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree. She then moved to Tempe, Arizona to continue her education and was awarded a Master’s of Fine Arts degree from Arizona State University. Moving to the desert was a pivotal point in developing Susan’s unique imagery. She immediately became enamored with the desert environment alive with stunning colors, never-ending blue skies and the unique assortment of desert foliage. As a career artist, Susan’s need to create something fresh, new and unique has driven her to pursue transforming her works into various media. Susan is an accomplished printmaker, painter, and sculptor. Ms. Canasi is a professional artist. In addition, she has presented workshops and seminars and has conducted classes in venues throughout the region. Susan Canasi is currently represented by the Silver Linings Gallery in Carefree, AZ and Ouray, Colorado, Corporate Art Consulting Services, www.ArtOnlineAZ.com, Tempe Center for the Arts – Art Shop and The Store at the Mesa Arts Center, Artist Cooperative Gallery. She has exhibited locally in numerous venues, including The Phoenix Art Museum, Tucson Museum of Art, Scottsdale Center for the Arts, Arizona Museum for Youth, and the Tempe Fine Arts Center. She has also exhibited nationally in New Mexico, Utah, New Jersey, Florida, Oklahoma, South Dakota, and Michigan. Susan has been commissioned to create art for numerous private collections. Contact the artist at suecanasi@cox.net and www.susancanasi.com.



Susan Canasi

Tempe Artist



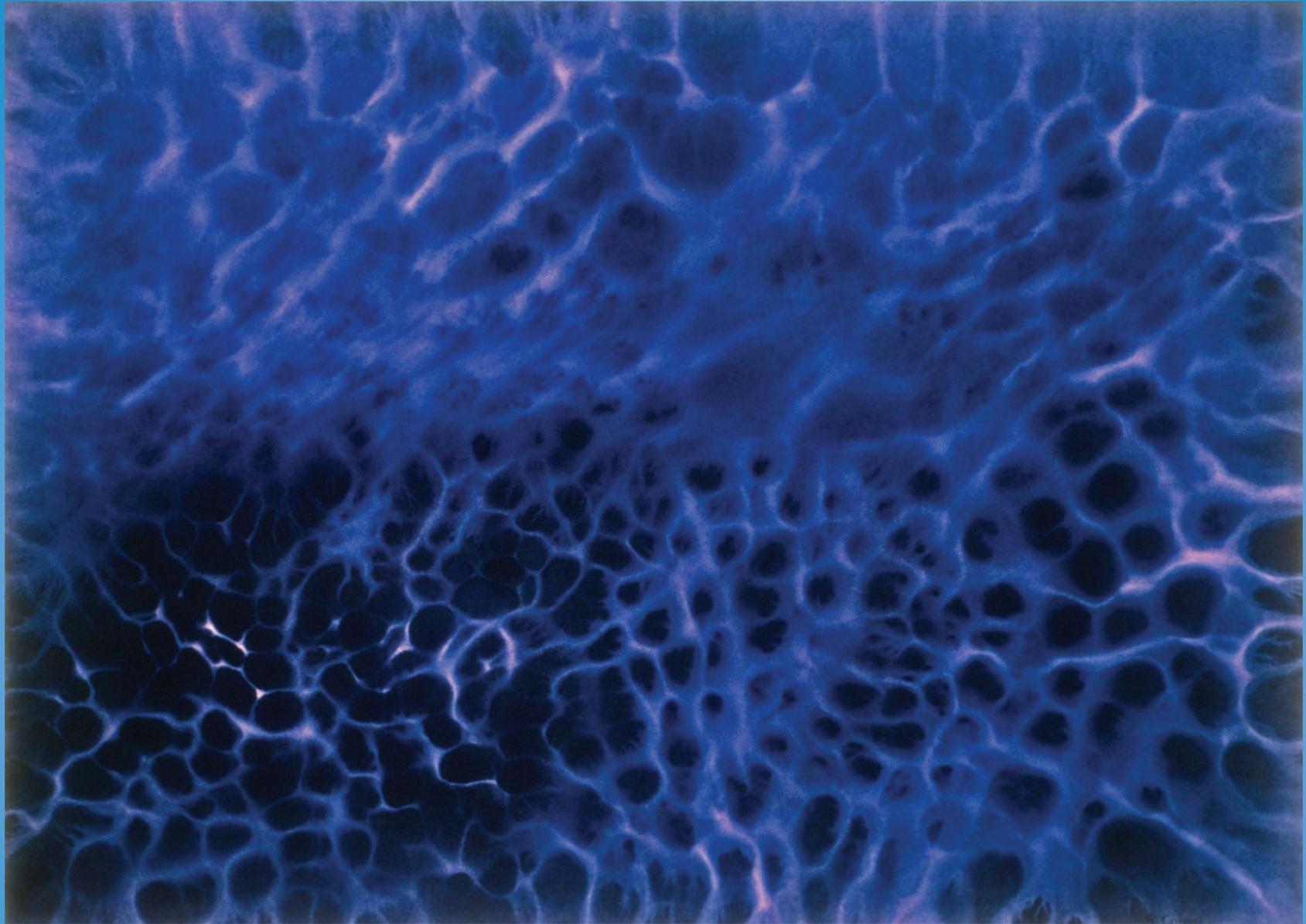
"The Gift"
Acrylic on canvas
52" x 66"

This series of paintings are artistic and colorful abstractions which are derived from distinct visual memories, imaginative invention and are all expressions of emotion. They capture frozen moments of time that flow directly onto wet canvas with a blend of spontaneity and control symbolic of our lives. Their vibrant expression in color combines the fluid motion of watercolor with the vivid power of the acrylic palette. The canvas is placed flat or on an incline to control the directional flow and motion of the paints as they explode across the canvas. Color blending is skillfully manipulated through pigment saturation, wetting and drying of the canvas, and the application of colorful acrylic paints with brush and fabrics of various textures. Paint is applied in multiple layers creating a rich color palette and an explosive sense of energy. Each painting is designed to inspire the viewer to look for their own interpretation as they view and experience these expressions of beauty, imagination and power.

- Susan Canasi

Susan Canasi

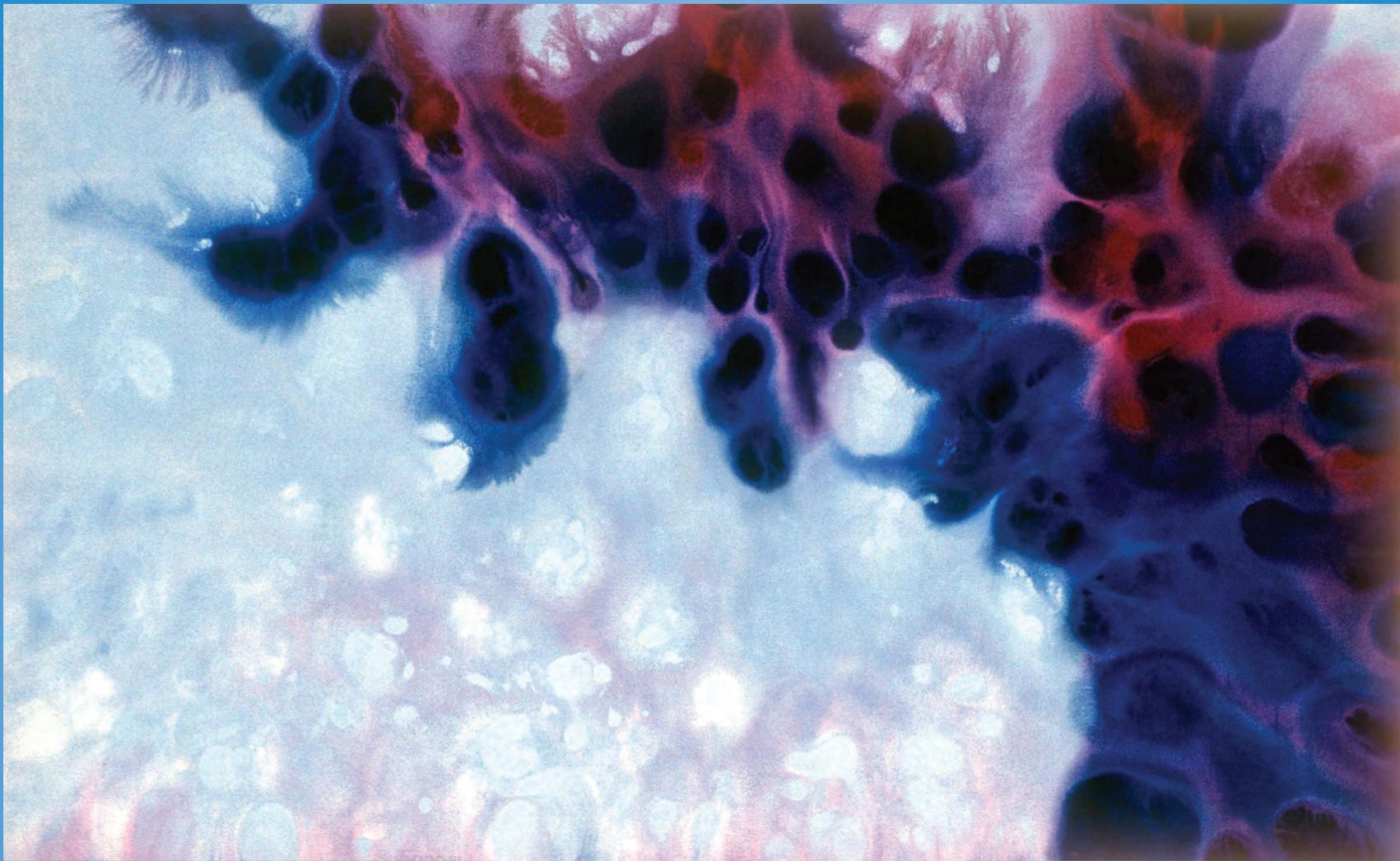
Tempe Artist



“New Magic”
Acrylic on canvas
52” x 72”

Susan Canasi

Tempe Artist



“Oceans and Dreams”
Acrylic on canvas
34” x 54”

Susan Canasi

Tempe Artist



"Iris"
Acrylic on canvas
32" x 54"

3 Poems by Marshawn Antinisha Cummings

Ocean Blue

© 2014
Ocean
Breeze, essential
Needing, breathing, living
Irony of being without
Pleasure

Believe me when I say...

© 2014
You're headstrong
Pave the way.
Vast intelligence required
Without a doubt, you have supplied it.
Now take the stairs to the top
Patience virtue has ceased to fail you.
Onward, conveying a futuristic vision
Determined to prevail.
By following your heart,
Not the crowd.
Displaying true leadership,
Bright lights and celebrations
You're the star,
Embrace it!

Mind Over Matter

© 2014
Hurricanes don't stop the rain
of thundering institutions

A precious mind, own your thoughts
Once trapped inside becomes persecution

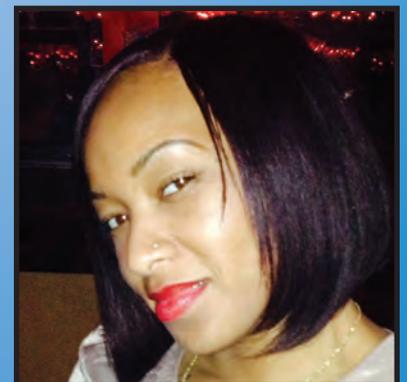
Stormy nights with bright lights
deep dark thoughts paid restitution

To end one's life as a cry for help
can't be a resolution

The world's pollution surrounds us daily

To change one heart would be success for me!

The poet writes: "My name is Marshawn Antinisha, from California; I love the beach and music. I've been inspired by poetry since I was a child. One of my favorite poets is Maya Angelou. Mottos to live by motivates me to be an inspiration to others." Contact the poet at rcpbreathe@gmail.com.



2 Poems by Andrew R. Jones

Describe the Pain

© 2014

Have you ever heard the beating of a beaten heart?

The one pierced with a diamond dart,
To penetrate the arctic cover, beaten by a lover, a parent causing a stutter,
A trauma from another, a lost brother or the drugs and brain clutter?

Has this heart been your own, can you describe the pain?
The stain left from shame? Who was to blame?
Our battles are different my friends, our tears the same.

We continue to push forward although it's unknown,
Pressing on to the beat of whips and stones.

But with each consecutive beat, our hearts took a beating and
With each passing breath we found difficulty breathing 'cus
We found no guarantee the air would be returning.

We found no guarantee our lives were worth nothing.
With each passing breath we found difficulty living
But with each consecutive beat our hearts stopped screaming

Pressing on to the beat of kindness and faith
We continue to overcome, rebuking the hate

Our battles are different my friends, our Savior the same.
The one who overcame, wiped clean our shame.
Has this heart been your own, does he dwell in your domain?

Three denials from your brother, a helpless loving mother, spit and whips from the others.
To penetrate the gates of Hell, save the lost and return to tell.
The one pierced with iron, striped and hung, soon admired.

Have you ever heard the beating of a heart's desire?

Andrew R. Jones is a Marine Corps combat veteran enduring the struggles of Post-Traumatic Stress and a mild Traumatic Brain Injury suffered from a blast in the Battle of Baghdad 2003. He utilizes writing as a therapeutic tool and hopes to find peace within his heart and prays for the ability to motivate others to heal as well. He is published in *Outrageous Fortune*, *Canyon Voices*, *Veterans Writing Project*, *International War Veterans Poetry Archives* and several other magazines and journals. He released an anthology in the summer of 2013 titled, "Healing the Warrior Heart," focused on the struggles of post-war life. He currently attends Glendale Community College and plans to transfer to Arizona State University to pursue a Master's Degree in Creative Writing. Andrew resides in Phoenix with his fiancée and two sons and can be contacted at Andrew@HealingtheWarriorHeart.org.



Rage

© 2014

Rage sits quiet in the dark
Awaiting its moment
To unload.

Like a 12 gauge double barrel Mossberg
Filled with buckshot.
Ready to unleash an explosion
Of destruction.

Waiting for the trigger pull-
The rage to be let loose, onto helpless
Unexpected victims.

Irreparable damage
Bandaged by a heartfelt-
“I’m sorry.”

A Poem by Jill Pierce

Two Goodbyes

© 2014

This is how you say goodbye.

Trust she'll tell you it's time.
You take her at her word.
She trusts you'll end her pain.
You wish you could end yours.
You remember the day you met.
She was only seven weeks old.
A fawn Boxer stole your heart.
She looked into your smiling eyes.
You knew you'd found the one.
Ten years went by too quickly.
Memories float like bubbles inside you.
She is the one always there.
Sometimes she is the only one.
You have one week left together.
You visit your old stomping grounds.
The river path is the same.
You ran for miles together there.
She drags her back legs now.
You scan photos into your computer.
You look at her brown coat.
Her flashy white markings are striking.
You give her bacon for breakfast.
She gets four Milkbones not two.
You measure time until the appointment.
Time ticks by much too quickly.
Her final day is upon you.
You sit on the sofa together.
She's your once-in-a-lifetime.

She penetrates you with trusting eyes.
Now you feel you've betrayed her.
She's still too full of life.
She's the one who understands you.
You never pace but you pace.
You pace and the vet arrives.
You stop and steel your shoulders.
It's for the best you think.
For her you let her go.
Selfishness has no place in this.
The vet inserts the deadly needle.
The sedative flows and she sleeps.
Vet says she can hear you.
The lethal concoction ends her pain.
You say it's okay to go.
Otherwise she'd surely resist leaving you.
She never willingly left your side.
Vet says her heart has stopped.
You fight back a visceral scream.
Your tears fall on her coat.
Your husband picks up her body.
He takes her away from you.
You watch her lifeless body leave.
You turn away from the sight.
Vet says it's the right thing.
You stare at the Christmas tree.
Nothing will ever be the same.

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Jill grew up in the Pacific Northwest and moved to Tucson in 1989. Jill's work has appeared in *Natural Awakenings Magazine* and *Sandscript*. Her first book of essays, "Four Square: Tales of Life," was published in July 2013. Jill lives in Tucson with her husband, John, and two Boxer dogs, Jack and Roxie. You can contact Jill at jillpierce82@yahoo.com.

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This is how a Boxer says goodbye.

I wanted to say it for months.
My pain is too much to take.
But for you I will endure it.
At seven weeks old I met you.
I climbed on your lap and smiled.
I knew I was where I belonged.
I cried my first night with you.
You held me close to your chest.
For ten years it was my place.
I listened to your heart beating strong.
If I was scared you saved me.
If I was silly you were happy.
When you were sad I stayed close.
When you cried I stayed even closer.
Ten human years are seventy Boxer years.
I wanted to have more than hundreds.
You finally saw through my brave face.
And I knew my end was near.
I was relieved my agony would end.
I knew your pain was only beginning.
Who would be there to comfort you?
It had been my job for years.
You didn't know I knew the plan.
Your sadness ran deeper than I'd seen.
You hid from me when you cried.
Ignoring my pain I went to you.
I didn't know why you cried harder.
Then I realized you would miss me.
You'd miss the one who knew you.
You and I had the real thing.
My vet came to our front door.
Funny, he had never been here before.
Then I knew it was my end.
I admired how you appeared so strong.
I lay on the sofa near you.
I felt a little poke that hurt.
Then I felt a little bit sleepy.
My nose was next to your leg.
Your scent always made me feel safe.
I heard you give me the permission.
Permission to leave you lonely and alone.
I felt a teardrop on my head.



Maggie

2 Poems by Michael Morgan

My Favorite Cat

© 2014

Oh Pooka,

Why must you jump on my lap when you know I'm watching TV?

I know, you insist, I must stroke your soft fur

As you press your paws against my stomach

Purring like a motorcycle over the TV volume

And you lick my hair, wet from the shower,

Perhaps tasting or smelling traces of shampoo which doesn't seem to bother you.

It bugs me, but it's so dang cute

How your whole world seems to revolve around me,

That's why I love you!

I Define Myself

© 2014

I'm much like a cat, cunning and devious, yet so adorable and innocent-looking.

I'm black because I say so – DON'T ARGUE! – Or it's *DISCRIMINATION!*

An M&M, like my initials, popular and beloved by all.

A noisy freeway, writing with varying speeds, but never done.

A cowboy hat, seen many adventures, always writing for more – no desire to rest.

I am not a rock. I can't stand to hold still!

The poet Jim Compton, who publishes under the pseudonym Michael Morgan, writes: "I am an Arizona native. I was born in 1993. I was home-schooled, got my GED and started classes at Glendale Community College when I was 16. My Mom is a professional writer and editor, and she has always encouraged my writing. I have always loved writing, and created a new Superhero character, 'Cat-Boy.' I have 4 published books, which are available on Amazon and Barnes and Noble.com. I am currently working on the 5th. The books are: 'Cat-Boy vs. The Fatal Game Glitch,' 'Cat-Boy vs. The Mafia Knights,' 'Cat-Boy vs. The Sword of Jimbo Colompton,' 'Cat-Boy vs. Tiger Man's Mutiny.' I was also a contributing author for 'The Santa Claus Project,' edited by Marsha and Matt Schmidt. My contribution was titled 'My Real Santa Claus.' My contact e-mail address is catboycreator@yahoo.com."



A Better Life

By Alie Vallon

© 2014

Jered was another part of the clutter in the living room. Glasses of water, water bottles, empty and thrown beyond the couch surrounded him. The television spoke loudly, but his ears did not hear it. The voices bounced further through the house, went beyond the dining room and the kitchen, but the dust caught around the cement of the hallways kept Bell from hearing the sounds in the study. The two called it the study, but the desk was only a table without shelves. There were no books. All the books were lost in a fire started by faulty wiring in the hallway just off the bedroom. Bell had cried over the loss of her childhood photos kept on the bookshelf which had been burned in the fire. Their study was not for books or studying, but for the virtual reality system Jered and Bell saved to buy. The single table was made from a light, bumpy white plastic, and was foldable, quietly held a small monitor with a low, pulsing grey light and a whirling computer case that heated the room. A limp dining stool stood in the corner, a shadow against the wall. An old mouse, once an off-white shade now grimy with the dirt of unwashed hands was near a bulky keyboard. The escape key had fallen off.

Bell was leaning over the table, still held in the platform by the harness around her middle. The sensors were still on, and the monitor was showing a small, low resolution view of the world she had been inside. Her ponytail was pulled out of place by the thick elastic straps keeping the mask on her face, and she had forgotten to hold her hair in place when taking it off. The monitor's glow was shining through the flyways and broken strands caught in the black bands of the goggles perched on her forehead. Bell knew she would need to clean the lenses before the next use. Not now, though. The oil from her forehead was bound to smear against the lenses, but Jered would not complain. When first they had gotten the device in the mail they

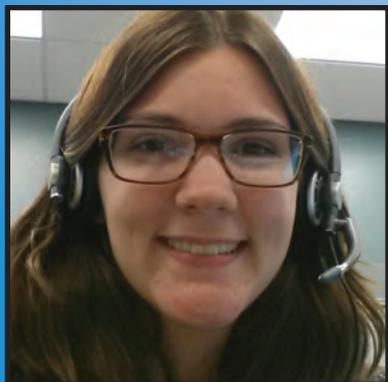
held it as their newborn. They first placed the goggles into their open palms and hid their eyes within the foam. The other would pull the straps over and around the head, holding it with cupped hands as to avoid smearing the lenses. They would always lay the straps gingerly so they did not fall into the mask itself when they put it face down on the table. The head mounted display, HMD, contained the lenses. These are the looking glass to other worlds, and it had cost them five hundred and sixty dollars, with an added shipping cost of thirty dollars, and nineteen days of checking the mail before the first piece of their Virtual Reality devices had arrived.

Bell laid the HMD down after shutting down the programs heating the room. The belts around her thin waist and legs unhooked easily, and she stepped from the platform. She laid these over the sides of the platform and the room looked abandoned under the faint sleeping glow of the computer. The platform was round, wide enough for a standing player. The floor recycled itself, holding the belt stationary while the legs walked; it was essentially a treadmill. They became the players in the game. It had cost them seven hundred and thirty five dollars and five months of waiting for the second piece of their Virtual Reality experience. It shined against bare walls and cement floors.

Jered watched beside Bell as she opened their account when their virtual reality tools had arrived. His left arm held him tightly to the pipe around the platform, holding himself as close to the edge of the uneven dining stool as he could. Jered wanted to be close to Bell. His right arm touched her shoulder. Together, Jered and Bell began to build life.

The voices from the television greeted Bell as she walked through the kitchen. She took a deep breath before she entered; let it out as she passed by the fridge. It was old, and it no longer

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Alie Vallon is a student at the University of Arizona studying English and Creative Writing. She enjoys reading, writing and playing video games in her spare time. You can contact her at: alie.vallon@yahoo.com.

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kept anything cold. The creaking freezer still spit out ice as the refrigerator compartment began to die, but Jered and Bell could not afford the cost to fix it or to buy a new one. It was festering. The food had been emptied save for condiments and two jugs of water, and nothing could be done about the smell. They had waited too long to clear the rotten food out. On occasion Jered would mention something as he walked by, but Bell would feel guilty that there was nothing more she could do, and he would feel the same. It was not brought up often. Past the fridge was the living room with the tv and Jered on the couch.

The fire that had burned the books in their study had not reached the living room. The stained carpet still stretched through. It was colder than the study, and Bell's back ached more as she knelt on the dingy carpet beside her sick husband. He shifted to see her and smiled.

"How are you feeling?" Bell asked. She caressed his hair, and his eyes were a clouded brown, but the deep sunken eyes made them seem amber in the light of the television. He nuzzled into her hand.

"Worse," his voice was quiet, "I don't even know if I've slept."

"Is there anything I can do?" Bell asked him.

"I need medicine. I can barely breathe – my throat hurt so badly," Jered said. His skin was pale, and Bell raised her hand to feel his forehead, but it was cold, sweaty. He did not have a fever. Clammy seemed worse to Bell, because at least a fever meant his body was still fighting.

"Of course, I'll be right back," Bell said and softly kissed his cold forehead, and pulled up the blankets around his tender arms. They had been strong. Jered had hauled the Virtual Reality platform in without needing a dolly when it had been delivered. He had squatted down under the hot sun to lift the heavy package of disassembled dreams into the house. His hair had begun to grey, but the muscles in his arms stood sturdy. She squinted towards the sun, and held her thin arm above her eyes. She had watched his body move past her as she held the screen door open for him.

The grocery store was clean and well lit. Bell smiled softly as she passed people before tilting her head down towards her buggy and strolling past them. Her red buggy rolled in front of her, and slowed as she checked the headings on the shelves before finding the pharmacy. It was in a green bottle, the vitamin he had asked for. Bell didn't know what it did, but her heart beat hard as the plastic cooled her palm. It was \$32, and she stood up.

Bell had twenty dollars in her wallet, and another \$4.14 on her bank card. The bottle went into her red buggy, sitting in the

plastic child seat. Nothing else was in her cart, and she went down to the soup aisle for broth. Jered could not keep any food in his body for very long before discharging it again. She loaded her buggy slowly with chicken broth containers, got carrots and celery. Bell wheeled her cart down the empty spice aisle, peeled the plastic from the outside of the medicine bottle with her nail. She knelt down, a frail, aged body checking a serving size, and she quickly plucked the cap from the bottle, dropping it on the thin aluminum shelf.

Bell shifted to a row of boxes just above where she had stashed the lid. She could now see the bottle, and she felt time turning against her, and in panic Bell pushed her nail through the foil. The thumbnail was too thin. It wasn't sharp enough to break the seal. Instead her right nail began to crack, and Bell grunted with urgency, clenching her back teeth. The nail splintered, she pulled it back, shoved her left thumb in. The nail scraped across the seal, she pushed harder. She could feel that the seal wanted to burst against her straining, shaking muscles. Switched thumbs again. Teeth gritted from her nail breaking against the bottle. Her carved metal keys lay useless in the cart. No time to grab them. The grimy nail stung Bell. And the plastic popped. A little mouth was ripped into the seal of the bottle, enough to fish the dry cotton out with a barred nail, and Bell poured a desperate stream of pills into her hand. She pushed a box to hide the brutality that the green bottle of vitamins had experienced.

Bell stood up. The capsules were dropped into the pocket of her dress.

There was no line at the counter, and her nametag said Diane. Brown hair was kept in a tight ponytail, pulling and smoothing the wrinkles around her eyes. Diane looked at Bell's dull grey eyes before running the chicken broth across the scanner.

"How are you doing today?" Diane asked, but the chicken broth did not beep as it went through. The layer of extra skin around her bicep moved with the chicken broth, back and forth across the black barcode readers.

Bell smiled without opening her thin lips, but her cheeks still managed to stretch enough to affect her eyes. And she said, "Oh, I'm okay. My husband can't seem to keep anything down. I figured, hopefully some soup broth and veggies would be okay."

"Oh no, the poor guy!" Diane said. Her purple chipped nails pried apart the thin plastic of the bag and put the carrots down, "You should try some of this electrolyte water. It's only a dollar."

Diane took a bottle of water from a cooler beside the aisle and handed it to Bell. The bottle was plastic, and Bell passed it back to add to the purchase without breaking eye contact. Diane took it with both hands, gingerly taking the bottle from Bell's

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thin arms. The total was \$12.14, and Bell handed the cashier's cracked, ringed hands a twenty dollar bill.

Bell slung both white plastic bags onto her left arm and her skin began to turn red. The change was dropped into the pocket of her dress. It chimed against the medicine on its way down.

She was in a garden, and the sun was stretching from the sky to touch Bell's long, white hair. Her hands had no gloves, and her knees were bent and perfectly balanced. The small of her back did not ache as she bent over the bright green flowers she and Jered had grown. It was a field, more than a garden, twenty rows long with columns of seven. Bell continued to harvest the herbs, replace with a seed, and water the soil until she was unable to grasp the leaves of the plant. Her inventory was full. The game would allow no more items into her possession unless she was able to carry it. With a flick of her finger, Bell had logged out. Her frail hands removed the HMD, and fallen gray strands came with the headbands of the device. Bell saw the hair, but ignored them and put the goggles down. The monitor glowed in pixelated blues and greens and as Bell left, the world enveloped her in its luminous colors. The hallway behind her was bright, but Bell continued to the living room.

Jered was on his back. A flattened comforter lay curled around him, and the elastic strands of his thin boxers were loose on his hips. The electrolyte water was gone, and the bottle became the living room. Bell released a deep breath as she sat beside her husband on the couch. His eyes did not open, and his hand stroked her back. She did not hear his whisper for her, but she curled her body around him on the couch.

"I'm sorry they didn't work," Bell's eyes were wet and closed. Jered felt the tears against his shoulder and he tensed around her. The muscles in his arms could no longer hug her, but only hold her small frame. Jered cradled her, holding her flat against his palms, one hand touching the base of her neck.

"Oh, my sweet girl," he said. Jered's lips were never thin, but they had begun to shrivel into themselves. He pressed them to the crown of Bell's skull. Her face was scrunched into his collarbone, and the nail on her thumb was red, broken, and throbbled.

"I want you to be okay," Bell said when the waves of hot tears had gone.

"Were the herbs doing well?" Jered asked her. His upper body began to convulse with his coughs. The fire and fungus and dust of the house glued his lungs. They tore through his throat, and he twisted his head away from his wife. Bell saw the flecks of green and red, phlegm and blood thrown from his body and onto his arm and the worn, cushionless couch beyond.

"Yeah, we can get almost all of them now on one trip. And we're getting really close to the quest. Then we can get the wings we want," Bell said.

"Flying will be wonderful," Jered said. The brown eyes were looking away from the water bottles and greasy couch and bowls of partially eaten soup. He did not see the hole in Bell's dress near her collar. The eyes were looking into blue sky and he was becoming a cloud. The blue of the sky once were her eyes. He was holding Bell with him as he went above the world, her soft, auburn hair floating, expanding around her red, painted lips.

Bell heard his ragged breath whistle through his raw, ravaged throat. She held herself to him, silent and her muscles tensed. It was late, and she wanted to be with him when it had finally happened. They did not have \$134.12 to pay the electric bill last Thursday, and she had waited seven more days past the due date. Her grey eyes stayed closed as she heard the click of the television being taken back. Bell clutched to Jered as his body lurched forward with a retching cough, but he did not wake. She did not see the blood now sprayed against his pale skin.

Their seeds will be grown into harvestable herbs in five and a half more hours.

A Creative Cycle

By Alie Vallon

© 2014

“What does it feel like to exist?”
“You should know.”
I lay on the couch, watch his fingers press buttons, controlling a character in a world born from a mind. My hand is rubbing his shoulder absently.

“What makes us different from them,” I say.

His character is being attacked. A bunny with a ridiculous hat jumps straight through the animated figure. Red numbers flash above the hero's head. My boyfriend's blonde hair is soft, his neck warm, and he ignores my questions for the immediacy of the game. It is a moment of adrenaline between the bunny and he that I cannot interfere with. I am observing, seeing the physical glide of his strong hands over the plastic controller, hearing the effects of a metal clink as he strikes the enemy. I see the glow of a potion over his character and the battle is over. Brandon now speaks.

“It depends who you're referring to.” He says to me, and he is drawn into another structured menu of battle options, hoping for the first attack.

“Anyone, anything. How do I know that what I feel is true, that it isn't just some prescribed meaning to some arbitrary existence? How do I know this is real?”

Brandon turns his head, releasing himself from the story of the game and engaging into the mundane. His lips curl down in anticipation of a smile, a precursor that brings his amusement to the forefront and includes me in the moment. I fear to speak, to end the experience with unfitting words, so vulgar, so unlike the beautiful thoughts that flow so wonderfully. The words are only expressions, given power by thoughts of what words once sought to emulate.

His laugh reaches for me and he shakes his head with a delightful maturity, “Oh Erin, you silly girl.”

“I'm not silly, I'm just-,” I say, letting his outreached hand pull me to my feet. I fall against his chest and let him hold us together, “-disenchanted”

“How is your painting going?” His lips rest on the top of my head. His breath is warm.

The canvas is not blank. There are washes of color, lines, dabs, shapes of mountains and fields under clouded, winged skies. I am staring at the paint, but nothing else. I can't explain the unreal scene as beautiful or creative, just as a poor representation of what being free would feel like. I want to feel the glistening sun wandering past a cool breeze to reach my skin.

“I hate painting,” I say to his chest, mumbling the words.

His hands are now on my shoulders, breaking us apart. Our eyes meet. The creases around his mouth are concerned for me, and I understand but I stare instead at the unfinished painting. It stares back. His hands delicately pull my face up, “You love painting.”

I see the painting, imagine the untouched brilliance waiting to be shown, feel the enormity of expression, but it can't be translated into this world without stripping it of its magic. With each stroke of a brush, more is being ripped out, drained away. It is being transmuted into a meaningless scene. I am not an artist, and art is not expression, it is destruction and I am a destroyer. My magic is being thrown away, leaking from thoughts of destiny as a child that led me to pursue my dreams.

I shake my head at Brandon. He stands and leaves, the music from his game filling me with violins and pianos and the legacy of a main character's plight. I stare into my painting, past the image. I feel nothing. It is a marred creation, once prescribed beauty by eyes in admiration. I lower myself to the level of the easel, sit on a barstool and we face off. I see the imperfections, the outlines that stray, colors too blended, not blended enough; it is fundamentally and expectedly ordinary. It taunts me.

I hear the A/C kick on, hear the heels of Brandon's shoes click over the polished tile. He comes to me. I feel him behind me, waiting. I give him nothing. He brings me a kiss and my brushes, and a warm touch. He understands my distance, and keeps close. His hands brush my hair, tugging at the ends, and he kneels beside me.

“I've got to leave soon, do you need anything,” he asks me, his voice soft, nurturing, genuine. I am his flower, blowing in the breeze of his concrete existence. I lay my head on his shoulder, but he stands and leaves me again. Slowly he clears the table beside the easel he bought for me. His hands are replacing the coffee mugs with paints and a cold lemonade. I smile as his hands tie a smock around my body, touching the skin on his hands and forearms. He finishes, starts to walk away, but I wrap my arms around his middle, laying my ear against his stomach.

His arms hold me. The painting is arbitrary and only his warmth exists. I fear saying a word that would only break the perfection of the unnamed, and I say nothing, because love is an expression not profound enough to capture the growth of our relationship. I can only hold him so tight. He holds me tighter, but neither the physical nor the unspoken can contain enough admiration, appreciation, dedication, dazzlement. His perfection

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can't be real, and if I prescribe words that are beneath these feelings, we will fall into the ordinary and the magic will be broken.

"I don't want you to go," I say. I can feel his lips smiling against the top of my head.

"Me neither," but he leaves anyway. He works as an engineer, doing things I see no enjoyment in, but he didn't enter the field for enjoyment. It was a means for a salary, caused by a disparity between what he felt he was worth and the poverty he had grown up with. He works for stability, which he has now achieved. A house, a car, the possessions of the financially stable. His wealth was achieved in his early years, and he remained unmarried, unwittingly attracted to the beautiful faces that only veiled their lusts for assets. He believes in me and my art. He supports my call to glory, and has been the saving grace for a woman too caught up in the future to achieve.

Brandon Wash was engaged once, to a woman both beautiful and compliant to whom he committed six years of his life. Her eyes, he told me, contained no adventure. He saw no will beyond the known and practiced. She held no aspiration to succeed, but she was confident, and gorgeous. Brandon was her prince, and he gave her the means to live beyond her own abilities. She submitted to him without a thought beyond his means. He told me it was dormancy; it was living without experiencing, without learning or growing and he needed more. He awoke from his hibernation with fervor. It was the routine of a life, first the career, then the wife, children, family, retirement, death. But he wanted more. He wanted enjoyment, wanted growth.. He needed to believe in life again, he told me.

His wisdom held him above his contemporaries. The status of his position and possessions stood him upon a pedestal. Those he kept for company were distanced by self-inflicted feelings of inferiority. He commanded attention with an obvious confidence, and when first I heard him speak, I wanted only to listen. It was how others felt as well. He ruled with slow articulations, with a quiet power that demanded respect, but it was to me so obviously a ploy for attention that I felt only disgust for the empty minds that listened to him. I wanted to find him egotistical and shallow. I refused to join the circle of his admirers. I avoided his eyes in discussions. I believed he would be nothing more than an arrogant man chasing curves. By a social contract of politeness, he trapped me into conversation. He spoke with me of art history, commenting that my paintings hung in the gallery felt inspired by the shadows of Baroque, and I smiled. It was a smile that had not formed of my own will, but one he had given to me with his understanding of my art. We talked of inspirations and emulations and of the frustrations with finding precision in the vague things we as

humans feel. He appreciated my perspective as an artist, and I appreciated his perspective of a worldly man. I began to show him my paintings. It gave to me such excitement that another could appreciate and truly see what I had felt compelled to capture in my paintings. I fed from his energy, growing with productivity and skill.

I began to bring paintings that I had been unable to finish to him. We would think together, searching for the purest emotion before the feeling had faded away. Together we refined. We sat upon the barstools over polished marble in his parlor and I was not intimidated by the lavish cushions under my cutoff shorts. He could see a mystery to my character that he found too meaningful to be left unknown.

Brandon Wash stood beneath the setting sun as I held my canvas lovingly, with only a desire of creation in my heart. He looked into my eyes and asked if he could watch me paint.

"None of my things are here," I said. The thought of being observed while I unleash my inner expressions onto a canvas made me fear that I would not create anything, and I wanted to avoid being seen in my moment of vulnerability.

He smiled with a level of soft understanding that calmed me, and he said, "Bring them with you next time you need me."

I didn't forget his request as I gathered my worn brushes, plastic palette, rolled tubes of paint, and my canvas. Paints were smeared down my arms and legs, along the side of my hand, had spread to my face, shoulders, hair, arms, stomach. I had been painting furiously, driven by a sudden burst of creativity, but the creation was not as I imagined it. I knelt nude on the concrete floor of my apartment, and as I wiped the paint on the brush across my thigh to clean the bristles for the next color, I knew there was no color that would fix the misrepresentation. I needed to see Brandon Wash, and I had no time to make myself presentable. In the chaos, I threw on a dress and covered his doorbell in blue paint until he opened his door for me.

"I need to be somewhere you won't mind me getting all painty, I'm covered," I said to him, keeping my distance from his walls and furniture, as he led me down a hallway to the study. He spoke to me as I painted, hunched over my canvas on the tile floor. Paint was molding to my imagination, breaking the limitations of speech and words. I was bound only by a satisfaction. Brandon became a soft breeze to ease the restraints of my communications. The paintings became wise, mature, and I blossomed into precision.

The more I painted, the less I left Brandon's house. I enjoyed the freedom of his presence, felt able to achieve anything. I was comfortable, and my art was commanding me to create. Three months after Brandon and I had first spoke, I closed the lease

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on my apartment.

His home is now mine. I stare out the window beyond the easel Brandon gifted me. The painting is still incomplete, but Brandon is coming home from work. I wish perhaps the excitement of anticipation will inspire me. But his boots are clicking on the flooring behind me. Time is elastic, curving to my whim with the freedom of art, but now I can't express as truly as I had. The unfinished work is telling me so. I am flouted with frustration of the orchestrated, and I hurt at the possibility that my creativity is evaporating away. The adrenaline of my precise expression may only exist as a definite. Perhaps I have exhausted my potential of imagination.

I am overwhelmed by the touch of his hand upon my shoulder; it shocks me from the despair. I am still happy, but unsatisfied with the inaccuracies between what I feel and what I can say. I am still happy.

"I hate painting," I say to him.

He smiles against my neck, and the warmth for him sweeps away the depressive frustrations. It sweeps the outrage with the world, his voice calming me into reason and thought. My days are not full of worries and depression. I no longer am questioning the reason for my existence, or wondering of death. I forget to think of untimely endings or legacies. My days are long. Enjoyment fills my actions and thoughts with the present brilliance that consumes me. Every hour is one to be embraced with appreciation.

"You love painting," he says.

"I don't know," I say, "I just don't know what to paint anymore."

"And why not?" Brandon asks me. He is genuinely concerned for me.

I sit down on the floor and say, "Because everything's too happy. Too perfect, it feels like nothing else exists but this, like we're in some kind of horrible bubble. Maybe I can't paint because I feel this happy. I'm trying to paint it, the happiness, but I can't even imagine anything more beautiful than my life just as it is now. And there's nothing but that happiness to paint

anymore."

Brandon kneels in front of me, "You're too happy then?" He shakes his head and smiles, but it isn't about just one positive feeling. Happiness is just like depression in its relentless consumption of every emotion outside of itself. I feel trapped by it, held down, stifled by it. I will only lose more magic, and become more ordinary.

I can't talk without crying now, frustrated by my inability to express myself, being limited by the inefficiency of words and all I want is for this emotion to be released from me.

I take a big gulp of breath, and say "I just feel like nothing of value ever comes from things being easy, and you make life too easy for me. I won't have to experience any hardships and if I don't experience hardships then I won't ever really be inspired. What sort of artist was ever inspired by happiness? Maybe I've just reached the end of my ability to create. Maybe I've explored everything great I'm meant to accomplish in my life. Maybe it wasn't quite as great as I had imagined it to be. I've let down my medium, and now I will never inspire anyone."

He sits beside me, resting his head on mine. He cares for me. He says nothing.

I say, "And I was meant for so much fucking more than this. This doesn't feel like my life, it feels fragile. If I talk about it, if I pursue it, like I did with painting, then it will break apart and disappear. I don't want to reach the end, I don't want to resent this moment. I feel drained, like all my magic is drained. I'm just like a wisp of a memory that I'm going to forget if I try to think about. I can't create from this suspended reality, and I just-

"- don't want to end up settling like you did and wasting my potential," I say.

Brandon Wash says nothing to me as he leaves the room. His silence is a refusal of granting me the honor of seeing him hurt. A heavy adrenaline jolt and a quick heartbeat give me no remorse. A frustration, a hideous tension of emotions, is bursting. I reach for my paints. I am scooping paint, smearing over the forgotten work. I begin erasing the perfection.

We Felt Together

By Alie Vallon

© 2014

The openness constricts me. It bites at my anxiety and I run inside myself. I close my eyes; start counting each step I make. *One.* A deep breath. *Two.* It'll be okay. *Five.* I open my eyes. *Seven.* I'm moving forward. *Eight.* Another deep breath. *Nine.* I close my eyes. *Ten.* Open my eyes again. *Eleven.* I double my pace. *Fifteen.* I can't breathe. *Seventeen.* Everyone is glancing over at me. *Forty two.* I'm not counting steps or seconds now, but each gasp of my heart. *Sixty four.* It's twisting in my chest, winding and tightening my resolve, I need to escape. *Eighty nine.* I slam the car door closed to trap everything out. I lock myself in and the bad part is over.

Traffic is awful, but I watch the drivers smoke on their cigarettes and talk and laugh. My eyes are on the mirrors, because no one else's are. A red light at the next intersection, and I'm already off the gas. The white explorer speeds around me. I avoid his eyes as it happens. I won't see him turn and look at me, mocking me, rushing to something I'm not important enough to understand. None of the other cars speed up to attack my driving, he is the one ruining the traffic flow, not me, and he now looks silly at the red light with us surrounding him. We're a school of fish in a current, corralled by lights and pedestrians and potholes and I wouldn't be happy if I were in that red sedan. That cigarette smoke must be suffocating. The windows must not work, but the red paint isn't old, a pomegranate clear coated to shine, and the car is certainly newer than mine. It probably doesn't have little leaves that are being ground into the fabric under my sneakers. But at least my windows work.

The light changes.

I slide to the left lane and prepare to leave the red sedan with the passengers that like to breathe their smoke. The car wash is full. Chrome adorns a Mercedes that sits in the parking lot, a blonde sunburned boy is polishing the paint on a yellow Corvette while I drive through a pot hole and hit my breaks for the tailgate-less truck that decides to turn right as I'm midway through my left turn. I roll my eyes and wait, slowing down, hearing the steering column grinding for their turn as I sit in the intersection. I'm close now, and they're probably in more of hurry than I am. The final left turn, the final right turn, and my spot is open. The green car with the hipster bumper stickers of some trendy girl trying to be misunderstood is practically sideways again, but I already invested into the turn. The gold van on the other side will have to understand it as a reaction and forgive me. So close though, I hope they don't smack into me on their way out. I slide out of the door, watch the dew stick to my suede boots in the grass up to my apartment. I stop outside the door, stare at my keys, and wish no one is home. I'm nervous, it controls me, it shifts my thoughts, it breathes for me. I need to be alone. The

tears are biting at my eyes, emptying me from somewhere that I can't bear to feel any longer. I cannot understand this ache or this suffocation of the outside onto myself, and the uncertainty is painful, and I need to push myself to move forward. Slowly, silently I slip in the key. I try to suck back everything I can't control and move forward.

The door isn't even open yet, "Hey, welcome home."

My backpack is sliding down my arm, I throw my elbow at the front door and take four steps to the left, "Nn," and I kick my door shut.

I breathe now; the sea is calm.

Safety surrounds me. My dreamcatcher still ticks off the wood of the door, soft and supportive. Lavender beads hang down from the blue threads, feathers that never got to fly bringing in the rainbow. It waits for me and holds every wish safe.

Jennifer had made it for me in fifth grade. The tile floor made her dad's feet stick, the smack of him coming got louder as did our desperation. We had thrown a blanket over the craft project, slapped off the light and dove for the bed.

"It's twelve in the goddamn morning," but he whispered it, and we giggled when the door had closed.

I followed her shadow, and she was trying to be quiet, but kept tripping over the sheets we were throwing our supplies into. The dragging of her hand on the wall led the way, feeling for the sofa that we needed to go around. I held the back end of our bundled sticks and glue and beads shifting together and traced her out the back door. We both took long, slow steps. No shoes on a summer night felt free, but the way to her garage was paved with sheets of wood covered in rocks and dirt brought in by wet twelve year old feet running from the sun. Rocks against the wobbly wooden sheets poked and stabbed at us, but we bit our lips and tried not to let anything fall to wake her parents. The garage had a pair of once white couches, worn, bouncy, with blankets thrown about for us to hide from the roaring A/C during the hot Arizona days. A coffee table was pulled up, trapped us with our backs against the couch, and the cushions were taken off and given to the ground under us. We sat with beads in lines over the newspaper covered table. Our words were those from Simple Plan, but the lyrics feel straight out of our own hearts. It was life and we knew every weekend would always be ours to create and to discuss and to plan and to be. Friends were always, and art was together. Jennifer's hands weren't as delicate, she didn't have the same dexterity, but in our hearts we had the same need for greatness and artistry. We understood our souls would always be the same.

Jennifer is now in the navy, I think.

The room is hot with stuffy recycled air that sucks the water

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from my skin. My backpack threatens to pinch my fingers as I try and hang it on its hook before it finally gives up and lurches onto the plastic. It ought to know its place by now. I can only open the window halfway before it bangs to a stop, but the breeze still crawls over my face. I breathe it through the screen. It never fears the enclosure, probably enjoys the moment of claustrophobia inside my lungs, because it knows it will be free again. If only I were the wind-

I can hear her shuffling on the couch, hear the snap of her MacBook, and she is at my door, tapping for me, "Kylie, have a sec?"

I open the door for her, and retreat back to my desk, "Mhm."

She lies across my bed, and the lazy cornflower comforter crumples beneath her. Her hazel eyes are on me, and her eyelashes are flawless. She has pulled the porcelain ballerina from my dresser. I don't watch her eyes, but follow the gleam of her nails trace the edges of my music box.

"So, you probably aren't doing anything tonight," she sets the music box carefully on my dresser, but it's facing the wrong way, "and I don't really think you should sit here alone for another Friday night, so you should come with me."

The mirrors against my wall reflect us. I'm twirling the ring on my right hand, pulling it off, slipping it back on, trying to push back my fluttering heart, "I don't really go to parties, I mean, I won't really know anyone and-

"You'll know me. You can't really wear that though." Delia is already going through my clothes, our reflections marred by the open door holding my mirror. Her soft hands click the hangers together, skipping my black, grey, brown sections, pausing on the purples, "Kylie! What do you wear to meet up with guys?"

"I mean, I-" but I don't know what else to say. The bangs of my hair look dark and greasy from trying to smooth them down throughout the day, but my fingers are doing it again, pulling them tight across my forehead, and I hope I don't look how I feel. I can't want her perfect mahogany hair next to mine; even her hapless ponytail looks beautiful, winding around her face, framing her flawlessness, and my hair won't stay out of my eyes. The excitement is now fighting me, and imperfection sucks the energy, a black hole for everything I want to feel and be and my dreams aren't trapped in strings, but being thrown away, and I can't go with her.

Delia grabs my left hand, and I can't turn the aqua stone to the top of my finger where it belongs, but she can't feel how wrong it is. I try and tell her I can't go, that I won't even fit in her clothes, I won't fit in at a party, that they probably don't want me there anyway, that I can't handle the judgment, that I won't be able to breathe, and the whispers will all be about me and I can't think anymore, because I feel like I'm going to deflate and melt away into nothing-

But she takes me to her room, and I'm standing where she let my hand go. The bed isn't made, a bong sits next to makeup scattered around on her desk, and I sit beside it, embarrassed to

look too long at something I don't understand. The mess is free, Delia's things scattered wherever they wanted to be, unafraid to be displaced, courageous for enduring the chaos I will never be comfortable in. But there is no pressure to control any of it, and I can enjoy without being at its mercy. My ring slips back onto my finger.

"What size shoes do you wear?" Delia is shuffling through her stacked closet. Her back is to me. Her shirt floats, leaving a tint of blue against her peach skin with her bra a lacey accessory. She looks so thoughtless in her clothes, no consuming judgment or compulsive pulling of the fabric. I wonder what shoe size Delia wears. Dainty, feminine girls have small feet.

"Like a five or six," I said, "probably."

She swirled her head from me to her closet, something red over her right arm, something pale lilac over the left, and the red makes my heart fill and overwhelms me. It's the color I've always dreamed of, but never let myself believe in. The ruby hue can feel me, reaches into me and I want it. It is for me, has been waiting for this moment to show itself. I want to wear it, but it won't fit me right, and how I want it to look will never be how it will look. The hope drains, neutrality floats, and the lilac would look just fine.

"Put this on, it's too small for me," she says. A flash of red. It's silky and welcoming. My heart is beating and I let it. The dress is a cool breeze, above my knees, strapless and fitted, and zips up the side. It hugs me familiarly, holds my frantic heart, and embraces me. Delia's eyes are bright, "So, what do you think?"

"Um," my eyes are locked on my reflection; I turn from right to left, trying to see more of myself. I soak in myself, feel delicate and let my hands swirl at my sides as I turn, and I am beautiful, "I think it looks nice."

"So do we like, knock or just walk in," I ask her. I have no invitation that tells me what to expect, no flyer, no text message, have no idea if such a thing circulates for parties, but Delia is confident, and we are a pair as we step up to the house.

"I'm sure we'll find out," she says. A pair stands near the sidewalk outside the worn brick house, and I smile to them as we pass.

The music thumps as a collective heartbeat. It layers over the names I'm exchanging, but not the people I'm meeting. Delia lingers with a group in the living room, and I drag my fingers through my blonde waves on the outskirts. I listen and don't understand. The conversation is outside my world, I'm not in any economics classes, don't know the professor. The music is louder than the talk, and as they slowly get closer to yell louder, I drift away. I'm far enough from the wall to not be avoiding anyone. A girl has her boyfriend's arm draped over her. She's leaning into him, and they're laughing.

"Kylie, right?"

I turn to my left and smile without thinking, "Yeah, hi," but I can't remember his name. His hair is deep brown, straight, his short hair flung around messily.

"Jamie," he says, sticking his hand out. Our hands meet briefly. My plastic cup is empty, and I take a drink. Nothing comes out, but my ring is in place as my right hand falls from the lowered cup.

"Oh, yeah," I smile with him, "hey."

"Need a refill?" His voice is smooth, further lowering my worries, and his blue eyes listen to me.

"Um, yeah, I-" My eyes scan the water droplets on the bottom of the red plastic. He is thinking I have beer, or vodka, and it's water, and I'm not involved yet in the experience, was not yet comfortable enough to feel safe without my own judgment, want him to think I'm as open to experiencing as I wish I would be, "I only had water though." I smile, feel it sprouting from somewhere warm and natural.

He lets out a chuckle as he smiles, "We can fix that."

Bottles line the kitchen counter to my right. They're scattered around. I push until the glass clinks against the wall while Jamie is wrangling ice from the freezer. Seven bottles; I shuffle them to size, but girth and height don't always coincide, and it isn't right. Color is better, tallest to shortest, alternate brown and clear, spreading from the nearly empty uneven clear in the middle to the fullest brown at the edges. Labels are looking out onto the world straight and clear, standing together proudly. The freezer door is standing open, and my legs are cold from the air leaking out.

Jamie has both cups in his hand, "Which one can we take?"

I look around the bottle counter, moving easily from one bottle to the next. They flow beside themselves, not having to choose where to belong, and knowing that there will always be a home to go back to. It shouldn't be disrupted.

"Any of them, probably," but the music catches my voice.

He doesn't hear me. His eyes are gazing past me, flicking over the bottles. The two red cups are in my hands now, Jamie moves over to the counter, and I step away, swirling the cola around in opposite directions with each hand. Glass is chinking and my skin is crawling and the room seems smaller than it is. The lights are dim, walls dingy from the Tucson dirt that invades my life. Dishes and cups and napkins and the counters are cluttered and the bottles slide and the caps screw on and off. The sounds of the bottles shuffling and clinking hurt my imagination.

"Here," Jamie's hand is rough and warm. I trade him a shot glass for a red cup. A clear bottle of vodka is slung in his hand, the fingers on that same hand curled around a shot glass, and the alcohol dances as he walks. The bottles on the counter are label out, lined up, two clear in the middle, filled evenly, two brown on the right, two brown on the left, and I follow Jamie outside. The bottles are smiling as we go. We settle to the edge of the pool, my hand feels the cool water, the heat of the evening comforting. The moon smiles dimly from the sky.

Jennifer and I had our feet hanging from the side of her roof. Her sobbing was finally gentle, and I was waiting for her to speak. There were no more words left for me. The flip-flop on her foot swung in the night. A twitch of her ankle and the foam drops in with a thud of dust.

"Do you really think that about him," Jennifer was wiping her face with her hands.

I nodded. The streetlight dimmed and gave up, sucking the light from the ground. The moon was recovering from being new, but a glow from the window lit our sunburned shoulders. I could feel her wanting to trust me, but her heart felt only the desire to be loved and adored, and she didn't yet believe love could hurt. I lean back against the tiles, "I'm sorry, you know, I want to like him, but, I really do just think he's using you."

"He said he loved me," Jennifer's head sunk low, and I couldn't find the words to say I understand her, and that her hurt was my hurt, and I wanted her to be happy, but this wasn't happiness.

"If he loved you, why wouldn't he let you finish school and then go? Or why would he make you pick him over your friends. That's completely ridiculous," I knew my voice mimicked the irritation again, but I did nothing to mask it.

"He isn't ridiculous. I really do think he could get signed to a label if I were there to help him. And when he's famous and we're rich, I bet you won't even care that I quit school, and you can still be my bridesmaid and we'll live in a huge house in Washington together," Jennifer turns to me, and her eyes burn red from the tears and she needs me to believe with her.

"I really think you should finish, there's only a couple months left, or at least get your GED or something," the hurt in my chest pulsed in the anticipation of her world crashing down, "and like, don't let him talk to you that way. Someone that loves you shouldn't call you horrible things if they get mad at you. I still don't think he loves you, and if he does anything, I'm going to hurt him-"

"He won't, I promise," Jennifer laid down beside me, turning her head to show me her smile. The happiness was temporary, but to her it was everything she thought she wanted.

"I'll be here anyway," and I wanted her to feel my hatred for him, to destroy his menacing hold over her heart, but I swallowed and waited to watch her sink away.

Our feet are blue in the water, the circle of light warm against my feet, and the music is felt but doesn't consume. I have my back against the cool deck as he thinks with his hands. I slosh my feet back and forth in the water, and he uses my thigh to push himself off of. Jamie stands, paces, sits, lays back and looks to me, "Are you sure it isn't *Frankenstein*?"

I smile from everywhere and shake my head, "Very sure."

"Shit," he shifts his head to look at the sky, "One more, please."

“No more after this though.”

His smile is lopsided, a playful smirk that knows something no one else does, and it makes me smile to see him shake his head in defeat, “Yeah, okay.”

“Alright so,” I hold out my three fingers and think of my hints, “About an experiment gone wrong, written by a girl but with a guy’s perspective, and all three main characters have codenames, two of which the book was named after.”

“Fuck, *Lord of the Flies*? I don’t know, just pour,” he hands me the bottle of vodka, “What is it?”

I hand him the full shot glass, fill another and hand it to him as well, “*Oryx and Crake* by Margaret Atwood.”

“Why’s it your favorite?”

I look at him wince as he swallows the second mouthful, staring as his eyes look into mine and I’m able to breathe safely and freely, “Well, it’s one of those books that I can read through again and again and find something different. And I feel like Snowman would understand me.”

“Snowman?”

Jamie’s hand reaches for mine, and he pulls me to my feet. The sun is rising, but the music is still going, and our bottle is empty. I have a hand on his forearm through the house; he drops our bottle into the recycling bin and among the ruined order of the kitchen, only our bottle is where it should be.

“Yeah, he’s like, this guy who just got roped into some things by his friend and this girl he loved and he just has to deal with what he gets, and he isn’t exactly super happy or anything, but he just keeps going,” I say following him, “and you’d probably like it. I’ll lend you the book sometime, it’s good.”

“Sounds cool,” he says, leaning on the door of the cab as I slide in. My fingertips are numb, and his hand warm on my back. The blue in his gaze is calming me, he sees past me and I don’t understand what he’s seeing, but I’m smiling for us and that part of me that wants to feel again. Our smile dances through me, and its glow spares nothing as the cab drives away. I’m crying, letting out the perfection and happiness and it glides down my cheeks, but the smile feels too good to let go of, but being perfect leaves everything else below it to yearn and wish and want but not to obtain. The smile scares me. It bursts from everywhere at once, taking the place of the hurt and the nothing, and the driver has his seat against my knees, but wings melt too close to the sun, and I am afraid to fall.

Jennifer was standing above my dresser; I watched her. She was hazard, scraping through my drawer, a bruise screaming from the back of her thigh. Black hair was faded and torn with bleach and dye, tied low on her neck. I didn’t want to breathe, she was an animal, she twitched, noticed me. I was soaked in anguish, the hurt of the tears masked by my clenched jaw, and I hated her, “Get out.”

“Why are you so fucking crazy?” Her brown eyes are tinted in red, the makeup line visible on her neck, and she didn’t need the makeup. It made her a mask, and I didn’t know the person beneath the bruises. I sobbed against myself, chopping my gasps short, wanted to cry out the hurt, but was afraid to submit to the anguish.

“I-I-I’m not, I just-” but there were no words for the emptiness expanding around me, and I was ripping apart, “-you need help. And I’m just-”

“Why would you tell the fucking *police* about it? What did you think was going to happen?” She took a step towards me, and another and I didn’t cringe, but her voice crushed out the hurt and it was anger that I couldn’t hold in, a loss of understanding of everything we had ever been together, and I couldn’t breathe. It was a living dream, feeling the clutch of my lungs aching to breathe, the tint of black and white in my vision, and I couldn’t feel anything, but the nothing was overwhelming and I needed something to hold onto, but nothing was there.

“Because after months of being in your room while you cry over him, I’m not going to sit here and watch him hit you too,” and I was drained of everything, and didn’t feel.

“You’re a crazy fucking bitch. I love him, you just don’t understand. I don’t know why the *fuck* we were ever friends at all. You better pray they release him,” and she slammed the door, the walls shook, and I locked the door with shaking hands.

Slow breaths. I lurched to the dresser, slowly, methodically took each trinket out, one by one, until I saw the porcelain ballerina smiling at me peacefully, and listened to her dance. The inscription on the bottom was for my eighteenth birthday, carefully lettered by Jennifer, and I listened to the song that her mother had given to her before the car accident. It was the sound of her mother, she had told me, and the sound of unconditional love, she said, and she wanted me to have it.

Jamie and I sit in the spring sun, our backpacks behind us and our feet dangling above the canyon. Lizards dart around, slipping over the edge, sucking in the sunlight. He grabs my hand, prying me up to my feet, I close my eyes. We’re alone, surrounded by the world, cradled, swallowed, and the world watches. It doesn’t expect anything but for me to be. I breathe slowly, counting each exhale. *One*. I see the rock walls jutting around us. *Two*. Lizards run from the shade. *Three*. Jamie’s hand cradles mine, rough but delicate and familiar. *Four*. I see the bushes and cacti lurking along the path. *Five*. I open my eyes. *Six*. His blue eyes are glowing, and happiness is seeping from his smile. *Seven*. I want to be closer to him, want the sun protecting us from everybody else, but his hand is holding mine, anchoring me to the canyon, keeping me from floating away. *Eight*. Expectations are a fairy tale. *Nine*. The blue in his eyes is the sky, changing but never leaving.

Ten. The sun is holding me.

Lana May

Phoenix Artist



**“Aureole of Night”
Necklace
2011**

Lana May is a professional couturier, jewelry designer and highly sought after teacher. Lana May recalls admiring her grandmother's beaded bride's purse as a child in Uzbekistan. She received her first degree in mechanical engineering and a second degree in clothing and accessory design, then owned a clothing-design firm and began designing jewelry to wear with her evening wear. She now lives in Phoenix, Arizona, and teaches at her home studio, in the Phoenix area, all over the USA, Germany, Ukraine. She is the winner of contests of Bead&Button, CRYSTALLIZED™ - Swarovski Elements, Fire Mountain Gems and Beads, etc. Her bead works and patterns have been published in books, catalogs, and magazines in different countries for more than 50 times for the last 5 years. She wrote the book “Mixed Media Jewelry Techniques.” Visit Lana's Web site at www.lana-bead.info for more information.



Lana May

Phoenix Artist



**“Fairy-Land”
Set
2012**

Hello! And welcome to my gallery of handcrafted Art Bead Jewelry. My name is Lana May. I am a professional couturier. For years now, I have been designing fashionable clothing for women. While designing, I found that it was harder and harder to find art jewelry that would emphasize the female’s personality and make a woman unique and more attractive. So I became a keen bead-worker. In my designing, I use various colored Czech and Japanese, Swarovski, Gem beads to help bring out the beauty of the dress and the woman. Unfortunately, pictures of my bead works cannot give in full all my love and sincere affection I have put in all my art beading designing. If you would like to know more about the pieces or would like to make a purchase, or take beading classes, write me at my website, www.lana-bead.info.

- Lana May

Lana May

Phoenix Artist



**"Sand Dunes"
Set
2013**

Lana May

Phoenix Artist



“Bead Symphony”
2013
Set

Lana May

Phoenix Artist



"Sultry Day"
Set
2013

Lana May

Phoenix Artist



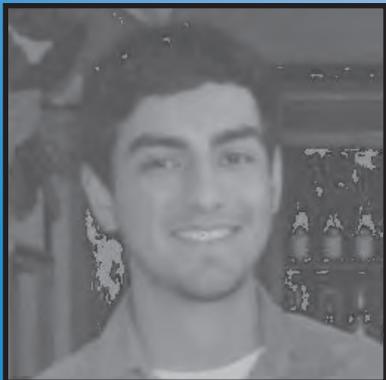
“Wedding Set Expectation”
2013

A Poem by David E. Rodriguez

Angel

© 2014

My dreams should have served as warnings given
That the one I loved would be sent to Heaven
But those warnings I did not heed
Now all I'm left with is her memory
The love we had was a love so true
Two young souls whose love had bloomed
She was the epitome of love, a piece of my soul
An air of elegance and a beauty all her own
I had the visions of her passing
But I paid them no mind, because they were never lasting
Fate has a way of moving on
Whether you want it to or not
So I lost my love and I began to mourn
With a heart heavy with grief with which it hath been scorned
When the pain had become too much to bear
There was a sudden change in the air
So I went outside on that very night
And saw my Angel dancing in the moonlight
Her celestial form perfectly complementing the stars
My heart flooded with emotion as I admired her from afar
Her beauty was just as captivating as ever
She'll have my heart now and forever
Now I look for her every night hoping to see
Her silhouette moving as effortlessly as the breeze
She will always be in the distance, outside of my reach
So I'll watch her dance until the day we once again meet



The poet writes: "I was born on May 28, 1992, and have lived my whole life in Tucson, AZ. I'm currently attending the University of Arizona studying Veterinary Sciences and am graduating in the Spring of 2014. I've been writing for 4 years now and I've developed a deep passion for it. I like to challenge myself with different forms of poetry and I am looking forward to challenging myself with other forms of writing, such as short stories. My goal for writing at the moment is to put out a book of poetry." Contact the poet at 1davidrodriguez17@gmail.com.

3 Poems by Deborah West

Lover's Girl

© 2014

try to love me
if you can. . .

Don't you know I'm
word for word
a pack of pennies
the fisherman's hook
and you thinking I'm
a breezy cookie
a comic even

more and more
the love-worn conferences
to finalize,
all romanticized
formalities

I still count
the tiny industries—
pick the omens
mute, ignored

forty years
and here's my place
where dreams break
and cannibalize

soon my arms cradle
old babies

I will conjure
land to occupy

Taylor

© 2014

the trees were
a tangled train
of crosses

yellow, orange pastes
holding fate together

angel fists
stirring warm
the wine within the trunk

there are certain
colors only God's
allowed to taste.



Deborah West is a poet and lyricist living in Prescott, AZ. She enjoys traveling, hiking and tackling French. Published in Rolling Stone and other magazines, Deborah is currently working on a book of poetry as well as various musical projects. E-mail her at deborahwest44@gmail.com.

Silence Is

© 2014

Bright and present,
The sun can almost fix anything.
The move up the hill
Was stark, uncertain.
But in time the moment
Sought and found me,
Just as circumstance will.

Someone had planted flags
For fallen heroes, nineteen
This time. A child's fire truck
An offering beyond memory.
Something for the cells to process.
Something that the mind can't work.

I feel that there is silence here,
But it's not real.
What I have is life and sound;
The Gone know the true quiet.
The birds cull their primal chatter,
The wind grounds the droughted weeds—
All this I can hear.

True silence is less than nothing.
Really, silence isn't for words,
Something to be scrubbed up and left to dry.

Even the sun gives off vibrations
Of light and tone that DNA can hear.
From there, life sings with temper and heart.
And now, there is the herald's scream,
The sad, soft beat of strident memory.

7 Poems by Richard Fenton Sederstrom

Verdin

© 2014

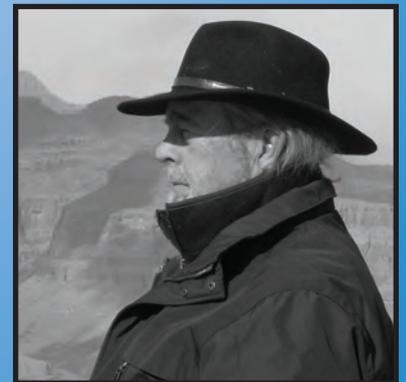
It is the third spring now that a pair of verdins has built their mystery of nest in the tall cactus out front, one of a statuesque family of cacti called grandfather cacti for their sparse white hairs. It is a cactus Carol and I planted when it was a couple of inches high. Now it reaches almost twelve feet. It rears up with five stout arms, in one of which, or the crotch of which, rests the nest the verdins are building, as they have done for several springs in a row now.

What they do, the few who are a part of this tiny society—the birds, the cactus, and maybe sometimes the old couple who pay attention—is small work done alone or no more than two by two and for no other purpose than survival—the verdins, the cactus, the poet, the nurturer.

We take up only a little room. Our excesses are miniscule and on the whole we eat what we harvest, clean up afterwards and take a moment to thank what deserves thanks, if only each other—ah, mostly each other. None of us have much that we need or that we stoop to bow to save perhaps the cactus for the stature and wit, for the protection it shares with the small birds and with the loving indifferent sustenance that comes from nothing more than our attention and our fellowship and the distance we all choose to cherish.

Our longing appetite is for another spring together, a few weeks apart from the birds' suffocating world.

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. Contact Richard at richard_sederstrom1221@q.com.



Kite Fishing at a Public Park

© 2014

For only this split second it is a sleek
Small kite and we can almost see a thin string,
A deception, as always, of control.

But then the kite breaks away,
A kite unstrung, not fluttering
As we think it should, but unseeled,

Snatches the bait that a boy had barbed
To his line's end. A second boy casts
At the park pond, and a second kite,

A Mississippi kite, dives with hawk
Speed, hawk grace, hawk luck,
To the invisible bait and not the hook,

And glides away, leaves behind in that grace
An awed circle of small boys unaware
Now that mere fins ever were, bird-fisherboys

Enchanted, flashing thin whips
Of fishing rod, casting again and again
Above the little ring of lake, waving on

Sleek winged falcons sliding on air
Above them in figures and flourishes
Impossible to invent or train.

Kites swoop out of the noontide sun
At the very peak of the tent of sky, pluck bait
From hooks with impossible dexterity

And miraculous balance in our instinct
For passion at the chase in a flash,
All in aerial teasing, and soar above

Picnickers loafing on the grassy slopes
Of what was only a small town park
before we flew by, hungry for grace.

Bringing Peace

© 2014

The bringers of peace
must always
be surrounded
by the circling dogs
and the circling dogs are circling because
it is the peace of dogs to circle.

The blue heron
calmly blue suddenly
snaps up out of its alertness
a leopard frog.

The heron
for whom the frog is a bringer of peace
will bring its peace one day
to the ooze that swallows
you and me and the dogs
into the smoldering juice of reincarnation.

Heron leaves no ripple that isn't peace.

Emporia Euphoria

© 2014

In the Sonoran Desert it is nineteen-fifty-five:
nothing but desert dotted with creosote bush,
highway debris and boredom.

I am eleven. Bored.

The flat tan of desert drones by, mile after mile.

The old ones listen to Monitor on the car radio.

Then my demure English grandmother:

“Oh! Oh! Look! A street-walker.”

The unamused roadrunner fails to get the joke.

My grandmother is embarrassed—
and pleased with the accident of invention
she will tell on herself for decades.

In Kansas, driving toward Emporia:
the sign tells me that I am entering
Flint Hills Country.

I look up from the trance of straight highway
to take in the scenery,

which is flat, save for the fading sign.

I peel my eyes for hills.

I am no more eager than the beige landscape
for the climax of gray-flint immensity.

The sign, a mile and a half behind in a moment,
tells me that I have reached
the summit of Flint Hills Country,
a few feet of elevation above the first sign.

I gasp for what oxygen is left
in the summitized rarification of air.

Down the highway
miles from the sign, from any sign,
my grandmother steps out from behind a creosote bush
back in the Sonoran Desert.
It is nineteen-fifty-five again and still.

She comments on how pretty are the tiny
yellow blossoms. I can
smell in the creosote bush the fragrance of desert rain,
which is always a dry fragrance, dust subtly perfumed,
and always memory, even minutes after rain stops.
And I smell my grandmother’s lavender perfume,

which is really sweet acacia
translated by her memory of some English garden.
I know I am a little delirious now. A little,
with my wealth of sparse scenery.
In the middle of Kansas I slow
to avoid hitting a desert street-walker
in a final moment of this sacred lapse of attention.

Three Choruses for Mockingbird

© 2014

1
It is six fifteen and the sun has almost rounded the last corner
Before the anguish of horizon.
The alarm we set to spice the errands of our retirement
Has awakened me.

No.
It has reminded me that I have lain awake,
No, that I have lain here in bed
Sometimes waking

Sometimes wondering why I am awake and why
I cannot go back to true sleep, blissfully remming away.
And I hear the mockingbird again
Peeping, chirping, cheeping, whirring

Peep peep peep
Chirp chirp chirp
Cheep cheep cheep
Whirr whirr whirr

Liiiiisten to the mockingbird
Liisten to the mockingbird
Liisten to the mockingbird
Peeping chirping cheeping whirring

Triads over and over and over again
For love!
For love for love for love
! ! !

2
How shall I contain my anger
Who have been awakened
Out of the black clot of night by crows
Cawing their rude schemes of language,

Generations of wrens' angry demands
In their shrill joy at formal
Separation from the seasons
Of my inexcusable intrusions,

Woodpecker in brain-defying counterpoint
To woodpecker
Hammering on a cabin wall
Another on a metal sign

Or the eagle,
No, the eagle's prey
Screaming its way into the machinery of talons,
Into the appetite of dark evolution.

3
How shall I who have been so angered and so enriched
By the Other voice than the song of the bird—
Be only so angered by the love choruses of the mockingbird
And not hear, a creature with so many appetites myself,

That they are also love songs? How shall I
Turn from the sleeping figure of my wife next to me,
Awakened, angry to be sure, but
Awakened into love?

Into love?
Into love
Into love
Into love

A Mating Tally

© 2014

So little to do driving today that we counted pheasants:
Twenty-nine pheasants from the southern border
of North Dakota to Dickinson,

eight more pheasants east toward Bismarck
before quilts of farmland end the display and hasty count.
Thirty-seven pheasants right around the highway,

maybe another seven out on the plain.
Some others are too far away this morning to tell for sure.
Some are too far dead to tell or care to tell anymore.

Thirty-six pheasants are male. They live for
one unresponsive hen, aloof or indifferent.
Alone, a rooster pheasant struts in the middle of the blacktop

then stands in perfect poise, perfect stillness for his mate:
russet, orange, sheen of sleek feathers
like thin titanium leaves in the sun slicked back in cocky invitation,

pheasant's indigenous pride of mandarin silk.
the red-cabbed silver eighteen-wheeler
barrels south and straight for the waiting rooster.

No honk, no sound from the tons of hyper-colored hen.
In a second of touch, of rapture,
This male's ecstasy is immediate and immortal

while industry, iron, cargo, gas, oil, rubber, the violence
of gales behind miles of smoke and slipstream,
a modern nation wind-blinded goes ramblin' on.

We leave behind our slick sign of legacy,
black tire streaks and a dot of russet
on a drifting continent of black tarmac.

Life and Dis-Life in the Late Anthropocene

© 2014

We try to share so much as we can of what we hope
might be the animals' freedom,
 what's left of it behind the barriers,
 pacing ruts round and round the airy cages
behind the bars, the plexiglass,
 the clever moats: the lies,
 the optical lies that lie before and behind bars,
 or on either side of moats,
the silent lies of imitation horizon

and share such little as we can of the anger we anticipate we would feel,
trapped as we are on the other side,
 pacing for food, hiding nowhere—

We've been walking through the zoo now for many years, almost fifty.
Same zoo.
 Used to take the kids to the zoo.
 Watch the animals.

Picnics.
 Kids loved the zoo.
 We all did. We all did.

But I can't say we have ever been to the zoo without feeling this vague
guilt for the killing that made a zoo the only world
 left for the animals,
 the choking gall of irony behind it,
and the anger.

But whose anger?
 Ours partly.
 Animals' maybe.

we duck our heads and run for the inner comfort and gloom
of our fabricated lair, and the conscience we consume
when we visit the zoo.

Only the flying creatures,
 descendants of the fourth freedom of evolution,
 are free here at the zoo.

The lesser among us, we will not fly.

8 Poems by Annemarie Eveland

A Spot of Sun

© 2014

I miss the touch of sweetness.
morning fresh; soft upon my face.
I leave notes to myself so that I can be reasonable
and remember how to stay alive.
I look for you in the places where you left long ago.
and the longing returns because I have not healed.
I wonder how many turns it takes before I can breathe
again.
without holding my breath against the invading winds.
I long for soft, holding me in safety
and the long minutes of life that
stretch out endlessly
and meaningfully.
I turn again
and my reflection stars back
and again
I look for you.



Author, speaker, counselor, minister and certified instructor since the 1980s of Reading People Face to Face, Annemarie's fun Face-Reading presentations: on Caribbean Cruise ships, Dale Carnegie Trainings, in Mexico; Canada, Great Britain, Germany, Scotland, England; Arizona Superstition wilderness; throughout the United States, including Alaska and Hawaii. Featured in international newspaper articles, journals, business newsletters, TV, Radio, multimedia educational videos and keynote speaker at Universities and Conferences, her audiences range from first-graders to elders. Also retained as a consultant by trial attorneys for client preparation, depositions and selecting juries. Her classes were required graduate coursework at post-secondary education institutes. She has written training manuals, a storybook for children and teachers, articles for newspapers, newsletters, journals and magazines, published poetry, wrote as a columnist for two newspapers. Her new book "At First Glance – What Faces Reveal" is a handy, easy-to-follow book on face reading. Contact her at aearizona@yahoo.com.

Hummers

© 2014

early early.
but the bombers screech by.
nothing will deter them from the search for sweet.
red plastic containers entice their formations to fly in.
nectar from some seeming god for them,
but easy for me to replace their breakfasts
with colored premix packages
of bird fluid feeding.

they chatter, exclaiming in a language
known only between them
the vying for the first and all
of what they consider important.

I look at them...there is plenty of
flowers, plastic yellow on red bottles
for them to each use;
yet they run each other off,
like it is scarce and
the fittest is the winner.

I think how often
we humans are the same;
there is plenty in this world
for us to content our lives.
yet we search and fight
and furious protect
even more than we can use.
and others find the same
insanity to contribute
to the illusion
that we will not be cared
for enough, and that
there are not enough resources
so we need to fight amongst ourselves
for some small morsel,
protecting it, as though IT
is our god, not the source
of all of it.

in a bombadeering way,
these miracles of life,
these tiny creatures
who are a miracle
within themselves,
for they are not supposed to
be able to fly, their wings are
engineered by some master who
knows more than all their nectar lurkings;
these little beings who I behold as my teachers;
they fly and squawk and argue
like they were little nothings;
their flying illusions, disregarding
they fact THEY are the miracle
they forget, they come to remind me...
I am also a miracle of this same great creator,
that who I am made like
cannot be concerned by lack, limitation or lovelessness.

I sit still, with the sounds of the bombadeering still furious
and almost laugh out loud at the incredible simplicity
of what we are, rather than what we think we need.
need always has an illusion....as I reflect back on my life
those things I thought I needed seems always to be the things
that
only pushed me in the direction of what I really needed
to grow, to know
and slowly, I am returning
to that which I
ALREADY WAS.

great flight.

Remember Me Sometime

© 2014

Remember me sometime
When all the night is dark.
Think of me when you're alone
And no one is holding you.
Sometimes when you stop
And try to breathe in deep,
Think way back to when
I took your breath away.
Sometime when you're home
With no one 'round to talk,
Listen to the silent place in you-
Hear my voice speaking soft.
Remember those special times
When we knew we were invincible;
And all the world was ours
To capture anything we desired.
In your memory bank
Draw out the best of us
And hold me close to you
Swearing all your vigilance.
Savor our precious memories
Then let them fly out free
To keep you safe and sane
To face your life today.
What we shared in life
Is linked in spirit now
But I will flash my sparkle
Across our heaven's stars.

Morning Sounds of Sea

© 2014

Morning sounds of sea
forever wash my mind.
Thoughts of tomorrow vanish
in the ocean of truth they bring.

I sit in this silent moment
remembering nothing of past,
only this moment, this sound
of hypnotic timelessness.

I reach out for the foam
white, lacy and patterned
as it lays ever changing
atop the layers of waves racing
down the beach line into shore.

The distant ocean blends
into sky blues above
seeking the indivisible
and finding oneness.

Cresting and crashing,
a changing tide remembers
and unfolds into unending
sounds of its own patterns.

Layers of sea foam
gather their strength
without nerves of human
concerns inside them.

Their power and mutability
remind me to ride the crests of life,
with passion and strength
like this endless returning sea.

In All the Warm Places

© 2014

I miss your sweetness
soft morning touches
fresh upon my face.

I leave notes to myself
So I can be reasonable
and remember to stay alive.

I look for you
in the places you left long ago.
and the longing returns
because I have not healed.

I wonder how long it takes
before I can breathe again
without hiding my soul
from the invading winds.

I long for you holding me safe
in those long minutes of life
that stretch out endlessly
and meaningfully.

As I turn to leave
my memories stare at me.
and again
I look for you.

Snowflakes

© 2014

We are snowflakes, you and I. Unique creative winter ones.
Individually patterned personalities – not one of us alike.
We are angelic singular designs drifting down from heavens,
Holding firmly onto our outwardly frozen solid forms.

But our individual geometric selves we will eventually lose.
Everything that has a form, will change, tempting us to cling fiercely
To save our form, begging us to believe we are forever losing us.

Eventually, we will look at this ongoing process closely
And see a process more than us one journey falling into earth.
We are melting together into an essential oneness.

The only safe thing we can do is surrender
And melt magically into each changing moment
Surrender our form and become formless.

So, breathe deep. We are safe. Seek the tenderness within.
Stand delighted in new sun-kissed mornings
Embrace extraordinary newness in ordinary days.
We have only this moment to melt. It will never be again.

It takes courage to trust this process but trust we must.
So, go melt. Do it now. Don't wait. Let go.
Remember who you truly are – a spirit for all seasons.

Today You Left Me

© 2014

Today you left for work.
I saw you turn and go
But I saw your face so sad
As you silently walked away.

You promised to always love me.
So, it is hard for me to know
How without a word to me
You could so quickly go.

I baked your favorite meal tonight
And the clock ticked loudly by.
I tapped my fingers on the table
Impatient to know the reasons why.

My mind began its ramblings
Why you didn't come home today
I thought of many reasons why.
Was it the unkind words I did say?

Or am I not so pretty now
That we've been together years?
Did we take each other for granted,
Not noticing the things so dear.

Perhaps you've found another gal
Who adores you "oh, so much!"
And you've chosen to run away—
Unable to tell me such.

Oh, what have you done to us?
And how could I restore
The love and fun we'd had in past
Then a knock came at the door.

Before me stood two officers
And the rest became a blur.
Something about an auto crash
And now you were no more.

For days I could not move or think
Nor eat nor sleep nor even feel.
It was a friend who brought to me
The red roses left behind his wheel.

It seems my Love had stopped that day
And bought them- coming home.
A little note revealed his message,
"May flowers tell what I cannot say:
That I loved you dearly, Annie
And surely we will be okay."

That was so many years ago
But still his message brings
A sweet sadness in my heart
Yet still helps my soul to sing.

Now, each day I look for ways
To tell those whom I love
How much they mean to me
Long before they are above.

Winter Secrets

© 2014

Like the stillness of this winter snow
I cling tenaciously – deep within
Holding fast what makes me unique
In places no one but me can come.

I am a winter wonder
Listening to quieter words
That my heart can hear me
becoming more assured.

A white and silent space I hold
Yet from your outside gaze
I look like frozen feelings
But inside feel amazed.

The seeds I'm holding now
In spring become my power.
And by my courage to believe
I become a magic flower.

That which brings to others
Radiance; and treasures
the things deep inside of us
that grow like giant towers.

So when you think you're stuck
Just sit and listen in the silence
To that which lives inside of you
As eternal strength of essence.

And in the morning light will come
A special kind of knowing
That comes from your very center
As a powerful seed that's growing.

Stone Cold

By J. Michael Green

© 2014

Henry was on the return leg of the 20-mile loop of his trap line, both feet planted on the sled runners and his left hand gripping the sled handle, when he became distracted. One of the seven dogs, all Malamutes, was limping.

Henry was concentrating on Buck, his best and strongest wheel dog, as they crossed a frozen stream and started up the bank. He didn't see the limb, heavy with fresh snow, that hung over the trail. His head collided with the limb and loosened his grip on the handle. His mittened hand slipped from the handle and he fell backward. His shouts and whistle had no effect as the dogs continued to run. He rolled down the slope and landed feet-first in a deep drift of soft snow along the creek, partially buried. His parka was pulled above his waist and snow covered his entire mid-section. His hat, which covered his head, neck, and ears and had a flap to cover his face, was catapulted somewhere by the limb.

Henry was in trouble. Nine miles from the cabin with nothing but what he wore for protection. Bears were hibernating this time of year although wolves could pose a problem. The major threat came from cold. January in the Alaska interior was always cold but the winter of 1898 was the coldest anyone could remember. He didn't know the high temperature for the day was 54 below although he knew it was damned cold.

The best thing to do was walk to keep from sitting down and freezing to death. He pulled the hood of his parka up to retain head heat, brushed off what snow he could from his mid-section, and plodded along the trail, each step burying eighteen-inches deep in the soft snow. He maintained a moderate pace to keep from overexerting himself and sweating.

After a mile his face began to sting from cold. He covered as much of his face as he could with a mittened hand and

continued to plod along the trail, breathing through the mitten to warm the air going into his lungs. Cold had invaded every muscle of his body. After three miles he began to shiver and his extremities began to numb while his brain began to fog. Although the snow under his parka had melted, his body had not warmed. His breathing became shallow and quick.

At the four-mile mark shivering was stronger, his movements uncoordinated, any movement slow and labored. He walked in a stupor, staggering really, as his legs did not obey commands from his brain. He looked down at the trail, concentrating on each step. Cold had penetrated his bones and his muscles protested every movement. His brain continued to fog and he became confused.

Suddenly his brain cells woke enough to remind him of the hot springs. He stopped and looked around. The blazed tree marking the trail to the hot springs was fifty yards behind him. He turned and stumbled back to the side trail, made the turn and began the two-hundred-yard walk. His movement slowed and he staggered from one side of the cleared trail to the next. Forty minutes later he arrived at the spring.

The pond was small, about ten or twelve feet square and three feet deep. His brain was fogged to the point of shutting down and he walked straight into the pond. He reclined to warm as much of his body as possible. He closed his eyes and rested, only his nose and mouth above the water level. Nearly an hour passed. His body was warming and the fog in his brain began to lift. The sun had set and the mercury had dropped even more. The sky was clear and stars provided ample light, reflected off the snow.

He dozed. The 101-degree warmth of the hot spring had returned his core body temperature to normal.

He woke with a start not knowing where he was. He opened

Continued on page 81



Mike is a native of Arizona but in reality is a child of the West, living in every state west of the Rockies except Utah and Hawaii before landing in Tucson twenty years ago. He has held many titles over the decades, but his favorites are husband, father, grandfather, and sergeant of Marines. Contact Mike at j.michael.green.46@gmail.com. Visit his website at <http://j michaelgreen.com/>, and get his latest book, "Nicky, Sasquatch, and Pink Elephants" at Smashwords, <https://www.smashwords.com/profile/view/jmichaelgreen>.

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his eyes and glanced around, his mind registering the pond, the forest, the cold. Finally, he realized he was fully dressed in thick, cold-weather gear that was soaked through and he had no way to dry them.

He considered options. He could remain in the pond until Sam, his trapping partner, found him. Although he had flint and steel in his pocket, there was no wood nearby for a fire. The fog in his brain was lifting although he was only functioning at about eighty percent.

Well, I can stay in the pond until Sam finds me, but he won't be back from Eagle for a day or two, depending on how drunk he gets. Could even be a week or more if he decides to take up with that new floozy that Old Man McCoy hired. I could starve to death before he finds me. If them wolves find me and realize I'm in trouble, they could come after me. I can't build a fire to dry my clothes. My only chance is to walk back to the cabin. It's only 'bout four miles.

He stood and slogged to the bank, his wet clothes impeding his efforts, and stepped to the top. He began to walk. His sleeves froze immediately and he was unable to move his arms. His pants were a little slower to freeze since his movement hindered the freezing, but only slightly. Soon his pants froze solid and he was unable to move. Within minutes of stopping, his wet mukluks froze to the ice that surrounded the pond. Twenty feet, eight steps, from the pond, able to move only his head and fingers, he was immobile.

That's how Sam found him two days later—a statue of solid ice. And that's how the name Frozen Henry Hot Springs came to be.

Rusted Junk

By Eduardo Cerviño

© 2014

Jerry and I took our dates home after a pleasant evening at the drive-in theater. Still full of energy, we drove to our favorite hangout.

The drive-in hamburger joint buzzed with teenagers. We looked forward to enticing some of them into another Saturday night street drag. To us, this was the highlight of the week. We found no takers tonight.

“Ted, let’s go to Fritz and Mel’s,” Jerry said.

“Okay. Nuttin’ going on here tonight.” We hopped back in Jerry’s maroon ’41 Chevy.

With the convertible’s top down this late in the year, the chill bothered us. But the breeze blowing through our hair made us look cool.

Fritz and Mel lived on my block; our garages faced the same alley. As soon as we turned into the gravel alley, we saw light escaping through the cracks in their garage door. Soon we heard them working on their 1934 Ford Roadster hot rod conversion.

The brothers had worked nonstop on the project for more than a year.

They had paid twenty-five dollars for the heap, a wreck they had to tow home. They left her outside for another year while they saved the dough to buy all the stuff needed to resurrect her.

What a sad piece of rusted junk, I thought the first time I laid eyes on her ragged cloth top.

The body had a few dents. The windshield could be saved. The boys removed and stored it in the garage rafters. The doors came off next, exposing the threadbare, stained interior upholstery. It had to go.

“This will take a lot of work,” Fritz had told me before he started. “But it’s going to be fun.”

Mel nodded, and I saw the determination in his eyes. I knew they would pull it off.

Once they took her apart, she stopped looking pitiful, and more like a patient in the recovery room.

Day after day, including weekends, Fritz and Mel came home from school and worked on their dream machine. The welding torch kept sparkling until the wee hours of the night. They found a Ford V-8 engine in a junkyard and rebuilt it. The day they mounted it on the refurbished chassis, we celebrated. It was the culmination of six months of dedication and grease-monkey work.

That day, Mel called me early in the afternoon

“Ted, you have to see her. Come over, man; we put new tires on this baby this morning, and maybe we can start the engine

today.”

I left home by the back door, crossed the alley, and saw Fritz’s head deep inside the engine compartment. Mel grinned at me.

“Ain’t she somthin’?” he said and kicked a tire with his right foot.

“Looking good, my friend. Real good.”

Fritz stood up and walked around the hot-rod like a rooster around a hen.

“We lowered the frame,” he pointed. “No more dents anywhere, see. We also installed the carburetor. We’re over the hump.”

They had rescued from the jaws of a crushing machine a pair of new, canary yellow Harley Davidson motorcycle fenders. Fritz installed them on the hot rod.

“Impressive,” I said.

Jerry and I began to buy a six-pack of Ambassador beer and dropping by Fritz and Mel’s garage to encourage them.

One cool day, I was giving Jerry a bad time about keeping the top down on his Chevy.

“I want people to see our letter jackets,” Jerry said as we pulled up in front of the garage. “Don’t be a chicken.” He parked.

“We tightened the hose clamp on the radiator. All we need now is a new battery,” Mel told us without saying hello or anything.

Fritz followed with, “We could fire this baby up right now and go for a ride.”

I laughed, “Without seats. Without doors, and no hood.”

“All I need is a wooden box and a gas pedal, and around the block we go,” Fritz said.

“Are you serious?” Jerry said.

“Of course. We flipped a coin, and he goes first.” Mel pointed at Fritz.

Before we could say yes or no, Fritz removed the battery from Jerry’s Chevy and installed it in the hot-rod.

“Oh, I forgot,” Fritz said. “It’s all wired up, but we don’t have a starter switch.”

Without missing a beat, Mel ran a wire from the starter and touched the battery. Fritz hand-choked the carburetor and handled the accelerator. It was exciting to hear the engine turn-

Continued on page 83

ing over until it started.

“Purring like a kitten,” Jerry said.

“Fuck kittens,” Mel said. “It’s growling like a bulldog.”

“No mufflers yet,” I said.

“What? Can’t hear you.” Fritz spoke from the other side of the car, cupping his ears. Then he grabbed a coat hanger from the bench and straightened it.

“What’s it for?” Mel said.

Fritz ignored him. He leaned over the engine and tied one end of wire to the carburetor linkage. Then he passed the other end through the firewall into the driver’s area.

“A hand operated gas pedal,” he said with the tone of a master of ceremony.

We beamed with admiration. He tossed an apple box onto the floorboard, and asked us to push the car into the alley.

I remember the exact date this happened. November first, 1950, and the number one hit song on the radio was “I Can Dream, Can’t I” by the Andrews Sisters.

Was Fritz dreaming big or what? I had my doubts about the arrangement of the accelerator device, but ended up trusting Fritz’s ingenuity. After all, his father, a German fellow, owned an auto repair shop.

After a couple of pops from the tailpipe, Fritz rolled down the alley, and we ran after him. He turned right at Saint Mary Street. We ran some more; he made another wide right at Penelope Avenue, and drove by the front of his house.

Fritz was the lucky one in the gang. His father was not on the porch to see him.

Out of first gear and into second, he pulled the coat hanger, the throttle opened, and the car roared and took off. Boy did he go.

Fritz pushed the coat hanger forward to slow her down, but the hanger bent. Now on full throttle, he barreled down the street, heading to the intersection of Penelope and Main. The

traffic light changed to yellow. He floored the brakes, the same old brakes the car had had since who-knew-when. She skidded and kept going. He jerked the wheel hard to the right; she jumped over the curb and hit the light pole, tossing Fritz onto the grass parkway.

We ran up to the car and piled on top of Fritz to see how he was. He pushed us away and hurried to inspect the front of the car.

“She’s fine,” he said.

Jerry and I rushed forward and pulled him out of the way of the light pole. But it kept leaning until it fell on the street with thunderous noise and colorful sparks.

I’m sure the police report had more details about the incident than I can remember now.

The Korean War came upon us. The entire gang joined the service. Fritz, always the lucky one, came back. Mel and Jerry died fresh out of the plane, in the Battle of Pusan. When I came back to the neighborhood in 1954, I had no visible wounds.

During the war, I had received a Dear John letter from my girlfriend. I walked by her house. The family had moved away. The hurt was immense. I thought of Fritz as I ambled the two miles back home. I reached his house. He opened the door in his uniform. He appeared taller than I remembered, but it must have been his military bearing, straighter than the new light pole.

We hugged and slapped each other’s back.

As if the war had not happened, I said: “Did you finish the hot rod?”

“No, my friend. My father sold her when I was overseas.”

That’s all I remember from the conversation. That was sixty years ago.

Fritz made a career in the Army.

I’m driving today to my hometown. Nothing there for me, except that I saw in Craigslist a “For Sale” ad that read:

“1934 Ford Roadster hot rod. Yellow, in fair condition. Never finished, needs a gas pedal, mufflers and seats.”

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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 arts and literary magazine, Unstrung poetry magazine and The Blue Guitar

Jr. literary and arts magazine for youth.

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 magazines, and the establishment of our future center.

Please visit our donations page, <http://www.artizona.org/donate.html>, and donate today!

Thank you for your continued support!



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.

A Call to Writers for The Blue Guitar Jr.

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

The Blue Guitar Jr. magazine seeks literary submissions for its next annual issue for children and teens. Submissions from children and teens and adults who write for children and teens are sought by Oct. 1, 2014, in all genres — fiction, poetry, plays, creative nonfiction — all geared to appeal to youthful audiences. Writers must submit original work and must live in Arizona. Simultaneous submissions will be accepted, but the writer must notify the magazine as soon as possible if the work is accepted elsewhere. It is free to submit, and submissions may be made in multiple genres. Please include your name and the best way to contact you on your submission. To submit or for further information, e-mail Editor Rebecca Dyer at rebeccadyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org. For more information, visit www.theblueguitarmagazine.org.

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

A Call to Artists for The Blue Guitar Jr.

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

The Blue Guitar Jr. magazine seeks art submissions for its next annual issue for children and teens. Submissions from children and teens and adults who create art for children and teens are sought by Oct. 1, 2014, in all media geared to appeal to youthful audiences. Artists must submit original work and must live in Arizona. Simultaneous submissions will be accepted, but the artist must notify the magazine as soon as possible if the work is accepted elsewhere. It is free to submit, and submissions may be made in multiple mediums; up to 5 images can be submitted. Artists are encouraged to submit images of work by e-mail; please provide high-resolution JPEGs of 300 dpi. Images must be identified in the e-mail with the artist's name, contact information, titles of works, dates and mediums. Please include your name and the best way to contact you. To submit or for more information, e-mail Editor Richard Dyer at richarddyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org. For more information, visit www.theblueguitarmagazine.org.

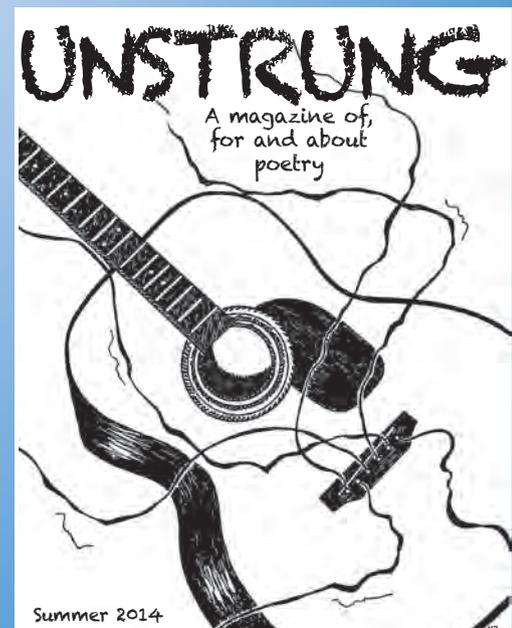
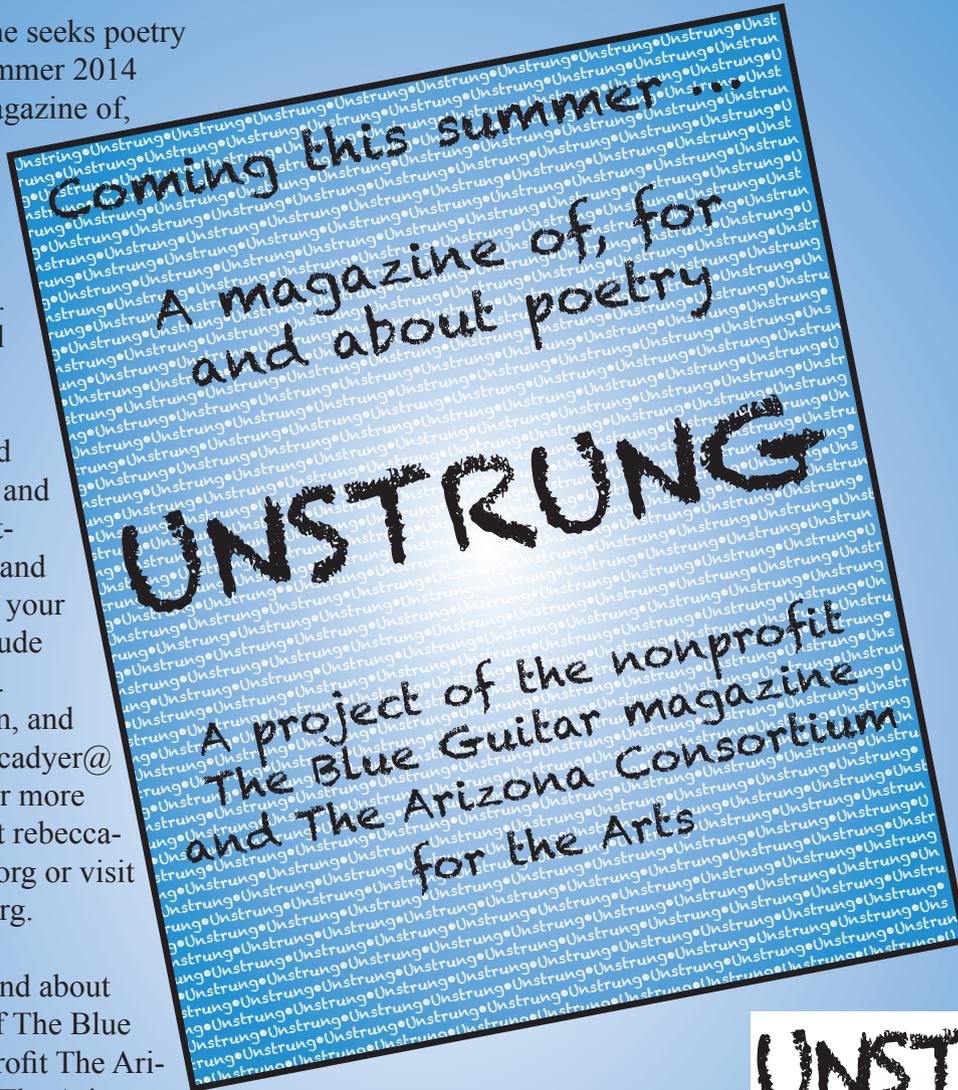
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www.theblueguitarmagazine.org and www.artizona.org.

A Call to Poets for the 2014 Issue of Unstrung

The Blue Guitar magazine seeks poetry submissions for the Summer 2014 Issue of Unstrung, a magazine of,

for and about poetry. Submissions will be accepted from June 1 through July 4. Poets must submit original work and must have a tie to Arizona. Simultaneous submissions will be accepted, but the poet must notify the magazine as soon as possible if the work is accepted elsewhere. It is free to submit, and multiple poems may be submitted. 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.



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., editor: Richard (married to Rebecca, above) is the managing editor for a monthly and three weekly newspapers in the East Valley, a photographer and a welded-steel sculptor. Reach him at richarddyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org.

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



Check our websites for news on the arts

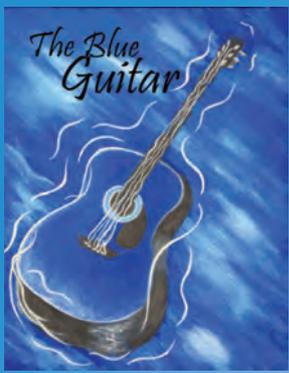


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Spring 2014

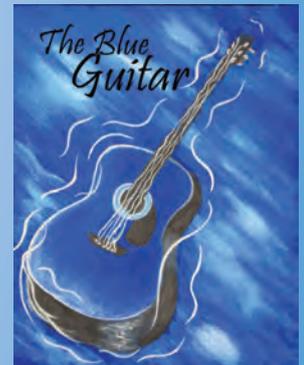


A Call to Writers for Fall

The Blue Guitar magazine seeks literary submissions for the Fall 2014 Edition from Sept. 1 through Oct. 3. Submissions are sought in all genres — fiction, poetry, plays, creative nonfiction. Writers must submit original work and must live part- or full-time in Arizona. Simultaneous submissions will be accepted, but the writer must notify the magazine as soon as possible if the work is accepted elsewhere. It is free to submit, and submissions may be made in multiple genres. Please include your name and the best way to contact you on your submission. To submit or for further information, e-mail Editor 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 2014 Edition from Sept. 1 through Oct. 3. Any artists who work in any visual art media, are 18 years or older and are part- or full-time Arizona residents can submit. It is free to submit and up to 5 images can be submitted. Artists are encouraged to submit images of work by e-mail; please provide high-resolution JPEGs of 300 dpi. Images must be identified in the e-mail with the artist's name and contact information, titles of works, dates and mediums. To submit or for further information, e-mail Editor Richard Dyer at richarddyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org. For more information, visit www.theblueguitarmagazine.org.



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“Things as they are are changed upon the blue guitar.”
— Excerpt from Wallace Stevens' 1937 poem “The Man With the Blue Guitar.”
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Volume 6,
Number 1
Spring Issue
FREE!

*“Things
as they are
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blue guitar.”*